CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF WORLD ACCORDING TO THE BG

After consideration of the concept of Brahman, the UR, we now come to that of jagata (world), another member of the three pivotal concepts of Indian philosophy. Usually after dealing with the question of Brahman, diva (the vital principle or soul) comes next, and then only jagat (the world) is considered. But, since this latter concept, from a vyavaharika point of view at least, shares both from the other two, it is methodologically advisable to deal with this after the other two.

A close view of the concept of the world is of paramount importance for a meaningful study of the concept of avatara. The degree of reality or ontological weight we give to the world, will have deep bearing on that we give to avatara as is obvious in the commentaries on the BG by the mayavadins and by those opposed to mayavada. It could be the other way round too. If avatara is interpreted in a very realistic sense, as the acaryas of the bhakti tradition do, involvement in the world will have a different meaning. In fact, this realistic interpretation of incarnation in Christianity is partially responsible for the various world-affirming doctrines of Christianity, often fighting against the world-negating tendencies of the religious enthusiasts.

In our treatment we shall take into account the two opposing schools of Vedanta in the interpretation of the BG concept of the world, viz. the Sankar Vedanta and the Ramanuja Vedanta. Sankaracarya gives
a mayavadic interpretation of the world keeping with his own philosophy while Ramanuja and also Vallabha, Badhava and Nimbarka give a realistic interpretation keeping with their own peculiar philosophies. Modern Indian scholars like Aurobindo, RadhaKrishnan and Kanade too seem to give a realistic explanation of the world. Dr. T.C. Malikar strongly opposing Sankara's views says: "It is very difficult to accept Sankara's contention that the Bhagavadgītā teaches maya, the doctrine of illusion. It has been shown that almost every passage when the word occurs can be satisfactorily and in a straightforward manner explained without taking the implication which Sankara is anxious to find." Among the Western authors O.P. Hill seems to understand the BG view of the world in terms of mayāvāda. He says: "Like every thoroughgoing monistic system, the system of the Bhagavadgītā robs the universe of meaning; personality, freewill, good and evil even avatāra itself, are incidents in an idle show." One of the recent Western scholars on the BG, Dr. O.C. Zacheer takes sides with Ramanuja’s realism.

The above remarks will help us to understand that there are at least two opposed schools of thought in the interpretation of the concept of the world according to the BG. Instead of getting involved with the arguments advanced by these schools we shall go to the text itself. We shall try to get into the Gītā-concept of the world in an indirect way by considering, from the point of view of the BG, the concept of prakṛti, kāraṇa, kṣetra and asvatta, and then by comparing them among themselves and with the concept of the world. Then we shall try to grasp the meaning of vibhūti and maya according to our sacred book.
A: PRAKRTI

What does 'prakrti' stand for in the Sanatkya Karika and in the BG? How can the concept of the world be understood in terms of this concept? How does the Saṁkhya-prakṛti differ from the BG-prakṛti?

In the third Karika itself Ṣvarkṛṣṇa enumerates the Saṁkhya categories dividing the totality of reality in terms of prakṛti with its evolutes and of puruṣa. Prakṛti with its evolutes stands for the unconscious or anātman elements of reality while puruṣa or puruṣas for the conscious or ātman elements of reality. Of course, for Saṁkhya Karika, prakṛti and puruṣa remain irreducibly two, thought we termed them as the conscious and unconscious "elements of reality". What is chiefly to be noted is that for Saṁkhya, as far as the ontological or reality value is concerned both prakṛti and puruṣa are equal.

The Gītā description of prakṛti, taken by itself i.e. independently of the Lord, is very similar to the Saṁkhya Karika description. In 7:4 BG gives eight of the 24 elements of Saṁkhya prakṛti viz. earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, understanding(buddhi) and ego-sense(abhinrśa). In 13:5 by way of describing the kṣetra the Lord enumerates all the 24 elements of classical Saṁkhya. Both in the BG and in Saṁkhya, in so far as prakṛti stands for the anātman or non-puruṣa 'realities', or the unconscious 'realities', it can be equated with what is signified by the term 'jagat' in the Indian or world in the Western philosophies.

In our treatment of the concept of WR it has been pointed out how the Saṁkhya prakṛti is the aṣṭara prakṛti of the Lord(7:5) without being
distinct from the UR. In this connection we shall cite a rather long passage from Aurobindo which shows how the BG unifies the Saikhya dualism, on the one hand, by proposing the Lord as the unifying principle, and on the other hand, without assuming that the lower prakṛti is just 'maya'.

Here is the first new metaphysical idea of the Gītā which helps it to start from the notions of the Saikhya philosophy and yet exceed them and give to their terms, which it keeps and extends, a Vedāntic significance... The Saikhya stops there, and because it stops there, it has to set up an unbridgeable division between the soul and Nature; it has to posit them as two quite distinct primary entities. The Gītā also if stopped there, would have to make the same incurable antinomy between the Self and cosmic Nature which would then be only the Maya of the three gunas and all this cosmic existence would be simply the result of this Maya.... There is a supreme nature of the Divine which is the real source of cosmic existence and its fundamental creative force and effective energy and of which the other lower and ignorant Nature is only a derivation and a dark shadow. 10

If one has no mayāvādic bias one can easily understand prakṛti of the BG in a very realistic sense. For the BG prakṛti is as eternal (anādi) as puruṣa (13:10) and at the beginning of the day of Brahman the finite beings evolve from avyakta or mālaprakṛti and at the beginning of Brahman's night they merge into it (8:18) and this cycle continues endlessly (8:19). One is compelled to action (18:59-60), whether one, even if he is a jñāni, tries to repress oneself or not (5:53) since prakṛti is the source of all actions (13:29). Indeed, the two prakṛtis (para and apara) (7:5) together constitute the womb (yoni) of all finite beings (7:6) for...
for their origin, and into which all return. From the Sāṅkhya point of view the prakṛti whose functions and nature are described thus in the BG is very real, and from the non-dualistic point of view of the BG according to which the prakṛti is the Lord's own nature, in a sense 'constituting' the nature of the Lord, it has to be understood in a realistic sense. Thus the prakṛti of the BG which is nothing but the material universe, is very real, indeed as real as the puruṣa. In those statements we prescind from the question whether the sattatattavādya of Śaṅkara-vedānta is a legitimate metaphysical method thereby positing different grades of being.

**B. THE WORLD IN TERMS OF 'KSETRA'**

According to Monier Williams ksetra comes from the root kṣā(क्षायति) which means to corrupt, to destroy to ruin etc. Ksetra as a substantive means, landed property, field etc. in the BG ksetra is contrasted with kṣetrajña as prakṛti is with puruṣa. The similarity between the concepts of ksetra and prakṛti are too obvious to need any special elaboration. Both are applied in the context of the microcosm as well as the macrocosm.

The word 'kṣetrajña' occurs in the Upaniṣads (SV-Up.6:16; MeI-Dp 2:5) and the word akṣetrajña in the Chānd. Up.(3:3:1). Here too those concepts are more or less identical to the Śāṅkhyā puruṣa and prakṛti.

In the Ki (13:5) the 24 constituents of prakṛti are given also as the constituents of kṣetra. About the constituents of kṣetra Radha-Krishnan writes:
These are the constituents of the field of ksetra, the contents of experience, the twenty-four principles of the Sāṁkhya system. The distinction of mental and material belongs to the object side. They are the distinctions within the "field" itself.

Apart from the constituents which Sāṁkhya give for prakṛti the BG adds a few more as the constituents of ksetra. These are desire and hatred, pleasure and pain, the aggregate (saṣṭhata), intelligence and steadfastness (15:6) etc. Hill says that "these emotions and qualities are modifications of mind, and owe their being to prakṛti alone: they are thus vikāras of the ksetra."[13]

What then are ksetra and kṣetrajña? From the constituents given by the BG it is identical with the Sāṁkhya-prakṛti though few other modifications of mind are included in the BG (15:6) which are not found in the Sāṁkhya description of prakṛti. In the first verse of this chapter the body (sarīra) is called ksetra. As in the case of prakṛti, in the case of kṣetra too, the unconscious elements both of the microcosm and the macrocosm are considered. Pointing out various Upaniṣadic texts where kṣetrajña is the individual soul (jīva) Saunaka says that the kṣetrajña, contrasted with ksetra, has to be the individual self, as prakṛti contrasted in the microcosmic level with the individual soul, is puruṣa. In 15:2 the Lord says that he is the kṣetrajña of all the fields (sarvakṣetraḥ) which could be taken as a parallel concept to Puruṣottama. This idea is well brought out by Aurobindo when he says that "physically it is a microcosm in a macrocosm, and the macrocosm too, the large world too, is a body and field inhabited by the spiritual knower."[13]
As we said about prakṛti here too it must be said that taken by itself, ksetra is very real. Hence to a great extent we agree with the following statement of Saṅkara:

In conclusion, it can be said that the Bhagavadgītā teaches the Bhedabheda doctrine, accepts Kṛṣṇa as the Keśtrajña while the dīva and the world-the Ksetra, are his parts. The Ksetra is as real as the Ksetrajña himself and the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā, on this point are very well summed up in a verse in the Viṣṇusūtraśāstra,14 that the Ksetra and Ksetrajña have Viṣṇudeva as their essence.15

Here we are not interested in taking sides with any particular school of Vedānta. Our position is that taking the concept of ksetra in itself without however excluding its relationship with ksetrajña, ksetra is very real, from the point of view of the BR.

C: THE TENDER AS KSARA

Ksara is another concept, like prakṛti and ksetra, which can give us some insights into the nature of the Gītā-concept of the world. Ksara-ksarati means to flow away, to melt away, to perish etc. Hence, ksara in its adjectival and substantival uses is rightly translated as perishable. Ksaraḥ is to be understood contrasting it with aksaraḥ as we studied prakṛti and ksetra in contrast to purusa and ksetrajña respectively.

In 3:15 aksara is said to be the source of Brahman.16 If Brahman here is understood as the Vedas, as Saṅkara does, aksara would mean the Parabrahman. For Saṅkhya here Brahman stands for prakṛti and aksara for the jīvatacan. But in 3:5; 12:3; and 15:16 aksara stands for the supreme transcendent reality more or less as Saṅkaracārya understands.
In 11:18 and 37 Arjuna calls Kṛṣṇa by this name. But in 15:16 both the ksara and aksara are called puruṣas and beyond these two the Uttarān puruṣa is posited as the UR in 15:17. 

What then is ksara? According to 15:16 ksara stands for sarvāni bhūtāni (all contingent beings) and a more or less similar meaning is given in 8:4 where it is said that the basis of all contingent beings is of perishable nature. The ksara and aksara would be compared with the pura and asara of the Lord in 7:4-7.

Aurobindo in his great synthesizing venture, in the context of the sub-principles of ksara and aksara and of the principle that transcends these two, namely of Purusottama, makes the following remarks:

Thus transcending the lower śakti we fix ourselves in the impersonality, the imperturbable superiority to all action, the purity from all definition and limitation by quality which is one side of the manifested nature of the Purusottama, his manifestation as the eternity and unity of the self, the Aksara. But there is also an effable eternal multiplicity of the Purusottama, a highest truest truth behind the primal mystery of soul manifestation... The spiritual person, puruṣa, the eternal soul in us offers itself and all it has and is to the eternal Divine, the supreme Person and Godhead of whom it is a portion, mã. 18

Aurobindo, thus, looks at ksara, aksara and Purusottama in a realistic sense. His enlightened and realistic monism could be supported by 7:7 where the contingent beings are said to be strung together on the Lord as pearls on a thread, or by 3:4 where the Lord says that "All beings abide in Me but I do not abide in them". And we find this interpretation quite plausible.
The allegory of the asvatta tree in the 15th chapter of the BG is very expressive of the BG concept of the world. The first three verses of this chapter give a graphic description of this tree. The roots of this mysterious tree are above, its branches below (15:1) though in the following verse the branches are said to strangle out above and below. This mysterious tree is such that neither its form, nor its origin, nor its end nor its continued existence can be comprehended. The allegorical meaning is then given out saying that its leaves are the Vedic hymns (15:1), sense objects are its twigs (15:2), the branches are nourished by the three gunas and its roots stretching forth into the world of men link themselves with actions (15:2). After having cut off this firm-rooted tree with the strong sword of detachment (15:3) we have to surrender ourselves to the primal Purusa, from whom the age-old activity has begun, in order that we may attain complete liberation (15:4).

For a more comprehensive view of this allegory we could trace references to it in the Sruti literature. Already in the Rigveda (1:24:7) there mention is made of a tree, sustained by Varuna in a bottomless region, which has its roots above and branches below. One may assume that this BG allegory is influenced by Katha Upanishad (2:5:1) and also by Ch. Up. 6:11: 1 and 2, where the question of cutting the tree occurs and by Naitri Up. (6:4) where the tree, with its roots above and the branches below representing the paccı mahābhūdas, seems to express the whole reality whose one aspect alone is the world. In the Sv. Up (6:6)
Brahman is said to transcend the cosmic tree.\textsuperscript{22}

In the \textit{Anugita} we have a more detailed description of the \textit{samsārābhikṣa}, which can further help us to interpret correctly the meaning of the \textit{aśvattha} tree of the \textit{BG}. In the context of speaking about the various bondages and liberation from them the \textit{Anugita} says:

The great tree of \textit{Brahman} is eternal: a tree which is produced from the unperceived as the seed, which consists of the understanding as its trunk, whose collection of boughs is the great egoism, the sprouts within which are the senses, the great branches of which are the great elements, and the said branches the objects of sense, which is always possessed of leaves, always possessed of flowers, in which agreeable and disagreeable fruits are always produced, and which is fed upon by all creatures. Cutting and piercing this tree with the sword of the knowledge of the truth, and abandoning the bonds in the shape of attachment who is free from (the thought that this or that is) mine, and who is devoid of egoism, is emancipated, there is no doubt of that.\textsuperscript{23}

What does this tree stand for? Its meaning is derived by Śaṅkarācārya by an ingenious analysis of this compound word into its elemental terms, viz. \textit{a (na = not) + śvas(tomorrow) + stha(staying, remaining)} to express the transitoriness of the tree which he calls \textit{samsārābhikṣa} (the world-tree).\textsuperscript{25} And according to Rāmānuja it is "samsārākhya-śaśvattham".\textsuperscript{26} After comparing the commentaries of various ācāryas and of modern authors among themselves it seems to us right to say with Hill that "all commentators are agreed that the \textit{aśvattha} stands for \textit{saśvāra}, the world of sense, interpretation of detail varies".\textsuperscript{27} Like \textit{prakṛti} (13:19) and \textit{Brahman} (13:12) it has neither beginning nor end. The root
of this tree is Brahman when Śaṅkara qualifies as "avyaktamāyā-
saktimat" (the unmanifest and endowed with māyā), due to his
māyāvād bias. This picturesque description of the world or samsāra
is very similar to the descriptions in terms of prakṛti, kṣetra and
kṣara as we have seen.

This samsāra has its roots above because, as Radhakrishnan
says, it "originates in God". Hence, it is not something independent
of God as the Sāṅkhya prakṛti, but more like the Gītā-prakṛti depending
on the Lord. Here cutting the tree must be understood as breaking the
cycle of karma (samsāracakra) by detaching oneself from this transitory
and impermanent reality. But BG does not advocate a Buddhistic nega-
tive detachment but as a means for the total and whole-hearted attach-
ment to the Lord. As in the case of kṣāra here too the relative and
impermanent aspect of the world is stressed but nothing of its being
like mirage or dream-object as Śaṅkara says.

E. THE WORLD AND THE VIBHUTI OF THE LORD

In the BG vibhuti is one of the richest concepts not only to have
the Gītā-view of the world but also to understand the relationship be-
 tween the DR and the world. The word 'vibhuti' defies accurate transla-
tion into English. Kaehner’s rendering of the word as "far flung power"
of the Lord is not very satisfactory. The prefix vi in opposition to
saṁ means to be apart, to be away etc. And bhūti means being, well
being, power etc. It is a concept which on the one hand goes against
dualism like that of Sāṅkhya showing that every reality at its root or
ground is the Lord as He is the total cause of the world, and on the
other hand, against rigid monism in the sense that the Lord transcends the world, that he is not identical with his manifestations, that his presence in them is in an eminent way. We shall keep the word untranslated in our study.

It is in chapter 10, which is known as vibhuti-yoga, this idea is found explicitly. In this chapter from verses 21 to 40, the Lord says how he is Viṣṇu among the Ādityas, the moon among the stars (21), among the Vedas the Śrīma Veda (22), Śiva among rudras (23) Brahmāpati among priests, Ocean among lakes (24) Prahalāda among Asuras (30), Ganges among rivers (31) and so on. By enumerating so many categories of realities the Lord says that he is the "quintessence of all these essences", to use Zachner's expression. Now the meaning of these statements have to be interpreted in terms of what the Lord says in 10:20 & 32, according to which he is the beginning, middle and end of all things, in terms of 10:40 and 41 according to which the root-cause of everything is a fragment of his own glory (tejōṣa) and in terms of 10:20 according to which the Lord is the self (ātma) established in all contingent beings. The basic reason for the vibhūtis is that the Lord is the total cause of everything, the efficient, material and final causes, cause at once immanent and transcendent.

In other chapters too we have similar ideas though not explicitly called vibhūtī. In chapter 7:8-11 the Lord makes such statements as that he is water in flavour, light in sun and moon, in man manliness (8), fragrance in the earth, life in all contingent beings (9) glory in the glorious (10) power in the powerful, Ātma in accordance with dharma in
all contingent beings (11) and so on. In these statements too, the Lord stands as the "quintessence of all essences". If we explain the vibhūtis in terms of the Lord's total causality, his statements in chapter 9 (16-19) that he is the father, mother, grand sire (17) sustainer, lord and witness (18) and so on, too are expressive of his 'vibhūtic' nature. The well-known common prayer of Hindu tradition which call upon the Lord as father, mother, relative and friend and the Vismū Shibasrannam seem to be based on the idea of vibhūti.

How then shall we explain more precisely the meaning of vibhūti? About vibhūtis Radhakrishnan writes: "They are the formative forces or spiritual powers which give to each object its essential nature. They are akin to Plato's divine Ideas, the perfect types and patterns of all things here below. Only the word 'idea' is likely to suggest a pale abstraction, a bloodless category. Vibhūti is a living formative principle." 32

Very cautiously Radhakrishnan avoids the use of 'idea' in its Platonic sense to emphasize the ontological presence of the divinity in them though these vibhūtis seem to show an archetypal excellence of a class. Viewing the 77 vibhūtis mentioned in chapter 10:21-38 and especially the 14 found in chapter 7: 8-12 we may roughly say that each "God-possessed" individual of a class possessed dominantly one or more of the following characteristic as Delvalker points out: "The individual is the beginning (ādi) or origin (bijā) of the class; it is the best of that class; and it represents the characteristic excellence of that class." 33 Again this is only a partial explanation of the vibhūtis.
A systematic treatment of the vibhūtis with clear-cut and precise definitions would be done an injustice to the Gītā-treatment of this question. For the statements about the vibhūtis in the BG are highly poetical and deeply mystical. The vibhūti, it is clear, implies the presence of the Uīr in everything though this presence or manifestation is in different degrees. Aurobindo writes:

The Divine is being, consciousness and delight, and in the world all throws itself out and finds itself again by energy of being, energy of consciousness and energy of delight; this is a world of the works of the divine Shakti. That Shakti shapes herself here in innumerable kinds of beings and each of them has its own characteristic powers or her force. Each power is the Divine himself in that form, in the lion as in the Wind, in the Titan as in the God, in the inconscient sun that flames through ether as in man who thinks upon earth.

If God is the total cause of everything he must possess in a divine way all the perfections found in the world. He possesses these perfections in a superabundant way. Now, when we see certain perfection in varying degrees in the contingent beings, we naturally tend to consider the most perfect nearer to God than the less perfect as for instance in Wisdom we may say that Lord Vyasa is a closer manifestation of divine wisdom than an ordinary sweeper. Here we shall cite a passage from Aquinas which seems to bring out this idea clearly. He writes in the context of describing divine perfections:

I answer that, All created perfections are in God. Hence He is spoken of as universally perfect because He lacks not any excellance which may be found in any genus. This may be seen from two considerations. First, because whatever perfection exists in an effect
must be found in the effective cause: either in the same formality, if it is a univocal agent - as when man produces man; or in a more eminent degree, if it is an equivocal agent - thus in the sun the likeness of whatever is generated by the sun's power... Since therefore God is the first effective cause of things, the perfections of all things must re-exist in God in a more eminent way. Dionysius implies the same line of argument by saying of God: It is not that He is this and not that, but that He is all, as the cause of all. Secondly... God is existence itself, of itself subsistent. Consequently He must contain within Himself the whole perfection of being.

Our consideration of the vibhūtis has been to go deeper into the concept of the world according to our sacred book. In this consideration, as Aurobindo says, "We have the way of the origination of the world from God, the immanence of the Divine in it and its immanence in the Divine, the essential unity of all existence, the relation of the human soul obscured in nature to the Godhead, its awakening to self-knowledge, its birth into a greater consciousness, its ascent into its own spiritual heights." Thus understood, the vibhūtis give a very realistic concept of the world. The vibhūtis are the manifestations of the divine in the world not merely in the sense of the moon reflected in the water but rather as realities which are at their depths, are as real as the divine. Or as Aquinas would say that "Perfections manifold and divided in other things are simple and united in God." 37

The vision of the cosmic form of the Lord in the eleventh chapter is, in a sense, the picturesque, poetic and mystical representation of the philosophy of the vibhūtis. Here there is no theorizing about the
truth how the Lord is in everything (10:20; 16:18; 17:8 etc.) and every­
thing is in the Lord (7:7; 16:20 and so on). It is seen by Arjuna with his supernatural eyes. Only a gross misunderstanding of the literary form, purpose, atmosphere and nature of this theophany would make some of the scientific critics point out various "contradictions" in this narrative. Bolvalkar, therefore, quite justifiably dismisses unanswered such "contradictions" or "inconsistencies" found in the description of the cosmic form. It must not be forgotten that Arjuna was able to see the cosmic form only when the Lord had given him a supernatural eye (divyam caksu 11:18). Therefore, a piece-meal analytical study with our puny little 'scientific mind' without seriously taking into account its numinous element would be indeed as inadequate as the effort to understand the nature of an elephant through a microscope.

Arjuna requests the Lord (11:3-4) to show him his imperishable form. After giving Arjuna the supernatural eye, the Lord shows his supreme lordly form (11:9). Verses from 10 to 14 consist of a brief description of the cosmic form of the Lord by Sanjaya. From 15 to 30 Arjuna overwhelmed by the great theophany bursts forth into praises of the Lord describing the Lord’s form. Arjuna begins by confessing that he sees on the Lord’s body all the contingent beings (sarvams tatha bhuta-visesa-sahbhagam, 15). In 16 and 19 the idea that the Lord is the beginning, middle and end is described as Arjuna sees with his divine eye not as a metaphysical conclusion. In 30, addressing the Lord Visnu Arjuna says that the Lord’s dreadful light fills the whole universe with flames of glory which reminds us of 10:41-42 where the Lord says how the vibhutis are his tejomsa. In verse 37 Arjuna proclaims the absolute supremacy and
transcendence of the Lord by saying that the Lord is sat, sat and
what surpasseth both. 42

That is obvious for our point of view is that the Visvarupa which
Arjuna was shown is real with all its details. All that is in the world
is real, indeed as real as the Lord. Commenting on verses 11-13 Ramanuja
quite realistically and in a very direct and straightforward way explains
how the varieties of contingent beings found in the brahmanda is found
in the body of the Lord, as real as himself. In the Christian tradition
too there have been mystics who had the experience of the immanence of
all things in God and God in all things. St. Theresa, in her autobio­
graphy writes: "Once when I was in prayer, I saw, for a very brief time
and without any distinctness of form but with perfect clarity, how all
things are seen in God and how within Himself He contains them all." 43
Then she goes on saying about the inexplicability of her vision with any
adequacy. Finally by means of certain images she explains the vision
which has a striking similarity with the theophany of BG. 11, in the
following words:

Let us suppose that the Godhead is like a very clear, diamond,
much larger than the whole world... Let us suppose furthermore,
that all we do is see in this diamond, which is of such a kind
that it contains everything within itself, because there is
nothing capable of falling outside such greatness. It was a
terrifying experience for me, in so short a space of time to
see so many things at once in the clear depths of that diamond. 44

G: MÁYÁ AND THE WORLD

Because of the all-pervasive and domineering influence of Saṅkar-
vedānta, any treatment of the concept of the world in the Indian situa-
tion ignoring mayavād would be a grave omission. Besides, in the BG the word maya occurs five times.\textsuperscript{45} For our purpose it would be enough to make some general remarks on the concept of maya and then to analyse the texts where this term occurs to find out the exact meaning of this concept in the BG.

1. \textbf{Some General Remarks on the concept of Mayā}

Usually the concept of maya is rendered in English by that of illusion. And this translation is far from adequate to do justice to the concept of maya. Ruth Reyna in her comprehensive and enlightened study on this subject says: "Rarely does maya mean to Indian philosophy, even to Sankara that the world is illusion, that it does not exist and therefore should be explained away.\textsuperscript{46} Indeed, maya is a concept charged with various shades of meanings during its evolution through diverse schools down the centuries, and so any facile translation of its into English is bound to misrepresent the reality it stands for.

According to Monier Williams' dictionary maya comes from the root ma-mati (or māyata) which means to measure. Though Radhakrishnan accepts mā as the root, he gives meanings such as to form to build or to have the capacity to produce forms.\textsuperscript{47} It meant earlier as art, wisdom, extraordinary power etc. though later on the meanings of unreality, trick, deception etc. were added to it. Vaishnavites consider maya as one of the nine saktis of Lord Visnu. According to Radhakrishnan, "The creative power by which God fashions the universe is called yoga-maya",\textsuperscript{48} and we shall see this definition of maya does justice to a great extent to this concept in the BG.
Ruth Reyna points out numerous texts in the Śruti literature where the term mayā occurs. Even a casual look at some of these texts can help us to give a somewhat satisfactory interpretation of the term in the BG.⁴⁸

In the Rgveda (5:85:5) the mighty deeds of Varuṇa are called mayā. Indra assumes many forms by his mayā(6:47:18). In 10:54:2, the battles of Indra are said to be of the nature of mayā since in truth he had no enemies. In Praśna Upaniṣad (1:16) mayā is used in the sense of trickery. In SV Up.(4:10) the Lord is said to be the wielder of mayā identifying it with prakṛti.⁵⁰ Here mayā is used in the realistic sense of Śāṅkhya prakṛti. The realistic meaning of mayā is clear in 4:9 too. In Br. Up. Indras multiplying himself in many forms is called mayā (2:5:19). In short we may say that the meaning of mayā in the Śruti literature is a combination of the sense of divine power which gives wondrous results and the sense of magic. The Śruti literature was fully aware that reality is one radically(Rg. 1:164:46; Ait. Up. 1:1:1; Br. Up. 1:4:1) and that the multiplicity seen has its origin in the One(Rg. 6:47:18; Chānd. Up 6:2:3), by his desiring to be many. The Nasādīya Sūkta of the Rgveda is a clear proof the awareness of the sages of the Śruti literature of the truth-untruth combination of reality, the echo of which we have already seen in the BG.

2. 'Māyā' in the BG

Among the five texts in which the concept 'māyā' occurs, the first is 4:6 in which the Lord says that he takes up his divino-human existence by his own mayā(ātmamayā). Śaṅkara identifies here māyā with prakṛti
while Ramanuja calls it jñānam (knowledge and will). Mainkar expresses his preference of Vallabhacārya's interpretation in the sense of sakti. This is the sense of māya in the Sv. Up. which had much influence on the BG, and so we too feel that the interpretation of Vallabha is quite plausible.

In 7:14 māya is declared as gunamayi and he who surrenders himself to the Lord transcends this māya. Here, this word stands quite clearly for prakṛti in the sense of Sv. Up. 4:16. Both the ācāryas Śaṅkara and Ramanuja understand māya here in terms of prakṛti while the latter emphatically stressed the reality of this prakṛti. In 7:15 māya is considered as that which hinders true knowledge not in the sense of a passive veil that covers up truth but rather as an active power. In 7:25 māya occurs with another word viz. yoga. Here too the 'reality' stands for yoga-māya in such that it hinders the vision of the underlying unity of all realities in the Lord. The last occurrence of the word māya in the BG is in 18:61 where it is stated that the Lord, remaining in the region of the heart of all beings, makes them turn round by his māya. Here again māya stands for as a principle of action rooted in and directed by the Lord. Mainkar sees a probable influence of the Brahma-cakra of Sv. Up (1:6) on this concept of finite beings mounted on a machine moved around by the Lord.

If we look at the texts where the concept of māya occurs, independently of the controversies among different schools, we easily give a realistic interpretation. Māya in the BG seems to stand as a principle of multiplicity, of action, of causing ignorance with regard to the
one Lord who gives a radical unity to all things. It is very much like the Sāṅkhya-prakṛti. And this māyā is totally dependent on the Lord in the sense that the Lord is its author. If this māyā is interpreted in a totally illusionistic way, it is not on the evidence of the texts themselves but for the philosophical reasons which try to find an ultimate solution to the question of one and many.

II: CONCLUSIONS

As K.T. Telang point out, since the BG belongs to "an age prior to the system making age of Sanskrit philosophy" we cannot expect a systematic and "scientific" exposition of themes with precise and clear-cut definitions. It is because of this awareness that we approached the question of 'Jagata' not directly analysing this concept or its synonyms in their contexts but indirectly through other concepts and themes which could lead us to an overall view of the Gita-concept of 'Jagat'. Our primary interest has been to know whether our sacred book takes the world in a realistic sense or not.

It is through the concepts of prakṛti, kaśra, kaśtra, asvattha tree and vibhūti we approached the concept of the 'world'. As a climax to this study we tried to have a glimpse of the world through Arjuna's eyes contemplating the cosmic form of the Lord. Looking at the texts as they are, independently of the controversies among different philosophical schools, we felt that all these concepts give a realistic view of the world. The BG does not conceive the world as an illusion caused by avidya.

What is strongly emphasized in the BG is that the world is totally
dependent on the Lord corresponding to the total causality of Brahman which we have already seen in the first chapter. Our sacred book does take up the dualistic principles of Sāṅkhya, but to unify them in the Lord, the Purusottama. Whatever exists belongs either to the Pāra or to the Apara nature of the Lord, the puruṣa-parā (the puruṣa beyond the empirical puruṣa) of 13:22. Indeed, the kṣetra-kṣetrajña-samjog of 13:26 is a far cry at once to Sāṅkhya dualism and to advaitic adhyāyasavāda. The Gītā-synthesis of the Sāṅkhya dualistic principles in the Lord does not devalue the ontological density given to these principles in the Sāṅkhya system. The contingent beings are like pearls in a unifying thread that is the Lord (7:7).

Is this realistic view of the world in the BG confined to the vyavahārika stand-point alone? Apart from the fact that our sacred book does not make such a distinction, it must be remembered that when the Lord speaks of the world in a realistic sense, it must be taken more authoritatively than any ordinary āpta-vākya. It has the authority of the Lord Himself. The realistic view of the world which Arjuna had, was not from the vyavahārika stand-point. It is a vision with the divine eye (divyam caksu 11:8), a vision which was given as a reward to him by the Lord’s grace (11:46). Certainly this is not a vyavahārika experience. If this is not paramārthika experience how does it differ from Arjuna’s experience here?

From the various passages in the BG it is obvious, as has been obvious to the ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Mādhva and Vallabha, and to modern scholars like Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and Malinkar, that the world in
this sacred book is something very real even when viewed with the
divine eye. And the higher synthesis the BG achieves of the Śāṅkhya
dualism in the Kṛṣṇottama does not diminish the ontological value of
the world. However, one might ask the question whether the Śāṅkara-vedānt with its well-known Sattattraīvidyā could give even a more satisfac-
tory philosophical synthesis in the Viṣṇu Brahman. Śāṅkaraśrīrya's
commentary seems to give a mayāvadic interpretation to the BG ontology.
But our position is that such an interpretation does not seem to improve
upon the uniquely balanced synthesis achieved by the BG without explai-
ing away anything.