Whether orthodox or heterodox, all the spiritualistic schools of philosophy in India, are agreed on their starting point, namely that life in this world is misery to which the individual is somehow bound. The doctrine of samsāra and bandha is a particular application of the more general theory of karma. The idea of karma, it would seem, had first crystal-lized at the time of the earliest Upaniṣads, and we know for sure that the same trends gave rise to Buddhism and Jainism which insist on the reality of samsāra and bondage with even greater urgency. If the materialist Cārvākas flung any bomb-shells against the structure, they have certainly not come down to us. ¹ And so the law of karma and the grip of bondage remained unchallenged, and to that extent unexplained. No system, for instance, would attempt a solution as to why the bondage had started and when. The only answer, repeated system after system, is that the process is without a beginning. It is the 'Ultima Thule' beyond which one cannot go.

However the manner in which the 'self' is affected by the bondage, and the nature of the bondage itself may be explained in more ways than one. Thus Buddhism ascribes all misery to avidya or ignorance which itself is beginningless. The cycle of existence, with all the sorrow it implies must be considered

¹. The Cārvākas fought mightily against the belief in after-life, rebirth, virtue and vice, merit and demerit as well as any pessimism concerning life on earth. Who but a fool would abstain from fish because there are bones in it? Who but a dolt would cease from sowing grain because the wild beasts might trample on it? It would be certainly surprising, then, if these iconoclasts spared the law of Karma or of bondage. Cf. Sarva-darsana-sangraha, Ch.I
its fructification. But avidya too, in its turn, is determined by other factors. It may be said that avidya came into being through asavas or depravities, and that it will be destroyed through the destruction of asavas.\textsuperscript{2} The Jainas on the other hand believe that the jīva, infinite consciousness and bliss by nature is smeared over and covered by the fine, sub-atomic karma particles. It is this veneer of Karma that is the cause of births and rebirths, pain and suffering, delusion and uncertainty.\textsuperscript{3}

According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas the bondage of the soul to a world full of sorrow is due to false knowledge—mithyā-jñāna. The jīva erroneously identifies the body, senses, manas, feelings and knowledge with his own self while in reality they are different. As the Sāṅkhyaśas see it, the purusas have been somehow caught in prakṛti's web. We do not know the ultimate cause of the eternal entanglement. Immediately of course, it is aviveka on the part of purusa that brings the two together. It is certain that if the bondage had a beginning, it would imply that the purusas were once free. And that again would mean the possibility of a second bondage for the released. Also, we are unable to say what caused avidya. Hence avidya and bondage are without a beginning, though they may have an end.\textsuperscript{4}

We may recall how Śāṅkara explains his idea of māyā. Avidya is intimately connected with māyā in that the world of experience is to be traced to the working of avidya. It is avidya again that brings about our dream life. It is the source of ignorance, sin and misery. Some of the Advaitins like Sarvajñātmamuni hold that the locus of avidya is Brahman. But because Brahman's nature as eternal light would repel any

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Dasg. I, p.99
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp.189s.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p.291
\end{itemize}

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avidya, others like Vācaspati maintain that the individual is the locus. But the individual presupposes avidyā as the cause of individuation as much as avidyā presupposes the individual to whom it belongs. Hence Śaṅkara attempts to escape the dilemma by declaring avidyā to be inexplicable and eternal. If this sounds like an insult to human reason, the monist is ready with an answer: durghatatvam avidyāyā bhūṣaṇam na duṣaṇam.5

It is Karma and avidyā that has encompassed the downfall and embodiment of the jīva, as Rāmānuja believes. The particular body that a jīva may possess today is due mostly to his past deeds. His avidyā makes him think that instead of being a mode of God he is a product of nature, and convinces him that the qualities of the body are his own, the fleeting pleasures of the world are everlasting bliss. Altogether it is a degradation for the jīva to be connected with the body.6

Madhva cites a number of scriptural passages in order to show how liberation and what precedes it depends solely on God's favour. To the ignorant Viṣṇu gives knowledge; to the knowing release; to the released bliss.7 The texts are clear. Unless therefore we tamper with them or compromise their import we cannot regard our bondage less than real. If the bondage were illusory how could release from it be real? At any rate there is perception to repudiate any suggestion of irreality of the bondage. And then also it has been shown already how the monist finds himself enmeshed in contradictions when he attempts to prove the reality of illusion.8

6. Iph., p.703
7. ajñānāṁ jñānādāṁ viṣṇur jñānāṁ mokṣadaśca saḥ/ ānanda-daśca muktānāṁ sa evaiko janārdanaḥ/—A.V. I 1, 15
8. Cf. supra, pp.34 ss
The jīva is eternal, matter is eternal and the involvement of the jīva with matter is eternal. It is manas we might remember, that forms the link between the jīva and his body. Itself being constituted by the three guṇas, manas is at the same time the depository of saṃskāras and remains so till the release. It is manas with its saṃskāras that explains the continuation of the jīva's embodiment not only generation after generation, but aeon after aeon as well.9

But this gives us only the mechanism of bondage. What does bondage itself ultimately consist in? In keeping with the other schools of Vedānta Madhva asserts: pramādātmakatvāt bandhasya—bondage is in the nature of ignorance.10 The ignorance, however, does not belong to the essence of the jīva.11 And yet it is potent in its mischief—in veiling on the one hand the qualities of the jīva himself, and on the other the true nature of God.12 However, such a veiling should seem rather strange, coming as it is from something material and inert (jaḍa). As a matter of fact, Madhva himself has taken exception to a similar explanation put forward by the Nimbārka-sākṣa who had thought that kāraṇa and adhyāta between them would provide an adequate answer. So it becomes inevitable that if the mechanism is to work, God himself must step in with His efficacious will.13 Given the theistic position of the system in general it is certainly unfair to see in such a view any sign of Deus ex machina. Madhva has made himself quite clear elsewhere that every reality depends on divine will.

9. Vide note 19 (p.49)
10. B.S.Bh. I 1, 17
11. Balamāṇanda ojaśca saho jñānamanākulam/ sva-rūpānyeva jīvasya—B.S.Bh. II 3, 31
12. Svagunācchādiñāt tvekā paramācchādikā'parā/—Bh.T. X 81, 13
13. ata evesvārāt phalam bhavati/ na hycetmanasya svataḥ pravrāttiruyjyate/—B.S.Bh. III 2, 39
not only for its being, but also for its becoming and acting. There is every cogency then in applying such a general principle to the present case where an inert principle like ignorance must obscure the effulgent nature of the jīva—a task much too far beyond it. The śrutī itself points to the same conclusion when it equates māyā with the mysterious will of God.14 And finally such a position should dovetail with the saviśeṣa and asvatantra nature of the jīva. For while any veiling would be incompatible with the infinite and attributeless nature of Brahman in the Advaita, no such difficulty could be found in the case of our jīva who is finite and full of attributes.15

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14. "māyām tu prakṛtim vidyāhmāyanam tu māheśvaram," "mahāmayetyavidyeyeti nityātmohani ca/ prakṛtirvāsanetyevam taveccā'ṇanta kathyate"—B.S. Bh. I 4, 25

15. More in the Estimate: ¶² 2/8