CHAPTER II

THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF

ADVAITA DARŚANA

India occupies a unique position in the field of philosophy. In India, philosophy is not divorced from religion. So also in this country, we find opposing currents in every field of human activity. As observed by Nataraja Guru, "the primary questions of all philosophies are: who am I? How does this phenomenal world come about? From most ancient times, bold speculation has gone on the world over to reveal the mystery. The fundamental questions confronting men were: How does matter interact with spirit? How are body and mind articulated?" Dr. Nataraja Guru said that "India is a land of contradiction, skepticism and belief, reason and sentiment like bright and dark strands, have crossed over from one side to the other, changing between what was considered orthodox at one time into heterodox at another time, and so on, many times over, during
the long history of Indian thought". Advaita philosophy has however withstood these currents and cross currents and survived even the most advanced scientific developments.

The search for the beginning of Advaita philosophy would take us down the long corridors of time, to the distant days of the Vedas and Upanisads. Though the Upanisads form the basic record, slight glimpses of philosophy could be discovered in the hymns of Rgveda, which is perhaps the world’s oldest scripture. In the Āryan’s conception of Gods behind nature, it is a quest after unity among the Gods and his monotheistic tendencies, his search for a Supreme God, his ultimately rising to the transcendental reality beyond all limitations, leading him to the concept of Supreme Reality. It is this indefinable principle that constitutes the beginning of Advaita or Monism.

Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad foreshadows the eventual development of this concept.

---

1 VRR., P.2
2 Br.U., 3.7.15. yah sarveṣu bhūteṣu tīṣṭhan, sarvebhyo bhūtebhīyoantaraṇ, yam sarvāṇi bhūtāni na viduḥ, yasya sarvaṇi bhūtāni śārintam, yah sarvāṇi bhūtāni antaraḥ yamayati, eṣa te śītaṁ antaryāmi amṛtaḥ ityadhībhūtān, atha adhyātmaṁ.
The central theme of the *Upaniṣads* is to seek unity in the midst of diversity. ‘What is that by knowing which every thing in this Universe is known?’ asks the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*.

The answer to this question is found in the concept of God or *Brahman*, ('the Greatest') as the ultimate cause of the Universe, “from whom indeed these beings are born, through whom they live, and unto whom they return and merge in”. Since the effect is not different from the cause, it is possible to know the Universe by knowing *Brahman*, “as by knowing one lump of clay, all that is made of clay is known, for the modification is but an effort of speech, a name and the only reality in it is clay.”

Though the universe is declared to have come out of *Brahman*, the human soul or *Ātman*, which is really the starting point of all our enquiry, is here stated to be an emanation from Him. *The Upaniṣads* always speak of it as an eternal verity. It is
never an effect, never a part of the Universe, but is co-existent with *Brahman* Himself. “The intelligent one is never born nor dies, it is neither produced from anything nor does it produce anything; it is birth less, eternal, un-decaying and ancient. It does not die with the death of the body”. Naturally, the question of its emanation to *Brahman* arises. And it is here that difficulties present themselves. For the *Upaniṣads* abound in statements that are apparently contradictory in their nature. Some describe the individual Self as essentially different from *Brahman*. *Brahman* is omnipresent and omniscient, but the individual Self has limited power and knowledge; *Brahman* is all pervading, but individual Self is confined to the body and goes from one world to another; *Brahman* is Absolute Bliss, but the individual Self is sometimes happy and sometimes miserable; *Brahman* is the goal, but the individual Self is the seeker; and so on. There are other texts that describe the essential identity of the two. In between these two extreme positions, there are varieties of other views. But all these divergent conceptions are based on the *Upaniṣads*. Indian

---

6 Ka.U.,12.18.  

na jayate mriyate va vipascin nāyam kutascin na babhūva kaścit ,  
ajo nityah śāśvatoynam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śāfere
Philosophy contains the earliest thoughts that were handed down from mouth to ear for over two thousand years. Indian philosophy is not easy to expound. It is the complex heritage of uninterrupted thinking and spiritual endeavour carried on by the sages of India down the centuries. These savants who, besides being intellectual giants, have through meditation and spiritual experience realised great truths and have systematised them on the basis of logic and reasoning. In order to keep alive the Advaitic tradition for the benefit of posterity, many expounders of Advaita have written treatises on Advaita Vedānta. Śankarācāya is the great exponent of the identity between Ātman and Brahman, the doctrine of Advaitavāda or Monism.

Of the diametrically opposite view, Dvaitavāda or Dualism, which holds the two entities to be eternally separate, we may take Madvācārya as the typical representative. Among the upholders of intermediate positions, Rāmānujācārya stands prominent with his Viśiṣṭadvaitavāda or Qualified Monism. One point, however, we must bear in mind in connection with

---

7 RAV, Pp. 1-2
these different schools of thought. None of the great men chiefly associated with them were the originators of these schools. They were merely the outstanding spokesmen of those systems, which had been traditionally handed down from time immemorial in India.

As mentioned by Surendra Nath Dasgupta in his monumental treatise on ‘The History of Indian Philosophy’, “The earliest philosophic literature in India is the Vedas, Brahmanaś, Aranyakās, and the Upaniṣads”. Hindu religious thoughts originally comprised of six darśanas – the Sāmkhya, the Yoga, the Nyāya, the Vyśeṣika, the Mimāmsa and the Vedānta. The Bhagavad Gītā, which followed, represented the latest masterpiece of Hindu religious thoughts. The precise period during which Vedas came into existence is before recorded history. According to Max Muller, the eminent German Philosopher who had a deep insight into the Indian Philosophical thoughts, Vedas came into existence around 1200 B.C. According to Balagangadhara Tilak, the period is even earlier around 4000 B.C.
2.1 The Basic Insights of the Vedas.

Dr. Raimando Panicker in his book, 'Vedic Experience', introducing the Nāṣadiya Sūkta, states:- “what is fascinating about the experience of the Vedic seers is not only that they have dared to explore the outer space of being and existence, piercing the outskirts of reality, exploring the boundaries of the universe, describing Being and its universal laws, but that they have also undertaken the risky and intriguing adventure of going beyond and piercing the Being barrier so as to float in utter nothingness, so to speak, and discover that Non-being is only the outer atmosphere of Being, its protective veil. They plunge thus into a darkness enwrapped by darkness, into the Beyond from which there is no return, into that Prelude of Existence in which there is neither Being nor Non-being, neither God nor Gods, nor creature of any type; the traveller himself is volatilised, has disappeared. Creation is the act by which God, or whatever name we may choose to express the Ultimate, affirms himself not only vis-à-vis the world, thus created, but also vis-à-vis himself, for he certainly was neither creator before creation or God for himself. The Vedic seers make the staggering claim of entering into that enclosure
where God is not yet God, where God is thus unknown to Himself, and, not being creator, is “nothing”. Without this perspective, we may fail to grasp the Vedic message.  

2.2 Definition of Veda

The *Veda* is usually defined as that source from which we gain knowledge about entities, which cannot be known through perception (*Pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*)

*pratyakṣenānumitya yastupāyo na vidyate*

*ētam vidanti vedena tasmād vedasya vedata.*

In his famous Malayalam work, *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam*, the Guru says:-

*anubhavamādiyil onnirikkil allā-

tanumitiyillitu munnamakṣiyāle*

*anubhaviyātatukoṇṭu dharmmiyunte -

nnanumitiyāl arivilariṇiṇiṭeṇam*  

---

8 VE., P.50
9 ĀŚ., 31 Without prior experience, inference there is none. The agent of overt expression not being experienced. By the senses, the presence of such. By inference cannot be known, do mark (Trans. by Dr. Nataraja Guru)
Another popular definition of the Veda is that it teaches about transcendental values. It is well known that Ontology and Epistemology are used in the service of Axiology in the Indian tradition.

2.3 The Value Systems of the Veda

According to Indian axiology, values are classified as kāma, artha, dharma and mōkṣa. The first two are empirical values and the last two are trans-empirical. Veda deals with these transcendental values i.e. dharma and mōkṣa - dharmabrahmanī vedaika veda.¹⁰

In fact, the whole of the darśanas in India are Axiological or value oriented systems. In the Vedic context, the term dharma is used in a narrow sense i.e. performance of various Vedic rituals.

The spirituality of the early Vedic Indians was Yajña-centric. In the Yajña, devatās were invoked by mantrās and oblations offered to them in the ritual fire. The fire represented the agnidevata and agni was supposed to be the carrier of the

¹⁰ Purvamāmaśa Sūtra – Jaimini
oblations to the devatās concerned. During the span of the Vedic period, usually taken to be from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C., there has been an evolution in the practice of spirituality. In the first phase, karma i.e., Vedic ritual was emphasized. In the second phase, the vedic ritual was interiorised into meditation or upāsana. In the last phase, karma and upāsana were left behind and the emphasis was on jñāna. This process of interiorisation from karma to jñāna was well known to the Guru. The last phase mentioned above, dealing with jñāna, is embodied in the last portion of the Vedas known as the Upaniṣads. This knowledge was considered secret and was imparted to only qualified disciples. This last portion came to be known as Vedānta. This term has three meanings:

1) Literally the last portion of the Veda
2) The real purpose of the Veda and
3) The end of ordinary knowledge.

The Guru is not interested in the earlier portion namely the karma-kāṇḍa. He is primarily interested in Vedānta. So the Guru comes in the line of vedāntic teachers. He has explicitly stated this in Ātmopadeśasatakam:-
tribhuvana sīma katānnu tīṇniviṁṇum
tripūtī muṭiṁṇu teṭiṁṇūtunna dipam
kapatayatikku karasthamākuvīle-
nupaniṣaduktirahasyamōrtitēṇam'"'

That light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns
Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds,
Remember, that it will never come within the reach
Of a hermit untrue, as Upaniṣadic secret lore declares.12

In his 'Jananī Navaratnamaṇḍjari', he states that one
who has known the Mother Goddess need not bother about the
vedic rituals13. Similarly it is well known that the early vedic
man was bothered about devas and pitrs (devayāna and
pitryāna). The Guru says:-

"luptapindapitrpratikriya
ceivatinnu mitonninum
kliptamillayenikk̄ tavaka
pādasevanamenniye.14

11 AS., 14
12 Trans. By Dr. Nataraja Guru
13 JN., 2, "illāraṇamkriyaka".
14 Śa.S., 9
The Guru here says that worship of the ancestors is not necessary. Worship of the feet of Lord Subrahmanya alone is enough.

2.4 *Vedānta* as a Philosophical System

The *Vedānta* discussed above later became an organised body of knowledge and found an important place in the six *darśanās* of India. In fact the development of *Vedānta* made the other *darśanās* look insignificant. One can even say that *Vedānta* became almost the official *darśana* of Hindus.

But this later *Vedānta* was based not merely on the *Upaniṣads* but also on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Brahmasūtras*. The *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras* constitute the triple canonical texts of *Vedānta*. The Guru had also accepted these canonical texts. These texts are usually referred to as *Prasthānatraya* or *Prasthānatrayi*. In fact, the Guru has written a short *Brahma Sūtra* called ‘*Vedānta Sūtras*’. Muni Nārāyaṇa Prasad, who has written a Malayalam commentary on the ‘*Vedānta Sūtras*’, says that “While Bādarāyaṇa has written his sūtras in the puranic style, the Guru
has adopted a modern scientific approach.15 The *Brahma Sūtras* have given rise to different interpretations. The Guru has resolved the confusion by writing his *Vedānta Sūtras*. Bādarāyaṇa has challenged the orthodox schools of philosophy and established *Advaita Vedānta*, whereas the Guru has given the essence of the *Vedānta* straight away.

2.5 *Vedic Cosmogony*

The first point that attracts our attention is how surprisingly close to nature the *Vedic* Gods are. For example, there is absolutely no doubt concerning what constitutes the basis in the nature of *Agni* and *Parjanya*. They are Gods and at the same time natural objects, viz. ‘fire’ and ‘cloud’. There are other Gods like *Āświns* and *Indra* whose identities are not so transparent, but we have to remember that the prevailing type of *Vedic* Gods is one of incomplete personalisation. This is a remarkable feature seeing how far removed, comparatively speaking, *Vedic* religion is from its source. It is commonly described as ‘arrested anthropomorphism’. But the expression is

---

15 Vedanta Sutras trans by Muni Narayana Prasad (preface)
apt to suggest that the Vedic concept of divinity lacks a desirable feature, viz. complete personification, while in reality it points to an excellence of frame of mind in the Vedic Āryan, highly favourable to philosophic speculation. It may be that the particularly impressive features of nature in India, as has been suggested, explain this 'un-forgetting adherence' to it; but it is at least as much the result of the philosophic bend of the Indian mind. The Vedic Āryan's interest in speculation was so deep and his sense of the mystery surrounding the Ultimate was so keen that he kept before him un-obscured the natural phenomena, which he was trying to understand until he arrived at a satisfying solution. This characteristic signifies a passion for truth and accounts not only for the profundity of Indian philosophic investigation, but also for the great variety of the solutions, it offers to philosophical problems.

2.6 Monotheism and Monism in the Vedas

To reduce the many devatās of early mythology to one is to elevate the most imposing of them to the rank of the Supreme. Varuṇa indeed at one time and Indra at another were
of a monotheistic creed in this sense, but neither did in fact become the Supreme God conceived definitely as a personality. So monotheism in the ordinary sense of the term proved abortive in the *vedic* period. The unity of godhead came to be sought after in a different manner then, and attempts were made to discover not one god above other gods but rather the common power that work behind them all. The basis of even this 'philosophic monotheism', as it may be termed, can be noticed in the early *mantrās*, for the vedic poets couple the names of two deities like *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* for example and address them as if they were one. It is the outcome of this tendency that we find expressed in passage of a relatively later date like the following: "What is but one, wise people call by different names as *Agni*, *Yama* and *Mātarīśvan". The same is the significance also, no doubt, of the refrain of another hymn of the *Rg.Veda* - *Mahat devānasm asuratvam ekam*: “The worshipful divinity of the Gods is one”. Though thus convinced that there is but one ultimate cause, the *Vedic* Indian felt perplexed as regards what its exact nature might be. Arriving at unity, a more abstract way was to select some

---

16 *Rg. V. I. 164. 46*
distinguishing feature of divinity—"a predicate of several Gods"—
to personify it and regard it as the Supreme God. Thus, the word
\textit{viśvakarman}, which means ‘maker of everything’, appears as a
descriptive epithet of \textit{Indra} and the Sun. But later it ceases to be
used as an adjective and becomes installed as ‘God above all Gods.’
The same thing happens in the case of several other epithets.

Among the Gods who became pre-eminent during this
long period, is that of \textit{Prajāpati} ‘Father God’, the most important
of them all, who is the personification of the creative power of
nature. This God occupies the first place in the \textit{Brāhmaṇas}. But
he ceases to appeal to the philosophically fastidious \textit{vedic} Āryans
and yields place in course of time, to other principles like \textit{prāṇa}
the maker and destroyer of all.\textsuperscript{17}

There is a higher conception of unity, viz. Monism,
which traces the whole of existence to a single source. It is fully
worked out in the \textit{Upaniṣads} but is foreshadowed in the literature
of \textit{Vedas}. One of its most notable expressions is found in a
passage of the \textit{Rg. Veda} where Goddess \textit{Aditi} (the Boundless) is

\textsuperscript{17} OIP, P. 41
defined with all gods and all men, with the sky and air – in fact with 'whatever has been or whatever shall be.' The central point of the pantheistic doctrine is to deny the difference between God and Nature. God is conceived here not as transcending Nature but as immanent in it. The world is not produced from God but is itself God."

2.7 Monism in the Upaniṣads

The genesis of Advaita Vedānta as a philosophical doctrine in any event is traceable to the Upaniṣads. The Brahmasūtra and Bhagavad Gītā have also contributed to the evolution of this doctrine. Various commentators like Śankara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha have interpreted those monumental work each in his own way. The famous orientalist Paul Deusen has observed that the sparks of philosophic light appearing in the Rg.veda shine out brighter and brighter until at last in the Upaniṣads they burst into bright flame, which is able to light and warm us today. Another German philosopher Schopenheur who read a translation of ten

---

18 Rg.V., 1.89. 10
19 We are indebted to Prof. Hiriyyana for the above excellent summary from 'Outlines of Indian Philosophy'. We have quoted almost verbatim because we found we could not improve upon it.
Upaniṣads said, “From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise and the whole is preserved by a high and holy and earnest spirit. In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upaniṣads. It has been a solace of my life and will be a solace of my death.”

The Bhagavad Gītā derives its spiritual nature inspired from the Upaniṣads. The following invocation reveals this connection — “All the Upaniṣads are the cows, the son of the cowherd, Krishna, is the milker, Partha is his calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers and the supreme nectar known as ‘Gītā’ is the milk.”

The quintessence of Advaita as enshrined in the Upaniṣads was gathered for the first time by the great seer Gaudapāda and interpreted with rare vision and insight by his equally great disciple and follower Sāṅkarācārya. Advaita as a philosophic concept defies definition in positive terms. It is capable of definition only in negative terms. Advaita in its essence is a spiritual experience.
As observed by Śrī. Venkitarama Iyer "The goal to be reached by philosophical thinking is not merely the construction of a complete and consistent system which will explain in an intelligible manner all the facts of experience of life and as such it is a śāstra. Truth is not mere intellectual consistency or coherence with all aspects of experience but something to be felt and lived, something, which must permeate our whole being, something that must produce a new outlook or the world. It is therefore not a mere academic affair but an intensely practical discipline, which must give the right direction to our thought and deed. In short, it presupposes a special discipline, which will transform intellectual conviction into felt experience. Advaita Vedānta is intended to inculcate the identity between the Finite Self Īśva and the Infinite Self Brahman". 20

As already stated the main idea of Advaita is that the Ultimate and Absolute truth is the Individual Self, which is one, though appearing as many in different individuals. In fact, the world itself has no reality and no other truth to show than this individual Self. While other systems investigated the pramāṇā

---

only to examine how far they could determine the objective truth of things, *Vedānta* sought to reach beneath the surface of appearances and investigated the final and ultimate truth underlying the microcosm and the macrocosm. The famous instruction of Śvetaketu, “that thou art thou śvetaketu”\(^\text{21}\) symbolises the sum and substance of *Advaita*.

The *Mahāvākyās* of the *Upaniṣads* are really a aphorisms, which served to explain and illustrate the concept of *Advaita*. The *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* embodies in its opening verse the central theme of all the *Upaniṣads*, viz. the spiritual unity and solidarity of all existence.\(^\text{22}\) The *Kenopaniṣad* purifies man’s concept of Ultimate Reality by revealing its character as the eternal Self of man and the Self of the Universe.

The *Katha Upaniṣad*, constitutes a happy blend of deep mysticism and profound philosophy; it contains a clear exposition of *Vedānta* through the dialogue between Yama and Naciketa.

\(^{21}\) Ch.U., VI. 15. 3, *Tat satyam sat ātmā tat tvam asi*

\(^{22}\) Ṣa. U., I. *Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kimca jagatyām jagat*
The *Mundaka Upanisad* classifies all knowledge as *para* and *apara*, it treats the knowledge of many as *apara*, and proclaims that one knowledge as *para* by which the imperishable, changeless reality is realized. And the *Upanisad* sings in ecstasy the glorious vision of the One in the many. *Mandukya Upanisad* says, ‘*ayam âtmā brahmā*’- ‘Individual Self of man is *Brahman*. *Aitareya Upanisad* says, ‘*Prajñānam Brahma*, ‘*Brahman is pure consciousness*. *Taittirīya Upanisad* proclaims that ‘*brahmavidāpnōti param*’- ‘The knower of *Brahman* attains the Supreme.’

*Chāndogya- Upanisad* helps us to discriminate the reality of ‘being’ from the appearance of ‘becoming’. It sings in refrain the divinity of man -“*tat tvam asi*”- “That thou art”. *Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad* proclaims the divinity of man and the spiritual solidarity of the whole universe in *Brahman*–‘*aham brahmāsmi*’- ‘I am Brahman’.

“*Advaita Vedānta* is a theory of non-dualism based on the *Upanisad*. The cardinal tenets are
1) The real *Brahman* is one and is of the nature of Consciousness and Bliss.

2) *Māyā* the real appears as the world of plurality.

3) There is no difference between *Brahman* and Individual Self".23

2.8 Concept of *Brahman in Advaita*

The reality in *Advaita* is styled *Brahman* or *Ātman* according as we approach it from the objective or the subjective point of view. These words represent the two fundamental ideas in the *Upaniṣads*. Usually they are used as synonyms. Where a difference appears, *Brahman* is the older, less intelligible while *Ātman* is later and more significant. *Brahman* is the first principle as far as it is grasped in the Universe as the enduring self of the latter. In the *Upaniṣad*, the expression *Brahman* may be regarded as denoting that eternal reality which was intuited and expressed in the *Rg.veda* in such passages as *

\[ ekam sad viprāh bahudhā vadanti agnim yamam mātariśvānamāhuh. \]

24 \[ ānidavātam \]

---

23 RRAV, P.4.
24 R.g.V., I, 164,46.
Not only does Brahman denote the eternal Self or the reality of the external world but also the inner Self of man too, more often referred to as "Atman is Brahman."26

In the Upanishads, we come across a beautiful description of the Brahman; for instance, Taittiriya Upanisad Bhṛgu Valli begins with a pictorial scene in which Bhṛgu the son of Varuṇa, approached his father and said, "Venerable Sir, teach me Brahman." To this pertinent question, Varuṇa answered thus: "(Understand) food, vital breath (prāṇa), sight, hearing, mind, speech (as Brahman)". To him he said further "That verily from which beings are born, that by which those that are born live, into which they finally reach and merge - seek to know that. That is Brahman." Again, the same Upanisad says, "the knower of Brahman attains the Supreme."27 Realisation of Brahman is the ultimate goal of man's life. Human life is marred with miseries and so he tries to avoid them by attaining a state where even an

25 X,129,2.
26 Satapatha Brahmana., 10,6,3.,Ch.U.,III.14—sarvamkhalvidam brahma
   Br.U.,II,4,6- Idam sarvam,yad ayam ātma
   Br.U,IV,4,5- sa vā ayam ātma brahma.
27 Tai,U.,Brahmānanda Valli, Brahmaidāpnoti param.
iota of sadness is not existent. That state of existence is the realisation of Brahman, which is the embodiment of Bliss.

‘Happiness is Brahman’.$^{28}$

Knowledge is the boon bestowed by God to all living beings. Human beings are greatly blessed, as they are capable of realising themselves. Though man is blessed with the faculty of self-knowledge, he hardly attempts to gain it. His knowledge is scattered on various external worldly things. Hence, his life has become a tale of untold miseries. But once he looks inwardly and finds out the source of all external knowledge, he realizes the Brahman. "Knowledge is Brahman".$^{29}$

Who am I, is the question that has echoed and reached the heart of a seeker from the very inceptions of the history of man and the world. We can see in the Brahadāranyaka Upaniṣad the words of the seeker who found the answer to the question. The Upaniṣad candidly and undoubtedly says: ‘Aham Brahmāsmi’-

‘I am Brahman’.

$^{28}$ Ibid., ānando brahmaītī vyajānāt.
$^{29}$ A.U., 3.1.3.- Prajñānam Brahma.
‘Omiti Brahma’\textsuperscript{30}— \textit{Aum} is Brahman. This is meaningful in both the \textit{Vedic} and \textit{Vedântic} context. In the context of the \textit{Vedas} ritual permission is given for the commencement of every uttering of the word ‘\textit{Aum}’. The performer also begins it by uttering the same word. In this way, the sound \textit{Aum} touches every aspect of ritual. In the \textit{Vedântic} context, it means the entire world, consisting of both the observer and the observed and is one and the same as the Absolute. \textit{Aum} is the expression of the Absolute in the world of language.

“The Absolute is not a thing or an event. It gives rise to many relative notions and can be approached from many angles of vision. \textit{Brahman}, the absolute existence, knowledge and bliss, is real”\textsuperscript{31}. \textit{Brahman} is the Sanskrit word for the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality. “The absolute is one and eternal having no end or beginning and basically it is the nature of knowledge and bliss. The word \textit{Brahman} is derived from the root \textit{brh} which means to expand the entity whose greatness, magnitude or expansion cannot be limited or

\textsuperscript{30} Tai.U., Siksa Valli
\textsuperscript{31} RAV., P.35
measured. The word is used in the *Rg.veda* both in the masculine and neuter gender". 32 It shows that the Ultimate Reality has no limit in its extensiveness.

The origin of the term *Brahman* is not quite clear as Prof. Hiriyanna points out. Prof. Hiriyanna refers to one of the many explanations- "The word *Brahman* signifies 'Prayer'. Being derived from a root 'brh' meaning 'to grow or expand', it also stands for the power which of itself burst into utterance as prayer; and it is to this meaning that, according to some present-day scholars, we should trace the philosophic significance of the term, viz, the power or primary principle which spontaneously manifests itself as the universe." 33

"There is a second current of thought in the earlier literature which also we should take into account, if we are to understand clearly the monistic doctrine of the *Upaniṣads*. Its aim is the discovery, not of a cosmic principle - the source of the world as a whole - but of the psychic principle - the inner essence of man. Its origin should be ascribed to the belief that the

32 Ibid., P.21
33 EIP., P. 20
proper study of mankind is man. Man’s conception of himself is vague; and anything from the gross body to the subtlest principle underlying the individual existence may be signified by it. We have almost all the possible alternatives represented in Vedic literature, such as breath or life (prāṇa) and the senses (indriya).

The culmination of this inquiry is represented by Ātman or the Self which is sometimes described negatively by denying that it is breath, the senses, etc., which are all the not-self (Ānātman), and sometimes as the true subject which knows but can never be known -“the unseen seer, the unheard hearer and the un-thought thinker”. Upaniṣads bring out this uniqueness of the Self by stating paradoxically that it is known only to those that do not know it, meaning that, though intuitively realisable, it cannot be made the object of thought.

Thus, Brahman means the eternal principle as realised in the world as a whole; and Ātman, the inmost essence of one’s own self. These two conceptions- Brahman and Ātman - are the key conceptions of the Upaniṣadic thought. The explicit identification of Ātman and Brahman is specifically Upaniṣadic. The significance of this identification must be understood. The
following quote from Hiriyanna explains the position very clearly: “Brahman, as the ultimate cosmic principle or the source of the whole universe, is all-comprehensive. But such a principle need not be spiritual in its nature, and may as well be a material or physical entity. Further, an objective conception like the above is little more than a hypothesis to account for the origin of the universe; and there is nothing compelling us to regard it as actually existing, there being no logical absurdity in denying it. Some thinkers already seem to have done so in the Upaniṣadic period and maintained that “In the beginning, this world was just Non-Being”. The establishment of the spiritual character of this principle and the removal of the uncertainty about its existence are both accomplished by its identification with Ātman or the self. For, our own self is known to us to be spiritual and there is an intuitive obligation to recognise it, in some sense, as indubitable. If we start from the idea of the Self, instead of that of Brahman, we meet with a similar difficulty, for, the Self points to what is spiritual and is an incontrovertible certainty, it is, as known to us, necessarily limited in its nature. Whatever view we may take of its nature, it is determined on one side by
the world of nature, and on the other by the other Selves. It is this deficiency of finiteness that is made good by its identification with *Brahman* or the all-comprehensive first cause of the universe. The outcome of the identification therefore is that the ultimate reality, which may indifferently be termed as either *Brahman* or *Ātman*, is spiritual and that it accounts for not only all the Selves but also the whole of the physical universe. That is the meaning of Monism or the doctrine of unity as taught in the *Upaniṣads"*.34

*Brahman* is usually defined in two ways.

a) *Svarūpalaksana* (definition per proprium)

b) *Tatstalaksana* (definition per accident)

The *Svarūpalaksana* is given in the classical *Upaniṣads* in the phrase – *satyam jñānam ānantam*. In later *Upaniṣads* we come across the single term *saccidānanta* as defining *Brahman*. *Sat* means ‘being’ pointing to the positive character of *Brahman*, distinguishing it from non-being. But positive entity may be or may not be spiritual. The next term *cit*,

---

34 Ibid., pp.21-22
which means 'sentience', shows that it is spiritual. The last epithet 
äñanta, which stands for 'peace', indicates the unitary and all-
embracing character, in as much as variety is the source of all 
trouble and restlessness. The Brhadäraṇyka Upaniṣad says, "Fear 
arises from the other."35 Thus, the three epithets together signify 
that Brahman is the sole spiritual reality or the Absolute, which 
comprehends all being.

The Taṭastalaksana is based on the relation between this 
unitary principle with the world and the individual selves. There are 
several passages, which teach that the world is but an appearance, 
and that it has no actual place in the ultimate reality. There are 
other passages, not less numerous, which grant reality to the world, 
though, at the same time they maintain that it is never apart from 
Brahman or the Absolute. Śankarācārya examines both these 
positions in his numerous commentaries, and concludes that the 
former is the true teaching of the Upaniṣads. The later view, 
according to him, is put forward in them only tentatively. That is, it 
marks only the first step in the teaching; and the Upaniṣads finally 
retract this view, affirming in its place the other, viz. that Brahman 

35 Br.U.1.IV.2-Dvítyāt vai bhavam bhavati
and nothing besides it is truly real. Thus, the reality conceded to the world in such passages is not meant to be taken as ultimate. The concession is merely for adjusting the final teaching to common or empirical ways of thinking, which assume that diversity is quite real. It represents but the 'lower' truth (aparā vidyā) which serves as a stepping-stone to the comprehension of the 'higher' (parā vidyā) - a distinction which is sometimes explicitly endorsed in the Upaniṣads. As regards the individual self, Śankarācārya takes it to be trans-individual because of its adjuncts (parā) like the body which, as parts of the physical universe, are not real in the true sense of the term. Bhartrprapañca was anterior to Śankarācārya and he maintains that the self and the physical universe though finite and imperfect are real and they are not altogether different from Brahman. The whole universe, according to this view, actually emerges from Brahman and therefore necessarily partakes of its character of reality. The richness of its content indicates that Brahman, its source, is complex. But the complexity is sometimes manifest, and at other times latent. The distinction made here between a latent and a manifest stage of the universe implies
the dynamic character of ultimate reality, and the view is accordingly described as “the doctrine of self-evolving Brahman” (Brahmapariṇāma-vāda). This view also is Monistic.

Another approach to defining Brahman is by using three methods of description:

a) By way of negation (neti neti- Br. U). Brahman is indicated by negating all phenomena. In other words, Brahman transcends every phenomenon known to man.

b) By way of eminence - the qualities met with at the phenomenal level are raised to an infinite degree and applied across phrases like Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent etc. We cannot know Brahman by understanding any phenomenon. It is trans-phenomenon. We have to take a leap from the phenomenal level to the level of Brahman.

c) By way of causality- Brahman is looked upon as the total cause of the universe. It is both the instrumental and substantial cause – abhinna nimitta upādāna kārana in Advaita Vedānta.
In this connection, it is worthwhile to review briefly different theories of causation found in Indian philosophy. These have been neatly summarised by C.D Sharma - "The basic question involved in any theory of causation is: Does the effect pre-exist in its material cause? Those who answer this question in the negative are called Asatkāryavādins, while those who answer it in the affirmative are called satkāryavādins. According to the former, the effect (kārya) does not pre-exist (asat) in its material cause. Otherwise, there would be no sense in saying that it is produced or caused. If the pot already exists in the clay and curd in milk, then why should the potter exert himself in producing the pot out of the clay, and why should not the threads serve the purpose of the cloth and why should not milk taste like curd? Moreover, its production would be its repeated birth, which is nonsense. Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Hīnayāna Budhism, Materialism and some followers of Mīmāṃsaka believe in Astakāryavāda, which is also known as Ārambhavāda, i.e., the view that production is a new beginning. Materialism believes in svabhāvavāda, Hīnayāna Budhism in Anityaparamāṇuvada Nyāyavaiśeṣika, and some followers of Mīmāṃsa in Nityaparamāṇu kāraṇavāda. The satkāryavādins
believe that the effect is not a new creation, but only an explicit manifestation of that which was implicitly contained in its material cause. Here, another important question arises: is the effect a real transformation of an unreal appearance of its cause? Those who believe that the effect is a real transformation of its cause are called parināmavādins: while those who believe that it is an unreal appearance is called vivarthavādins. Sāmkhya yoga and Ramanuja believe in parināmavāda. The view of Sāmkhya yoga is called Prakṛti parināmavāda, while the view of Ramanuja is called Brahma parināmavāda. Śūnyavādins, Vijñānavādins and Śankara believe in Vivartavāda. Their views may be respectively called Śūnyavivarta vāda, Vijñānavivarta vāda. The view of Jains and of Kumarila may be called Sadasatkārya vāda because according to them, the effect is both real as well as unreal before its production — real as identical with the cause and unreal as a modal change thereof, though ultimately both incline towards parināmavāda. The pre-Śankara vedantin, Gaudapāda, altogether ignores theories of causation and introduces his theory of Ajātavāda or theory of non-creation.36

36 CSIP, P.151
2.9. Concept of Īśvara in Advaita

According to Śanakarācārya, the Ultimate Reality is non-dual. This non-dual Reality is Existence, Consciousness and Infinitude (*satyam-jñānam-anantam*). In other words, the *Brahman* of Śankaracārya is immutable, non-qualified and static forever.

According to Swami Vivekananda “God is both omnipotent and immanent - omnipotent, because of his inexhaustible power of creation of all forms and immanent because of his inherence in all created objects. Whenever God is viewed as the creator of the world, he has to be omnipotent because an all-powerful being alone can create this world so long as this world is taken to be real”.37

*Svetāśvatāropanisad* clearly described the immanence of God in the following verses:

“That God faces all the quarters of heaven. A foretime was he born and it is within the womb he has been born forth. He will be born. He stands opposite creatures, having his face in all directions.”38

---

38 Śve. U., II 16, Hume's Translation, P. 399

*es o ha devah pradīśo nu sarvah pārvo ha jātah sa vu garbhe antah sa eva jātah sa janisyamānah pratyājjanāstistati sarvatomukhah*
“The God who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees – to that God be adoration.”

The explanation of the multiple worlds, according to Śankaracārya’s Monism, demands further a relative Being, which alone can give birth to this changing world. “The changing universe cannot be traced to prakṛti which is unintelligent. While Brahman stands for being, prakṛti stands for becoming. The only way is through the recognition of a Saguna Brahman as Īśvara who combines within himself the nature of both being and becoming, the unattached Brahman and the unconscious prakṛti.”

The word Īśvara is derived from the root ‘īśa’, which has various meaning as to control, to command, to own, to posses. We must be aware of the subtle differences between Īśvara and Daivam. Both words are normally translated in English as God. But in Indian philosophical context, Īśvara is the controller and is superimposed by Māyā. Daivam, is the Absolute Reality, which has no attributes. Hence, in Indian thought, Daivam, is synonymous with the Reality.

---

39 Ibid., II. 17
40 IP., Vol. II. P.555
Modern life is replete with dual experiences such as frustration and hope, happiness and sorrow etc. Scientific and technological advancement has made man to think of himself as the controller of this universe. Here, we may recollect the expression of Nietzsche that ‘God is dead’. But the concept of God is a perennial solace to man from time immemorial. Hence, the various meanings of the word Īśvara or God is a subject of interest.

We have already found that the Sanskrit word for God is ‘Īśa’ meaning the one that controls or rules. Adding the suffix ‘vara’ (of the highest order), we have the word Īśvara for God conceived as the highest Being - the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the world. The Absolute Reality conditioned by Māyā is called Īśvara. The first mantra of Īśavāsyopaniṣad begins thus: ‘Īśavāsyamidam sarvam yatkiṃca jagatyām jagat’ - “All this whatever moves on the earth – should be covered by Lord”. Here the word ‘Īśa’ means the Supreme Self, which is not conditioned by Māyā. Let us now understand how Ramanuja describes Īśvara in Viśiṣṭādvaita, in which, Īśvara is of the nature of spirit or intelligence and is of unsurpassed Bliss.
The term Īśvara is used in a dual sense. First, it stands for the entire universe with all its spiritual and material elements included in it. In this sense, Īśvara may be thought of in two stages—‘as cause and effect’. In dissolution (pralaya) He subsists as the cause with the whole of the universe latent in Him; in creation (Srṣṭi) what is latent becomes manifest. Subtle matter becomes gross; and souls expanding their dharma bhūtajñām, enter into relation with physical bodies appropriate.

Īśvara is philosophically considered as the Absolute. But Īśvara is historically conceived as completely personal. He is looked upon as having pity for the erring man and as activated by a desire to show mercy to him. Benevolence, indeed, is one of his essential features. He is known as Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu who dwells in his own citadel Vaikuṇṭha. He manifests himself in various ways to help his devotees. One of the most important is vyuha. It is four fold: Vāsudeva, Sanikarṣan, Pretyumna and Aniruddha. They are all incomplete manifestations and God appears in them in different garbs. Another way in which the Supreme Reality manifests himself is as avatāra.
Another manifestation of God is known as the antaryāmin whose presence within is common to all the jīvas. The last of the manifestations called aviyavatāra, are holy idols worshipped in sacred places like Śrīrangam.

Māyā is the source of the physical universe. “Māyā is the potency (Śakti) inherent in Īśvara, through which He manifests the objective world with all its diversity of names and forms. This Universe emerges from Īśvara or the Universe is within Him”. The creative power of Īśvara gives rise to a sense of the other, Māyā, which, in fact, is the helping principle of Īśvara to create this Universe. Jīva, the individuated aspect of Īśvara, identifies itself with the organisms with which it is bound up and looks upon the rest of reality as wholly external. It develops likes and dislikes for a small part of it, and assumes an attitude of indifference towards the rest. Īśvara does not make such preferences and inclusions.

In comparing the Īśvara and the jīva with the Absolute Brahman, they are merely the phenomenal appearances of one and the same Brahman. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, “So beyond the
personal Īśvara is Brahman, the Absolute, lifted above all Self divisions and holding together both absolute objectivity and subjectivity in the unbreakable bond at Absolute Consciousness”.41 Īśvara, the conceived Brahman, is having the deficiency of a degree of perfection. These logical determinations are merely the effects of Avidyā. “Advaita speaks of Īśvara as the embodiment of existence, subsistence and value. God is the embodiment of existence or truth. He is subsistence itself. True knowledge and values are the means for getting eternal Bliss. God is not limited by time, space etc. He is the present, the past and the future and is everywhere. Saguna Brahman personified becomes Īśvara Īśāvasyopaniṣad gives the following adjectives, which are the characteristics of God:

1. He is fearless.
2. He is the Supreme.
3. Nobody can grasp him completely since he is infinite.
4. He knows all (omniscient).
5. He is everywhere (omnipresent).”42

---

41 IP., Vol. II. Pp. 560-61
42 Thesis Dr. P. Kalyanikutty., P.102
Iśvara is the Supreme Reality of the empirical consciousness, but ultimately He is unreal. The only Reality is the indeterminate Absolute, the Nirguṇa Brahman.

2.10 Concept of Māyā in Advaita

The doctrine of Māyā is the soul of the Advaita Vedānta of Śankarācārya. It is the pivot on which the metaphysical Absolutism of Śankarācārya revolves. It is the unique principle of explanation which Śankarācārya uses to describe the time-honoured philosophical problem of the relation of the One Brahman to the world of the plurality of souls and the universe in all its variety. In order to find an answer to the question, how the immutable and unqualified Absolute, the Nirguṇa Brahman, if non-dual, can manifest itself into this multiple universe, Śankarācārya upholds the principle of Māyā. Śankarācārya inherited this Vedic doctrine from his predecessor and great Guru, Gaudapāda, who in his noble work, the Māṇḍūkya Kārika used frequently the term, Māyā. The term ‘Māyā’ was implicitly used in the Upaniṣads and it was not in the form of a doctrine before the days of Śankarācārya. It is Śankarācārya who systematised first the principle of Māyā into a doctrine, which became the pivot of his system.
"Māyā is a philosophical concept employed by Hindu idealism in its traditional literature in its various avenues of expression - the Brahmanical school and their subdivisions - as the basic and common explanation of the relationship of Appearance to Reality."\(^43\)

The term Māyā and its allied concepts are treated in a comparative manner within the Indian Philosophical systems and especially in contrast or agreement with the traditional Advaita Vedānta of Śankarācārya. It is recognised by all students of Indian thought, that one can expound Māyā with Śankara or against Śankara, but none can expound Māyā without Śankara".\(^44\)

The term Māyā was derived from the root 'ma', which means to grow, to understand, to assimilate, to mould, and to measure. All these meanings are involved in the Māyā. The etymological derivation of the term is "mīyate anena iti māyā" which means—'measure out the immeasurable'. "From

---

\(^{43}\) The concept of Māyā by Ruth Reyna.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
an analysis of the meaning content of the word (Māyā) as used in the Vedas, we attempt to work back, and trace in the mind of Pre-vedic India, the original germ of thought, the Māyāplāsm.45

The concept of Māyā takes on a more metaphysical character in the Upaniṣads. Māyā in one of its earliest appearances with the meaning "cosmic illusion" can be found in the Śvetāsvataraopaniṣad: "know then, that prakṛti is Māyā and the wielder of Māyā is the Great Lord. This whole world is pervaded by beings that are parts of Him."46

Śankarācārya in his ‘Viveka Cūḍāmaṇi’ describes Māyā, as “Avidyā”(nescience). Māyā, also called the Undifferentiated, is the power of the Lord. She is without beginning, is made up of the three gunās and is superior to the effects (as their cause). She is to be inferred by one of clear intellect only from the effect She produces. It is She who brings forth this whole universe”47. Śankarācārya now abolishes all paradox in the very next verse: “She is neither

45 PDM., P.11
46 Śve.U.,IV.10. Māyāṁ tu pr akṛtim viddhi māyinam tu Maheśvaram
47 VC., 108.
existent nor non-existent nor partaking of both characters; neither same nor different nor both; neither composed of parts nor an indivisible nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words". In the Bagavat Gītā, the meaning of this term is naturally disputed by the exponents of rival schools. In two cases, Śankarācārya interprets it as meaning God’s power whose essence is contained in the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas and which deludes all living beings - sarvabhūtamohini. In verses four, six, eighteen and sixty one of the Gita, Śankarācārya takes Māyā to mean the power of mere appearance, na paramārthatah cādmana. In the Brahmasūtras, the word occurs but once, where Śankarācārya takes it to mean the utterly unreal - na paramārthagandho apyasti- being devoid of stable relations in regard to time, space and cause and being liable to sublations. But Ramanuja understands by Māyā in this sūtra, āścieya or ‘the marvellous.’

48 Ibid., 109
49 BG, VII.14-15.
50 SB.on the verses referred to above.
51 BS.III.2.3.
52 BSS. on III.2.3.
53 RB.on III.2.3.
Both Śankarācārya and Ramanuja were worthy exponents of *Vedānta*—they were possessed of the same problems and their texts were practically the same, yet their conclusions show striking differences. Śankarācārya holds the nature of *Brahman* to be that of the Unconditioned or Pure Consciousness, indescribable and unknowable as suggested in the *Upaniṣad*—“The Supreme Self is not to be fixed; He is unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, not to be conceived”\(^{54}\) and again, “His form is not an object of vision, no one beholds Him with the eye.”\(^{55}\)

We read in the *Brhadārāyana Upaniṣad*, the famous ‘description’ employed by *Yājñavalkya*—“not this, not this (*neti, neti*).\(^{56}\) Śankarācārya emphasises the indescribability of the Absolute in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, mentioning that *Brahman* can best be described by silence, calling attention to Bādhva, who, after considerable silence remarks, ‘I am teaching you indeed concerning *Brahman* but you do not understand. Silence is the Self’\(^{57}\). This, then, is the *Nirguṇa Brahman*, devoid of

---

54 Maitri Upanisad., VI.17 *ēṣ a paramāma‘parimito jo yakṣyo cintya*
55 Kaṭha U., II.3.9. *na samṛṣe tisthati rūpam asya na cakṣusā paśyati kaścanainam*
56 Br.U.IV.4.22.
57 Śankara’s *Bhāṣya* on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, III.2.17.
attribute and un-relational, beyond the confines of time, space and causality; yet, no relation need be assumed, for according to Advaita Vedānta, it is a metaphysical oneness that is the very foundation of relative existence- ‘that which is above heaven and below the earth, which is heaven and earth as well as what is between them and which they say was, is and will be pervaded by the unmanifested ākāśa (Brahman)\textsuperscript{58} and ‘That which is the subtle essence this whole world has for its self. That is the truth. That is the self. That art thou.’\textsuperscript{59} This is the meaning of the Absolute to Śankarācārya. He recognises, however, the conditional reality of a qualified Being (personal God) from the phenomenal standpoint. As long as one sees the material world, one must postulate a Creator. But how does this qualified Being come about? “Without compulsion from outside, Brahman imposes upon itself, as it were, a limit and thus becomes manifest as God, soul and world …… it is the Saguna Brahman by whom all things have been created, and by whom, after being created, they are sustained, and into whom, they are absorbed”\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Br.U.,III.8.7. yad ārdhaṃ, yādṝavalkya, divah, yad avāk pr thivyah, yad antara dvāprthivī ime.
\textsuperscript{59} Ch.U., VI. 15.3. sa ya es onima aitadātmyam idam sarvam. tat satyam. tā ātmā. tat tvam asi.
\textsuperscript{60} TUN., Vol. I.P.49
This power of \textit{Brahman} to accomplish such a manifestation is conceived as \textit{Māyā}; and qualified by the limiting power of \textit{Māyā} the Absolute becomes the conditioned - the \textit{Saguṇa Brahman}. It must be remembered, however, this conditioning for Advaita \textit{Vedānta} is not real but only apparent, in that \textit{Brahman} appears to the finite mind with attributes and creative function. \textit{Māyā} then in this sense is conceived of as both the inscrutable power of projection and the mysterious veiling power of a \textit{Nirguṇa Brahman} who remains as the unchanged and unchanging substratum of all that is- “like the ocean, \textit{Brahman} appears to us in two aspects; a \textit{Nirguṇa Brahman} is without a wave or ripple untouched by the appearance of creation and the activity of the created; \textit{Saguṇa Brahman} is the ocean agitated by the wind of created things covered by foaming waves ...... but a \textit{Nirguṇa Brahman} and \textit{Saguṇa Brahman} are not two realities ......it is the same ocean whether peaceful or agitated.”\footnote{Ibid., Discussion on Brahman.} \textit{Māyā}, therefore, both as projecting power and veiling power has no independent reality; it is inherent in \textit{Brahman} as the power of \textit{Brahman}. 
Ramanuja, while describing Māyā as 'a screen that hides the true nature of the Lord,' denies that there is anything illusory about it. He contends that Māyā in the Upaniṣad really denotes that which produces various wonderful effects — from that the Māyin creates all this, and in that the other is bound up by Māyā. He concludes that here the highest Person is called Māyin because he possesses the power of Māyā, not on account of ignorance or nescience on his part. "Māyā is to Ramanuja, the loving transforming power of God, resulting in a Oneness (God, soul and nature) which admits of distinction".

"Gaudapāda takes Māyā to mean:

1. The nature or power of the Ātman by virtue of which He (though unchangeable) appears as the manifold world.

2. The inexplicability of the relation between the Ātman and the world.

3. The apparent dreamlike condition of the world.

---

62 Śve,U.,IV.9. asmāṇ māyāḥ sejate viśvam etat tasmimscānyo māyayā samniruddhah
63 Śrī Bhāsyā., I.1.1
64 Māyā in the Philosophy of Ramanuja by Dr. Ruth Reyna, Vedantakesari Vol.55.1968-69
To describe the relation of the world and the individual Ātman (jīva) with the unchangeable Ātman, Gaudapāda adopted the theory of Māyā. He examines the three states of Consciousness (jāgrat, svapna and suṣupti) and the so-called law of cause and effect in the objective and subjective fields and concludes that the states are mere appearances superimposed on the Pure Cit, which alone is real. But how this superimposition takes place, nobody can explain, yet it is undeniable. Similarly, the relation between cause and effect and that between subject and object admits no satisfactory explanation. This impossibility of reasonable explanation of phenomena and, nonetheless, their perceptibility are what Gaudapāda would call Māyā or Avidyā.⁶⁵

According to Śankarācārya, ajñāna or Māyā and pure consciousness are contradictory in nature like darkness and light- tamapракāśavat viruddha svabhāvah.⁶⁶ While Māyā is inert or non-consciousness, the Ātman is Self-luminous, pure

---

⁶⁵ Gaudapāda on Māyā and Avidyā by Prof. Surendra Nath Bhattacharya, Pabuddha Bharata Vol. LXV. May 1960.
⁶⁶ Adhyāsabhāṣya
consciousness alone. In order to develop the illusoriness of the world, Śankarācārya accepts three types of existence namely, the ultimate Real (pāramārthika), empirical (vyāvahārika) and apparent (prātibhāsika). Of them, the vyāvahārika and the prātibhāsika are the product of error and are in the realm of Māyā. The pāramārthika is the Ultimate Reality. In the state of dreaming, the dream world is real but in the state of waking, dream world becomes merely an illusion. Similarly, in the state of awakening through jñāna from the field of vyāvahārika to that of prātibhāsika, the vyāvahārika world becomes an illusion.

2.11 The Concept of World in Advaita

The doctrine of avidyā with its subjective note suggests a misleading view of the nature of the phenomenal world, that it is an illusion, a creation of the mind. Śāṅkarācārya thinks that the world is an illusion, and it has no identity with the Absolute. It is merely the appearance of Brahmaṇa. Śāṅkarācārya traces the whole plurality of appearances, including that of Īśvara to avidyā.
But the nature of Brahman is not affected in any way, simply because our imperfect knowledge takes it to be so. The moon is not duplicated simply because those of defective vision see two moons. To Śankarācārya, the world is illusory, and its creation takes place in the primordial ignorance, the Māyā. Māyā is the creative principle, and the world is its evolution. No illusion is possible without a real substratum. The non-dual Absolute is this substratum, which possesses the essential qualities of Existence (satyam), Consciousness (jñānam) and Infinitude (ānantam).

Commenting on the Brahma Sūtra tatadhīnatvā-darthavat 68, Śankarācārya writes that the causal state of the world, where the names and forms constituting its essence remain undifferentiated, is termed avyakta, but that, unlike the sāmkhyās, the Vedāntins consider it as subordinate to Isvara. Isvara cannot create the world except through the instrumentality of avyakta, known also as Māyā, Prakṛti, Avidyā and so forth.

68 B.S., I, 4.3
The world-cause in the *Upaniṣads*, then, is Ṣvara equipped with the creative power of Māyā. It may be imagined, on the analogy of the potter and the pot, as the Naiyāyikas, is never tired of repeating, that Ṣvara is only the efficient cause of the world. Intelligence, planning, and execution are the characteristics of an efficient cause like the potter in the example. The *Upaniṣads* proclaim: ‘He thought; He created life’. ⁶⁹

The *Vedantin* explains that the world-cause has to satisfy an important condition, which will make Ṣvara not only efficient, but also the material cause of the world (*abhinna nimitta upādāna kāraṇa*.)

In the *Chāndogya*, where this point is elaborated, the world-cause is laid down to be such that its comprehension includes that of everything, viz, all its products.⁷⁰ Only the knowledge of the material cause can include that of the effects. The examples offered in that context, clay-products like pots etc., also point to the fact that the *Upaniṣads* are in quest of the material cause of the world.⁷¹

---

⁶⁹ P.U., VI. 3 and 4. *sa īkṣ āmcakre, sa prānam asr jata*
⁷⁰ Ch.U., VI. 2.3
⁷¹ Ibid., VI. 1.4-6; Mu.U., I. 1.2, 7; Br.U., IV. 5, 6, 8
Above all, that Īśvara in the Vedānta, is the material cause of the world. According to the Taittirīya Upaniṣads, the world is said to originate and subsist in him. It also goes back to him in dissolution\textsuperscript{72}.

In the explanation of Brahman's causality of the world, Śankarācārya says that Brahman remains unaffected by the change of the world.\textsuperscript{73} He says that the world is attributed to Brahman as the snake to the rope- "A man in the dark may mistake a piece of rope for a snake and run away from it, frightened and trembling. Thereon another man may tell him, 'Be not afraid, it is only a rope, not a snake, and he may then dismiss the fear caused by the imagined snake and stop running. But all the while, the presence and the subsequent absence of his erroneous notion as to the rope being a snake make no difference whatever to the rope itself".\textsuperscript{74}

The stars do not actually twinkle, though they appear to do so. The light they project is quite steady, though the disturbances in the earth's atmosphere through which the light

\textsuperscript{72} Tai.U., III.1
\textsuperscript{73} BSB, II, 1.28, II. 1.9
\textsuperscript{74} BSB., 1.4.6. See also SB on Katha.V, III. 14; IV. II
passes so affect our vision as to give them a constantly flickering appearance. Even so, the semblance of variableness in Brahman is a fancy occasioned by our distorted vision.\textsuperscript{75}

Śankarācārya argues that the Supreme Reality or Brahman is the basis of the world. If Brahman were absolutely different from the world, if the Ātman were different from the states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, then the repudiation of the reality of the world cannot lead us to the attainment of truth. We shall then have to embrace nihilism and treat all teaching as purposeless.\textsuperscript{76}

The illusory snake does not spring out of nothing, nor does it pass into nothing when the illusion is corrected. The root of the illusion is logical, psychological, and not metaphysical. The pluralistic universe is an error of judgment. Correction of the error means change of opinion. So does the world of experience become transfigured in the intuition of Brahman.

\textsuperscript{75} BSB., II.3.46
\textsuperscript{76} ŚB on Ma.U., \textit{yadi hi tryavasthātmavilakṣ anam turīyam anvat, tātprpaṭti dvārābhavat sāstropadesānarthakṣam Śānyatāpati vā}
The Sāmkhyās and the Viṣistadvaitins hold the theory of the real transmutation of the one real into many, and therefore to them the cause as well as the effect is real. They take the Prakṛti Parināma and the Brahma Parināma respectively for the explanation of the existence of the world multiplicity. Śankarācārya’s Vivartavāda holds a seeming or false transmutation of the Ultimate into the world of ‘becoming’ due to the illusion-causing power, Māyā. Dr. Radhakrishnan points out:— “The world of ‘becoming’ is the interruption of ‘being.’ Māyā is the reflection of reality. The world process is not so much a translation of immutable being as its inversion. Yet the world of Māyā cannot exist apart from ‘Pure Being’.”

To explain the empirical problems such as the creation of this world, Śankarācārya has accepted a lower kind of causation theory, the parināma of Īśvara (SaguṇaBrahman). Śankarācārya by introducing the theory of adhyāsa through which the false notions of the parts, grief etc have been superimposed on the Ātman by the avidyā- ridden jīva and therefore, the whole world is merely the ascription of our own intellect- buddhiparikalpita – to the non-dual Ātman. The Ātman

77 IP. Vol. I, P. 36
thus becomes perceived as though it were to transform itself into the world. Therefore, the cause for the phenomenon is not the pure Brahman, but Brahman with ajñāna i.e., Īśvara or Saguna Brahman. When Brahman is said to be the cause of the world, both the efficiency and the materiality are actually of the ignorance, or the creative power of Īśvara. Thus, Īśvara, the controller of Māyā is the direct cause, not the pure Brahman. Īśvara is the relative god of empiricity, which is just as prātibhāsika is illusory in nature.

2.11.1 In what sense is the World Mithya?

In Śankara Vedānta, Brahman is considered to be the primary reality or Pāramārthika satta. In addition to this satta, two other satta's are also recognised namely vyāvahārika satta and prātibhāsika satta.

"Advaita classifies existence into three levels.

1. The transcendental existence Pāramārthika satta. This is the final stage where we have only the non-dual experience i.e., Brahman.

78 BSB., I. IV 23
79 CSA., P. 84
2. The empirical that is phenomenon existence as example in the world appearance is *vyāvahārika satta*. This is the empirical experience in life where we live and struggle.

3. The apparent existence as in a dream or as in the reflection in a mirror is *prātibhāsika satta*. This is the dreamed world where objects are purely presented to the subjects and have no common reference$^{80}$.

The empirical world is considered to have only *vyāvahārika satta*. It is not as real as *Brahman*. At the same time it is not totally unreal like the ‘horns of a hare.’ This intermediate position which is neither *sat* nor *asat* is the connotation of the world *midhyā*. There is a popular definition of Śankara *Vedānta* contained in the following couplet from ‘*Brahma satyam jaganmithya jīvō brahmaiva nāparāḥ*’. The term *midhya* gives rise to a lot of discussion in the post-Śankara period. It was taken to mean ‘illusion’ and Śankarācārya was thought to have considered the world as a mere illusion. The relationship between *Jagat* and *Brahman* must be understood properly. The usual analogy quoted is the rope and the snake.

$^{80}$ RAV, P.69
The rope is mistaken to be a snake and when knowledge dawns, it is found to be only Brahman. The rope is not affected by appearance of the snake. In other words, the rope and the snake belong to two ontological orders. The relation again is one sided i.e., cancellation of the snake does not cancel Brahman. Brahman is trīkāla abādhita. The snake however would not have been seen if there was no rope. This relationship between the snake and the rope is called tādātmya in Advaita Vedānta. The snake is none other than the rope. Brahma satyam jaganmīdhyā means only this kind of relationship. The jagat or the world is looked upon in three ways by three types of persons. To the ajñāni, the world divided into nāmarūpa appears to be real. To the person who has heard about Brahman, the world appears to be inexplicable, i.e. he is not able to explain how a multifold world can emerge from pure Brahman. To the Jñāni, there is no world and he sees only Brahman everywhere. The category of Māyā points out this inexplicable relation between Brahman and Jagat.
Śankarācārya is mostly interested in Parabrahman and speaking from this point of view, he calls the world an illusion.

Pañcadasī, a post-Śankara advaita manual declares that there are three different standpoints through which Māyā is understood.

1) The common man thinks the world of Māyā to be real (vāstavī).

2) The enlightened man of scriptural knowledge thinks it to be very unreal (tuccha)

3) The metaphysician who has trust only in the powers of the intellect sees this world of Māyā to be neither real nor unreal (anirvacaniya)\(^81\)

It is the jīva who sees the world. The world is seen only when the senses or intellect are functioning. In Śankara Vedānta, the world is an adhyāsa or superimposition on Brahman. Therefore, it is not considered an Ultimate Reality. When the senses and intellect do not operate, for example, in the

\(^81\) TPSS., P. 141
state of sleep, the world is not seen. The waking world therefore gets cancelled. It is based on this daily experience of waking and sleeping that Śankarācārya has built his system. The waking world disappears with the dawning of Brahmajñana. Śankarācārya makes it clear that this disappearance is only an epistemic and not ontological. In his Brahmāsūtra Bhāsyā he opposes Brahmapravālīyavādam. Śankarācārya’s point is that when Brahman is looked upon as divided into names and forms, it is Jagat. Jagat itself is Brahman when names and forms are abstracted from it. There is a popular stanza in the drkdrśyavivekā:

asti bhāti priyam nāma rūpa iti amśapaṇcacakam
ādyaatrāyam brahmārūpam tato dvayaṃ jagadrūpam.

It is this confusion between Epistemology and Ontology that has brought about a lot of criticism against Śankarācārya.

Śankarācārya himself uses the word avidyā in many places and this word avidyā means only the above way of looking at Brahman divided into name and form. It is a positive entity, which disappears with gaining knowledge.
2.12 The Concept of Jīva in Advaita

The etymological meaning of jīva is that which survives breathing (jīvah prāṇadhāraṇe). As it means a living being, it is purely a biological concept. But here our intention is to describe the different meanings of jīva as revealed in our scriptures.

The common misconception that Ātman is a synonym for jīva observes only the metaphysical sense of the word Ātman. Jīva, understood as an indwelling and animating principle of living being, is a concept readily acceptable to most people, especially to those with religious views. In Indian thoughts, philosophy and religion are indivisible. Therefore, the shift, over time, from the philosophical to the theological sense of Ātman was not generally noticed or seriously considered. It is the view of the multiplicity of souls held by the theological schools of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, which has been most responsible for that shift. In later Vedānta, especially after Śankarācārya, it resulted in the emergence of the concepts of Jīvātman and Paramātman signifying 'Individual Soul' and 'Universal or
Supreme Soul.' These two words do not appear in any of the major *Upaniṣads* or in the *Bhagavat Gītā* and although the *Bhagavat Gītā* mentions the word *jīva* four times, it is used in a sense not at all related to the concept of *jīvātman*.

The *Upaniṣads* like the *Brhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya* say that the *jīva* and the Supreme Reality (*sat*), are essentially one. Explaining the passage, *anena jīvenā 'tmanā 'nupraviśya*[^2], Śankarācārya writes that the phrase *anena jīvena* refers to the Real or *jīva*, which in an earlier cycle of creation, underwent embodiment, and which, as such, is present in the cosmic mind of the creative Absolute or *Īśvara*[^3]. That which underwent individuation and became *jīva*, i.e., the *prāṇadhāraṇakaṛta*, is of course none other than the *jīva*, which in itself is pure consciousness (*caitanyasaṁvāpam*). Its embodiment is denoted by the term *anupraviśya*, i.e., having entered into the *Upādhiś* or inorganic element of world manifestation.[^4]

[^2]: Ch. U.VI,3,2
[^3]: Ch. U.B., P.311.
[^4]: Ch. U., VI, 2
“The Advaita philosophy holds that the jīva is not different from the Brahman, which is of the nature of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. In the system, the difference of bodies cannot be the ground for assuming a difference in the jīvās. The bodies are products of nescience and because of being conditioned by them, there appears to be many jīvās. But in reality there is only one jīva, which is not different from Brahman.”

In Śankarācārya’s philosophy, the concept of jīva plays a prime role. He uses the word as a device to bring home his points in Indian thought. He says in his Vivekacūḍāmaṇi:-

\begin{quote}
Vedānta - sidhānta-niruktireṣa  
Brahmaiva jīva sakalam jagat ca  
Akhanda-rūpa-sthitireva mokṣo  
Brahmādvitiya śrutayah pramāṇam.\end{quote}

In the above beautiful verse, Śankarācārya proclaims that the Brahman is the jīva and the world. To stay in that state constantly is what is called freedom. And Brahman is ‘one’ without a ‘second.’ The scripture is the testimony. The process of

\begin{footnotes}
86 VC., 478.
\end{footnotes}
respiration or \textit{jīvatva} is the subllest activity in a living body. Hence, he points out the subllest state and teaches that \textit{jīva} is identical with \textit{Brahman}. It is only a methodology he adopted to present his noble thoughts and experiences in a philosophical context. In the sixteenth \textit{kārika} in the second chapter of \textit{Māṇḍūkya kārika} we read - “First of all, is imagined the \textit{jīva} (the embodied being) and then are imagined the various entities, objective and subjective, that are perceived. As is (one’s) knowledge so is (one’s) memory of it”.

\`Ś\ukṣm\aś\vra\c\c\c\a\c\y\a\c\c\c\’s commentary on this \textit{kārika} throws light on the concept and nature of \textit{jīva}. He writes: “The \textit{jīva} is of the nature of cause and effect and further characterised by such ideas as, ‘I do this,’ ‘I am happy’ and ‘I am miserable.’ Such \textit{jīva} is, at first, imagined in the \textit{Ātman}, which is pure and devoid of any such characteristic like the imagination of a snake in a rope. Then for the knowledge of the \textit{jīva} are imagined various existent entities both subjective and objective, such as \textit{Prāṇa} etc., constituting different ideas such as the agent, the action and the result of the action.”

\textsuperscript{87} Mā.U. with Gaudapada’s Karika and Sankara’s commentary. Swami Nikhilananda.

\textsuperscript{87} Mā.U. with Gaudapada’s Karika and Sankara’s commentary. Swami Nikhilananda.
Discussing the views of the three teachers - Āśmarttavya, Audulomi and Kāśakṛtsna⁸⁸ - on the nature of the ātma, Śankarācārya points out that Kāśakṛtsna represents the true Upaniṣadic position, viz, the paramātman is present in the body as ātma or, as he is otherwise called vijñānātman.⁸⁹ Āśmarttavya introduced a causal relation between God and ātma while Audulomi stood for bhedābheda, identity-cum-difference, between them. The names denoting God and ātma are, in the realm of truth, synonyms.⁹⁰

It was noted above that ātma is sat in association with upādhīs or psycho-physical complexes. Śankarācārya explains the terms in two different contexts. The upādhīs, psychologically consists of vāsanās, or tendencies, which constitute the mind of the ātma.⁹¹

We began with the observation that the older Upaniṣads firmly maintain the identity of ātma and Brahman. But in the later Upaniṣads, there are certain passages, which apparently posit a difference between the two. It is necessary to note how the Advaitin understands these passages. In the

⁸⁸ Ibid., I, 4, 20-22
⁸⁹ BSB., P.332; aṣaya paramātmano anenāpi vijñānātmanabhāvenāvasthiānāt
⁹⁰ BSB., P.336, Cf SU, IV, 3; Sibhite kṣetrajña paramātmaikatvaviseṣya samyakdarśanē kṣetrajñah paramātmite naṁmārābhedaś
⁹¹ BSB., P.308
Śvetāsvatārōpaniṣad, e.g., in numerous contexts, Isvara and jīva are sharply contrasted. The celebrated simile of the two beautifully plumaged inseparable birds on the same tree of life, one pecking at fruits, sweet and bitter, while the other majestically looks on, brings out the normal relation between Isvara and jīva in empirical life. Here Viśistādvaitin insists that as the jīva alone is the subject of experience or bhōkta, his difference from Isvara is real and lasting. The Dvaitin adds the note that the inseparable companion, jīva, referred to is of the upripght type, rju; for he holds that crooked jīvas are fit only to suffer in shady hell. The jīva or the empirical Self, whose upādhis are avidhyā, kāma and karma (nescience, desire and acts) is alone subject to experiences, pleasant and painful. God, eternally pure, aware and free, is a mere looker-on, without sharing in those experiences. Still, by his mere presence, he may be said to cause the jīva to act. This causation or prērayitrtvam consists merely of his presence.

92 Sve.U. 1,9; IV, 6; MU., III,1,1 dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhyā, samānam vrksam pariṣasvajjāte, tayo ranyah pippalam svādhyānaśnam anyoabhicākṣāti
93 MSS., 79; The Dvaitins maintain that there are three classes of jīvās 1. Fit for liberation 2. Perpetual wanderers in transmigratory life (nityasamsārīnakah) 3. Doomed to hell-life (tamayogyakah)
94 SB on MU., III, 1,1 dar śanamātram hi tasya prērayitrtvam
This jīva is a bhōkta or subject of experiences, while his real basic nature is that of the Lord, nityaśuddha-buddhamuktasvabhāva. The Upaniṣadic explanation is that it is due to the association of the pure Self with the psycho-physical organisation.95

In the Upaniṣads three grades or positions of consciousness (caitanyam) may be distinguished - the pure unqualified Brahman, Brahman with qualities and Ṣvarā and jīva involved in actions and subject to their consequences. According to Śankarācārya, the distinctions among Brahman, Ṣvarā, and jīva rest purely on upādhīs. Apart from these, neither distinctions nor their negations may properly be predicated of the Absolute, which is a mass of undifferentiated consciousness. The description neti neti96 of the unconditioned Self underlines its ineffability, its wholly transcendental character. But when it is associated with adjuncts like body and sense organs, the Absolute Reality is designated as jīva or the empirical Self. The same Absolute, in conjunction with the power of eternal, unsurpassed knowledge, is termed Śvarā. All distinctions and difference, therefore, must be traced to upādhīs in as much as the final doctrine of Upaniṣads points to the ekamevādvitiyam.

95 KU., III, 4 Ātmendryamanoyuktam bhōktyāhurmanīs inah
96 Br. U., IV, 2, 4
In the introduction to Śankarācārya’s commentary on the second adhyāsa of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, the jīva has been described as the agent of activities like hearing, seeing, thinking, etc. Other Upaniṣadic passages refer to him as the unthought thinker, unknown knower, etc. Again, the unknowability of the jīva, has been laid down thus: na matāramantaram manvīta, na vijñāter vijñāntaram vijñānīyāt etc.

The basis of distinctions among jīvas, Īśvara and Brahman, is an unstable appearance. With its abolition, these distinctions vanish and the sole Reality of the Self remains.

2.12.1 The Jīva appears as the Body through Ignorance

Just as a rope is imagined to be a snake and nacre to be a piece of silver, so is the jīva determined to be the body by an ignorant person. Just as gold is thought of as an earring and water as waves, the stump of a tree is mistaken for a human figure and a mirage for water, a mass of woodwork is thought of as a house, and iron as sword, one sees a tree in water (the tree is not in the water. It is only a reflection due to water that a person sees), so does a person on account of ignorance see the jīvas as

97 B. U., II. 4, 14 tat kena kam jihṛet, tat kena kam paśyet. tat kena kam śṛṇuyāt
98 Ibid., III, 7, 23 amato manta avijñāto vijñātā
99 Ibid., III, 4
100 AA., V.70.
the body.\textsuperscript{101} Just as all things that are really large appear to be very small owing to great distance,\textsuperscript{102} just as all objects that are very small appear to be large when viewed through lenses,\textsuperscript{103} just as a surface of glass is mistaken for water,\textsuperscript{104} or vice-versa, just as a person imagines a jewel in fire or vice-versa,\textsuperscript{105} just as when clouds move, the moon appears to be in motion,\textsuperscript{106} the jīva appears as the body. Further, just as a person through confusion loses all distinction between the different points of the compass, just as the moon reflected in water appears to one as unsteady,\textsuperscript{107} just as a person going in a boat sees everything to be in motion, just as a person with defective eyes sees everything as defective, just as a fire-brand through mere rotation appears circular, the jīva appears as the body. Thus through ignorance, there arises in the jīva, the delusion of the body, which again through self-realisation disappears in the Supreme.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., V.72-75
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., V.80
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., V.81
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., V.82
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., V.83
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., V.84
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., V.85-86
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., V.87