CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
The Indian word for Philosophy is 'Darabana'. 'Darabana' means 'Vision' or 'instrument of vision'. The term 'darshana' comes from the root 'drá', which means 'to see'. This seeing does not mean ordinary perceptual observation. According to Dr. C.D. Sharma, "it stands for the direct, immediate and intuitive view of Reality, the actual perception of Truth, and also includes the means which lead to this realization". 

In India the earliest philosophical literature comes originally from the Vedas. Thus the origin of Indian philosophy is rooted in the Vedic literature. Of course, one thing should be remembered here that Indian philosophy is mainly divided into two groups as Āstika and Nāstika. The schools falling in the Nāstika group are those which do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. The Āstika group believes in the Vedas as the most authoritative basis of philosophy. Our main aim here is to study about the advaita Vedānta of Ācārya Śāṅkara. We shall touch upon those points which are necessary for a close understanding of Śāṅkara's philosophy.

The Hindus regard the Vedas as anādi or beginningless and respect them as the 'voice of Divine'. It is

difficult to ascertain the exact date of any part of the Vedas as to when and by whom it was written; as it comes from teacher to student through verbal recitation. "The absence of chronological data, the complete indifference of the ancient Indians towards personal histories. The archaic character of the Vedic sanskrit, the break of tradition, and the biased orthodox colouring of interpretation, which instead of a help often proves a hindrance, are some of the main reasons due to which our knowledge about this period remains mostly shrouded in mystery and vagueness".¹

The Vedas reveal different stream of religious and philosophical culture. In India, as philosophy is very much closely related with religion, so from the religion of the Vedas, specially, from the Rigveda, we can trace back the first philosophy of India.

In the Vedic religion, we find the germ of pluralistic, monotheistic and also the absolutistic views of reality. Thus in the pluralistic stage, the several Gods, such as Varuna, Indra, Agni, Viswarakraman were looked upon as the creators of this universe. At a later stage, we find the view that "Brahman is the tree and wood out of which heaven and earth are made".² Sometimes it is also

said that God is the creator of this universe by the power of sacrifice (Tapa).

In the first phase of the Rg Veda, though we find an idea of poly-theistic religious philosophy, where several Divine powers are personified and worshipped, such as Surya (Sun), Agni (fire), Indra (thunderstone), Vayu (the all pervader) and others, the prerogative of creation, preservation and destruction, yet we find the idea of an eternal, unfathomable, unspeakable unity, from which all Gods arise. Thus it is said in the Rg Veda 1. 164, 46 - "Ekam Sat Vipraah bahudhah vadanti. Agnissi Yamasii mātarisvamamāhuh" i.e. 'the poet give many names that which is only one; They call it Agni, Yama, Mātarisvām'.

In another hymn of Rg Veda also, we find the germ of absolustic idea as - "This entire universe is the Purusā alone, both that which was and that which endures for the future". 1

In the Nāsadiya hymns of the Rg Veda, we find a highly monistic philosophy. It makes nature and spirit both as aspects of the one Absolute. The Absolute itself is neither the self nor the not-self, neither the self-consciousness, the 'I' nor unconsciousness of 'not-I'. It is higher than all these. The opposition is developed within itself by Tapas from which the created world come

in being. So there is no conception of the unreality of
the world in the hymns of Rg Veda. The world is just the
evolution of God. And the very 'desire' to impulse of
creation is regarded by later philosopher as 'Māyā'.
Whenever the word 'Māyā' occurred in the Rg Veda, is
used only to signify the might or the power. "Indra the
well-known God, assumes many forms (māyābhīḥ)" by magic
wills, or mysterious powers, through māyā (super natural
power) Indra triumphs over the māyin demons". Thus we
find the term māyā and its derivatives, māya, māyēvant
etc. are used to signify the will of the demons and we
also find the use of the word in the sense of illusion
or show in various passages of the Rg Veda.

In the hymns of the Rg Veda, we find that the
universe in all its past, present and future is due to
one and single principle which is also described as
Prajāpati (the Lord of creatures). It is also said that
"Prajāpati, occupies the highest in the pantheism, until
he is displaced by two other more philosophical concepts
- Brahman and Ātman. These three names, Prajāpati, Brahman
and Ātman dominate the whole philosophical development
from Rigveda to the Upaniṣāds". In the Upaniṣāads, the
term Brahman and Ātman which . are identical, are used to

2. G.A.Jacob. The Philosophy of the vedanta and the
vedantasara. P. 8.
explain the ultimate reality and the term Prajāpati is used as only a mythological concept. It is clearly stated in the Rg veda that "Prajāpati does not create a world, he transforms himself, his body and his limbs into the different parts of the universe. Therefore in creating he is swallowed up, he falls to pieces, and is restored by the performance of some rite which is in this way recommended". Thus we find the concept of an eternal entity, behind the world-appearance, what Hindu philosophy call as Brahman, the first principle and it is the non-dual principle of Indian philosophical school, specially the vedānta school of Saṅkarāchārya.

1. That the idea of Advaita philosophy is already present in the mantras of the Rg veda, is clear from our above discussion. These ideas took more definite shape in the Upaniṣads. So it will be better for us to have an idea of the classical Upaniṣads in which the spiritual idea of the Absolute of the vedic literature attains a remarkable position.

The etymological meaning of the term Upaniṣad is - "Upa" means 'nearby' 'ni' means 'devotedly' and 'sat' means 'to sit down' or 'to destroy' or 'to loosen'. Thus

1. ibid. p. 8.
the term means 'the sitting down of the disciple near the
teacher, in a devoted manner to receive instruction about
the highest Reality which loosens all doubts and destroys
all ignorance of the disciple'. Generally, the word
Upaniṣad means any secret teaching about Reality and
therefore Upaniṣad means the 'Rahasya-vidyā' or 'Ouhya
vidyā' or 'the Real of the real' (satyasya satyam).

The Upaniṣads form the concluding part of the
Veda and therefore the Upaniṣads are generally regarded
as Vedānta or the 'final section of the Veda' (vedasya
antah). We find in the writing of Datta and Chatterjee,
there are various reasons for which the Upaniṣads may be
rightly regarded as Vedānta. Firstly, the Upaniṣads
were the last literary products of the Vedic period. The
Vedic literature can be broadly classified into three
kinds, the earliest being the Vedic hymns or mantras
compiled in the different Śāhītās (Ṛik, Yajus, Śāma and
Atharva), the next being the Brāhmaṇas, treatises, guiding
and encouraging the Vedic rituals and the last, the Upani-
ṣads which discuss philosophical problems. Secondly, in
respect of study also, the Upaniṣads come last. As a rule,
a man studied the Śāhītās first; the Brāhmaṇas are requi-
red next for guiding him when he entered life and had to

2. Datta and Chatterjee. An Introduction to Indian Philoso-
phy. P. 347.
perform the rituals enjoined on a householder; and last of all, the Upaniṣads (some of which are also known as āranyakas or forest-treatises) were needed to help him when he retired from the world and started the life of Bānaprastha, in the forests where he tried to understand the meaning and the mystery of the universe. Lastly, it is called the end of the Vedas in the sense that after the study of the Vedas with other branches of learning, a man's education is not complete till he receives instruction in the Upaniṣads.

There are about one hundred and eight Upaniṣads of which about ten or eleven are regarded as important and authentic. Of these Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara has commented on ten. They are - Īsha, Keṇa, Katha, Praśna, Mūḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Taśtirīya, Aitariya, Chhāndogya and Brāhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads.

The Upaniṣadic literature have a strong impact on Śaṅkara. It is on the basis of Upaniṣads that Śaṅkara's philosophy takes a definite shape in the Advaitic line. According to George Thibaut also "Śaṅkara's Vedānta is perfectly in harmony with the essential teachings of the classical Upaniṣads. According to R.D.Ranade, the Upaniṣads are related to the Brahmaūtras and also to the Bhāgavad-gītā and it is for this internal relation among them that
all these three, namely, the Upaniṣads, the Brahmaṇa-utra and the Bhāgavatṛṭīta are the three foundation-stones of the whole of the vedānta philosophy. Ranade says, "Bādarāyana, the author of the Brahmaṇa-utras, borrows so frequently and so immensely from the Upaniṣads, in fact, all his aphorisms are so much rooted in the Upaniṣads, that it would be impossible either to understand or to interpret the Brahmaṇa-utras without a perceptual reference to the texts of the Upaniṣads".  

The central contribution of the Upaniṣads to the history of philosophy is the idea of monism. As we have seen that the idea of monistic philosophy is already available in the Ṛg veda in the verses like, "Ekā sad viprāh bahudha vadanti". In the Brhadāraṇyaka, the chhāndogya the katha and kena Upaniṣads, there are various explanations of the ultimate reality as Brahman and ātman. And Śaṅkara's theory of Brahman is also on the foundation of the Upaniṣads.

As regards the doctrine of māyā which is the central contribution of Śaṅkara in his Advaitic philosophy, we may say that the idea of māyā, is not a new creation of Śaṅkara. It is also a contribution of Upaniṣadic literature. It inheres in Upaniṣads in an implicit form. The

view that Brahman is the sole reality necessarily imply that the world around us is only an appearance. Thus to accept Brahman as the ultimate reality is to accept temporary existence of the world. It is on the basis of Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara in his philosophy, admits the two distinction between pāramārthika and the vyavahārika view of reality and grants the vyavahārika reality to the world-appearances. And in order to explain how this world-appearence is related to Nirguṇa Brahman, the doctrine of māyā is a necessity for Śaṅkara.

Though the term māyā is not explicitly mentioned in the older Upaniṣads, yet there is frequent use of the word Avidyā. In essence, Avidyā is not different from māyā. Avidyā and Māyā, both stand for delusion which has the effect of breaking it as subject and object, as agent and enjoyer, doer and the result of the deed. Whether we call it māyā or Avidyā, it connotes the principle of differentiation that is implicit in human thinking.

The Upaniṣads are the creation of different seers at different times and it is for this reason that we donot find any systematic philosophy in the Upaniṣads. We come accross divergent views almost side by side and even at the same time. Thus there is the higher view of Reality as Nirguṇa Brahman and also the lower view as Saguna.

Brahman. Brahman is regarded as beyond all thoughts and words and there are also explanations of Brahman as the creator, and destroyer of this world. Brahman and the world are regarded as two orders of reality, one being the higher and the other being the lower. But there are also passages which admit the world as a real creation of God. Thus there are divergent views scattered here and there in the various Upaniṣads. All these views are arranged by different commentators into a coherent and systematic manner. Thus there are commentators before and even after Śaṅkara on the Upaniṣadic literature. "But the credit of doing justice to all the important passages by means of a comprehensive formula belongs to Śaṅkara alone". Thus it is Śaṅkara who successfully developed the higher and lower views of reality into a comprehensive 'Advaitavāda' and it is for this reason that Śaṅkara's philosophy is regarded as a most comprehensive and the most satisfactory explanation of philosophy, not only in India but also it has a peculiar place in the western philosophy. No doubt, 'Vedānta nāsmopanisatpramāṇam', for it squarely rests on the Upaniṣads.

III. The Vedānta Sūtra:

The vedānta philosophy is closely related with the vedānta sūtra. It is also called Brahma sūtra, because

it is an explanation of the doctrine of Brahman. The another name of it is 'Sariraka Sutra' as it also gives an exposition of the self bounded in the Sarira or body. 

Badarayana is regarded as the author of Brahma sutra. It begins with the sutra (1,1,1.). Athato Brahmagijnasā (Now, therefore the inquiry into Brahman) and ends with the sutra (iv. 4.22) "Anavṛttih āadāt anavṛttih āadāt (No return, so the scriptures declares)."  

The vedānta sutra consists of four books and each book consists of four chapters. The first book explains Brahman as the only reality. It is also an explanation of the nature of Brahman, its relation to the world and the individual soul. The second book meets various objections raised against its view and also give reply and solutions to them. The third one discusses the various ways and means of attaining Brahma-vidyā. And the fourth and the last book gives an explanation of the fruit of Brahma-vidyā. 

There are many commentators on the vedānta sutra, who try to colour the sūtras on their own choice. Śāṅkara has wrote the direct commentary on Brahma sūtra which is known as 'Brahmagūtrabhāṣya'. It is the most authoritative work of Śāṅkara which is regarded as the most influential work in Indian philosophy than any other. Its 

main importance is the fact that Śaṅkara has made an Introduction in the Brahmanūṭrābhāṣya which is known as 'Adhyāsabhāṣya'. It is Śaṅkara, who clearly explains that superimposition is a fact which happen to us in our daily life, which is innate (naisargika) to the human nature. And for this innate ignorance only that there arises the world-appearance in place of Brahman.

There are several interpretation of the word 'atha' by different commentators. Śaṅkara considers that 'atha' mean after acquiring the four sādhanaś (requisite), which are indispensable for the study of vedānta. According to Śaṅkara, "the inquiry into Brahman should invariably follow the acquisition of the four requisites, whether the aspirants are householders or sannyāsins or those who do not belong to any āśrama or are even devas".1 Thus in his commentary on the first sūtra of the vedānta sūtra, he explains four conditions, essential for the student of vedānta, which are known as the 'four-fold-aid' (Sādhana-Catustaya).

The first condition is the knowledge of the distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal. 'Nityānityavastuvivikṣa'. By eternal substance is meant Brahman and by non-eternal means everything else. Thus one

should realize that the self alone is real and everything else is transitory and perishable. According to Sadananda, "this no doubt is the result of Brahma-realisation and cannot therefore be an aid to it. But it is possible, even before such realisation, to feel convinced in general that there are things of permanent as opposed to those of provisional value and that it is former alone that matter in the end*. Thus this first condition implies that the other three conditions naturally follows from it.

The second condition is the absence of desire for securing happiness or avoiding pain. Thus it is mention by Sadananda as "Renunciation of the enjoyment of reward here and in the other world, "iha-āmū-trārtha-phalabhoga-virāga". (Vedānta-Sāra). It is thus the detachment from all selfish ends and an attainment of Nīkāmakarma.

Thirdly, the mūmukṣu must have self control; control over the senses as well as the mind. There are six means, which an aspirant must attained. They are, ānāma and dāma respectively, represent the control of the mind and the senses. The next one is Uparati which is, renunciation in spirit; the next one Titikṣā, means resignation and then Sarādhi, means concentration and the last of them is śraddhā i.e. the belief in the teaching imparted.

The fourth and the last requirement for the study of the Vedanta, Sankara and Sadananda called as mumukṣhvatvam i.e. "the longing for liberation. There arises a longing, a desire for self-realisation and due to this inner urge, one can attain the state of perfect knowledge. This is beautifully expressed in the Brh Up. 1.3.28. as to pass "from the non-existent to the existent, from darkness to light, from death to immortality."

IV. The Bhagavadgītā:

The Bhagavadgītā literally means "The Lord's song". It is the most popular and sacred book of the Hindus and it is contained in the Bhīṣmaparva of the Mahabharata, the greatest Sanskrit epic, written by Vyāsa. It is the philosophical discourse of Lord Kṛṣṇa to persuade the reluctant Arjuna to fight.

The Bhagavadgītā occupies an important place in the religious philosophy of the Hindus. The main aim of the Gītā is not to discuss the metaphysical teaching, but to adopt the metaphysics in the daily life of man, so that the common people also have an idea about the metaphysical teaching of the Upaniṣads.

The central teaching of the Gita is that "of the unreal there is no being, and of the real there is no non-being". The Soul is indestructible (avinâshī), eternal (nitya), unborn (aja), undiminishing (avyaya), all-pervasive (Sarva-gata), immovable (achala), ancient (saṅkātana), unmanifest (avyakta) unthinkable (achintya) and immutable (avikārya). Thus the soul is immortal. Only the body is perishable. When a man die, it is only his body, that is destroyed and not the soul. The soul take birth again due to its accumulated law of karma. "Just as a person casts off worn out garments and put on the new ones. So does the soul cast off worn-out bodies and enters into another that are new".

The Gita represents a synthesis of Jñāna,Karma Bhaktimārga for the attainment of Mokṣa. For the Gita, self-realisation is possible only through knowledge. In the karmayoga, Gita gives importance on Nīkāma karma which implies the giving up of all interest, desire, fruit, attachment towards the fruit or result of action. Thus Nīkāma karma means not for renunciation of action, but for renunciation in action. As without knowledge, renunciation of desire and attachment is not possible, so Jñāna and karma

2. ibid. P. 33.
are not opposed to each other, rather they are necessary for each other. As C.D. Sharma says, "Only a true jñāni can perform niśkāma karma".1 Again bhakti is also related with knowledge. Bhakti arises due to the niśkāma karma. In the highest stage of bhakti, there is a feeling of spiritual ecstasy, where the devotee feels his oneness with God. The Lord says, "Merge thy mind in Me, by My devotee, postulate thee My word, thou art dear to Me. Abandoning all dharmas come upto Me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins".2 Thus we see in the Gīta that, "Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti are giving equal importance for the realisation of Mokṣa. "Without jñāna, liberation is impossible and so is detachment or renunciation in action and so is disinterested devotion to God".3

The philosophy of Bhāgavadgīta is highly influenced by Upaniṣads. The traditional account of the relation between the Gīta and the Upaniṣad is contained in the popular and famous quotation that, "the Upaniṣads are the cows, Kṛiṣṇa is the milker, Arjuna the calf, and the nectar-like Gīta is the excellent milk".4 There is

1. Ibid. P. 35.
2. Ibid. P. 37.
3. Ibid. P. 37.
evidence of direct influence of Upaniṣads on the Bhāgavad-gītā. Thus the idea of Saguna and Nirguna Brahman, comes from Upaniṣads. Again Bhakti is a direct development in the Upāsanā of the Upaniṣads. The disinterested action (Niğkāma karma) which is so clearly explained in the Gītā is also a direct influence of Upaniṣads. The ultimate reality as neither sat, nor asat, neither being nor non-being of Gītā, which is called as "Sadāsadvilakṣana" by Advaita vedānta is also comes from Upaniṣads. According to Gītā, it is the Nirguna Brahman that appears as Saguna under the influence of māyā. There are several reference of māyā in the Gītā, though under the theistic influence, it appears as a power of God.

Thus from all these, it is clear that the fundamental idea of Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda is under the direct influence of Bhāgavadvgītā. There are other characteristics also, such as the state of Jīvamukti through knowledge, which is attainable even in the embodied state, are also under the direct influence of Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara takes Bhāgavadvgītā as an important base of his Advaitavāda. He wrote a commentary on it, known as Bhāgadvgītā-bhāṣya.

V. Influence of Gaudapāda on Śaṅkara:

So far we have discussed that the idea of Advaita vedānta comes from the early Indian philosophical literature. The Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Bhāgavadgītā, prepare the very ground of Vedānta philosophy in general, from which we have found various schools of Vedānta philosophy. Now, the credit of first systematic expounder of Advaita philosophy goes to Gaudapāda only. Gaudapāda was the first, who systematically developed the Advaita vedānta under the idea of Upaniṣads.

As tradition says, Gaudapāda was the teacher of Govindapāda, who was the teacher of Śaṅkara, and there is evidence of Śaṅkara as respecting Gaudapāda as his 'grand-teacher'. Śaṅkara's disciple Sureswara also regarded him as the 'Revered Gauda'.

The famous work of Gaudapāda is the Māṇḍukya-kārikā or the Gaudapāda-kārikā, which is also known as Āgama-shāstra and it is regarded as the first available systematic work on Advaita-vedānta. As says by S.Radhakrishnan, the most important topic on which the Advaita philosophy is based, such as, "the order of reality, the identity of Brahman and Ātman, Māyā, the inapplicability of causation to ultimate reality, jñāna or wisdom as the

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direct means of mokṣa or freedom, and the inconceivability of absolute nothing, are set forth in the Kārikā. The Kārikā has four chapters, each contributing to the development of Advaita vedānta. The first chapter is called Āgama prakarana. It explains the ultimate reality as non-dual or Turīya on the basis of Upaniṣads. The second is called Vaisheshika prakarana, where the illusory character of the world and its duality which is called 'māyā mātraṁ' is explained. The third chapter is Advaita prakarana, it proves the non-illusoriness of Advaita philosophy which is known as Ajātivāda. In the last part, known as Ālaya āyati, explains the nature of pure consciousness and also the self-contradictory nature of other schools of philosophy. All the four chapters are inter-related and they explain the Advaita view of philosophy from different angles. Now, as we will discuss about Gaudapāda’s philosophy in the third chapter, so we are not going into the details of Gaudapāda here.

It may be pointed out that Gaudapāda’s philosophy is contemporary to Buddhists philosophy. So naturally there is an influence of Buddhism on Advaita vedānta. There are plenty of evidences, which prove that Gaudapāda accepts the Buddhistic doctrine, which he found not in

conflict with his Advaitavada. As Radhakrishnan says, "To the Buddhists he appealed on the ground that his view did not depend on any theological text or revelation. To the Orthodox Hindu he said that it had the sanction of authority also. His liberal views enables him to accept doctrines associated with Buddhism and adjust them to the Advaita design".

Śaṅkara, the great follower of Gauḍapāda, is highly influenced by his teachings of Advaitavāda. Śaṅkara himself never claimed the credit of creating a totally new theory of philosophy. He builds his Advaitavāda on the foundation of the prasthānatrayas, under the influence of Gauḍapāda, which is regarded as the system-builder of Advaitavāda.

There are several commentators, as a result of which the different systems of Vedānta philosophy come into existence. Thus after Gauḍapāda, we have Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbārka. Śaṅkara commented upon all the principal ten Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtra and the Bhāgavadgīta and a lot of independent works. Śaṅkara's philosophy, as we know is Advaitavāda. Rāmānuja does not wrote commentary on Upaniṣads but he wrote on Brahma-sūtra and the Bhāgavadgīta. Rāmānuja's philosophy is known as

1. ibid. P. 453.
Visistadvaitavāda. Madhva commented upon all the three Prasthānas and even upon the first forty verses of Ṛgveda. His philosophy is unqualified dualism *Dvaitavāda; in which he admits the dualism between God and self, between God and prakṛti and between one jīva and another. Again Nimbārka wrote a brief commentary on the Brahma sūtra and an independent work Daśāṅgloka. According to Nimbārka, the soul the world and God are neither absolutely identical nor absolutely distinct. His philosophy is known as Dvaitadvaitavāda. Vallabha, another vedāntist did not comment on anything, rather he wrote the independent work on vedānta. His view is known as Sudhadvaitavāda, in which he regards that Brahman is the only reality but he also admits that the world is subtly Brahman. All these different schools have many followers and they have contributed to their respective doctrines and thus creating a big family of vedānta philosophy as a whole.

Thus the system of the Advaita vedānta, which is directly based on the Upaniṣads, is diversified as the years rolled by. But in spite of threats to its cogency from dualism or pluralism - Saṅkara's philosophy has emerged almost unscathed. His philosophy is a unique one. And the concept of ignorance (māyā) plays a crucial role in it. In the following chapter, we will first try to
understand the possibility of Appearance, for it is in this way that Śaṅkara himself deals with the problem in his commentary of the Brahmasūtra.