CHAPTER III
ULTIMATE REALITY

1. In the System of Suddhadvaita Vedānta, otherwise known as Brahmavāda, the One, Secondless Ultimate Reality is the only category. Every other thing has proceeded from it at the time of Creation, is non-different from it during Creation, and merges into it at the time of Dissolution. The two other well-known categories, namely, the animate souls and the inanimate objects are respectively its parts and modifications. The animate souls are its parts because they retain to some extent the essential qualities thereof, namely, consciousness and joy. The inanimate objects are its modifications, because these qualities are absent therein. The nearest analogy is that of a gold ingot. Small particles of gold can be had therefrom. Ornaments too can be made thereof. The Ultimate Reality corresponds to the gold ingot; the animate souls to small particles; and the inanimate objects exhibiting rich variety to various ornaments. Particles and ornaments are in substance no less gold.

2. 'God' is nothing but a convenient theological term for this Ultimate Reality. In the Vedic Scriptures it is called 'Brahma' because it is greater than its parts, the animate souls and its modifications, the inanimate objects. It is also called 'Paramātma' because it pervades them all.
These two aspects are more or less impersonal. In its personal aspect it is known as 'Bhagavān', the word which is generally an equivalent of 'God'. These different words will be employed in different contexts. But their meaning will be one and the same, namely, the Ultimate Reality.

3. For his metaphysical system which centres round this One, Secondless Ultimate Reality, Śrī-Vallabhācārya has wholly relied on the Vedic Scriptures, especially, the Upaniṣads, which are generally known as 'Śruti'. And in what follows the words 'Vedic Passage', 'Upaniṣadic Passage', 'Śruti-Passage', and 'Scriptural Passage' are employed in the same sense.

4. 'Suddhādvaita' means unity pure and simple. Now let us first see how Śrī-Vallabhācārya, wholly relying on Vedic Scriptures, arrives at such a doctrine and next consider whether there is some rational justification for the same.

5. Turning to the Upaniṣads, which form a very vital part of Vedic Scriptures so far as their metaphysical doctrine is considered, we find the Passage,

"Sad eva Somys idam agre āsīd, ekam eva advitīyam" (1) meaning "In the beginning there was only one Real Entity, only one and that too without a second". Thereafter comes another Passage,

"Tad aikṣata 'Bahu syām, prajayeya' iti" (2)
meaning "That one Real Entity wished; let me become many, let me multiply myself". And later on it is stated that it did become many and did multiply itself. Relying on these two and similar other passages, Śrī-Śrī-Vallabhācārya has arrived at his doctrine of Suddhādvaita Brahmacāda. Now let us see what this "Sat", the Ultimate Reality, is. Some Western Philosopher has remarked to the effect that man first looks out, next looks in, and then looks up. (3) And it is in this way that we become aware of the world without, of the soul within, and of God beyond. Physical sciences study the world without; psychical sciences study the soul within; and theological systems study God beyond. The discussion in detail of the natures of the world without and of the soul within has little relevance in this thesis. So, it is only in their relation with the Ultimate Reality that their natures will be discussed later on. So for the present, let us confine ourselves to the discussion of the nature of God, the Ultimate Substance, from which, according to the Vedantic doctrine, both the world without and the soul within are derived.

6: From the strictly rationalistic point of view, the enlightened human mind is the only source from which all concepts arise. So, it is to this source that we have to turn for our concept of God. Mahātma Gāndhi, as all know, was certainly endowed with an enlightened mind. Now, let us see what he has to say about God. He writes:
"There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

"But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even as an ordinary affair we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules... I do feel .... that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. That law then which governs all life is God. Law and lawgiver are one. I may not deny that Law and Lawgiver, because I know so little about it or him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and his Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

"I do dimly perceive that as everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates. The informing power or spirit is God..."
"And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is supreme Good.... I confess that I have no argument to convince through reason. Faith transcends reason." (4)

From these gems from the pen of Mahatma Gandhi, a veritable prophet of the present age, it will appear that God is more of a powerful principle to be felt in one's own life rather than to be known through senses or to be demonstrated to others dialectically or experimentally. It is just like one's health. It is something to be felt and not known through eyes or ears. Ordinarily, what is vital is generally felt, and what is non-vital is generally known. A doctor only knows the pain, but the patient actually feels it. Moreover, this God is a powerful principle that controls the universe, a powerful principle that keeps everything in order, a powerful principle that silently and incessantly works regardless of the fact whether we are conscious or unconscious of its existence. In other words, God is like the law of gravitation that goes on working incessantly though silently regardless of the fact whether people know it or not. Moreover, God resembles force. We do not know what force is. We know, however, what force does. In this respect God and our own soul are alike. We do not know what a human or an animal soul is. But we certainly know what
it does. The body that is animated, functions. The one which is dead, does not. Physically and chemically a living body and a dead body do not much differ. Then this functioning of the body is due to the presence of the soul in it. This soul may have individuality and consciousness as is the case with either the human or the animal soul. Or it may have no individuality and no consciousness as is the case with the state of perfect fitting of the various parts of a machine. Nevertheless, this state of perfect fitting of the various parts of a machine is the soul of that machine. If it is there, the machine works; if not, it does not. If we want to know the omnipresent nature of God, it will be absolutely necessary for us to extend our notion of the soul. In today’s thought, our notion of the soul is very limited. It is limited only to the principle animating a human or an animal body. In Indian philosophical thought, the word 'Atma' has this extended sense. It is derived as

'Atati vyapnoti iti Atma'

meaning 'Atma is that which pervades and thus animates'.

Returning to the point, let us note that Mahatma Gandhi has, moreover, found this God to be good.

7. But here a very pertinent question can arise in our mind. Is this principle intelligent? i.e., Does it work with discrimination? Or, does it work blindly and inexorably like the law of gravitation? An answer to this will be found in
the following words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, another enlightened Indian mind:

"Philosophy has its roots in man's practical needs. If a system of thought cannot justify fundamental human instincts and interpret the deeper spirit of religion, it cannot meet with general acceptance. The speculations of philosophers, which do not comfort us in our stress and suffering, are mere intellectual diversion and not serious thinking. The absolute of Śāṅkara, rigid, motionless, and totally lacking in initiative or influence, cannot call forth our worship. .... The obvious fact of experience that, when weak and erring human beings call from the depths, the helping hand of grace is stretched out from the unknown, is ignored. Śāṅkara does not deal justly with the living sense of companionship which the devotees have in their different lives." (5)

Before commenting upon these lines, I am tempted to quote the following lines from Śūradāsa:

"Suneri maine nirbalake bala Rāma:
Pichālī sākha bharūṁ santanakī,
Āde sambhāre kāma." (6)

meaning that the poet has heard that God helps the helpless; and that he can cite a number of instances from the lives of devotees that God has always stood by their side in the hour of their need and has as a rule ferried them across, out of
troubles, safely to the other shore.

Coming to the point, from the above words of Dr. Radhakrishnan we learn that this governing principle, conveniently termed God, is not only powerful, but is also kind. He is ever ready to help a person in distress. Call him forth from the depth of your heart; and he is there eagerly waiting to come to your help. Moreover, he is always by your side. He never leaves you even for a moment. It is something like the clearness of water. It is always there. Remove the dirt and it is there. You have not to import it from outside.

8. Not only saints like Mahātmā Gandhī, but scientists like Sir C.V. Rāman have also amply experienced this kind and constant companionship of this Ultimate Principle. This latter when visiting Ahmedabad had said in one of his lectures that during various scientific experiments he was just like a person groping in darkness; nevertheless it was his constant experience that he hit upon the right course either in his first, second, or third attempt. And it is because of the complete conviction of the kind and constant companionship of the good God guiding our intellect that the Vedic Seer, Viśvāmitra, in his famous Gāyatrī Mantra, (7) which is daily repeated by devout Brahmins, prays to the Ultimate Principle that it may lead him aright; and Śrī-Vallabhācārya prays as follows:

"Buddhi-preraka-Kṛṣṇasya pāda-padmāṃ prasīdatu" (8)
meaning "May the lotus-foot of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who guides our intellect, do us favour".

Coming to the point, we are compelled to state that to ignore the solid experiences of such devotees of Truth as Mahātmā Gāndhī and Sir C.V. Rāman and to say that God is merely an idea arising in a weak mind suffering from fear-complex is mere meaningless persistence in one's own ignorance, more to be pitied than condemned.

9. Now let us see if any other consideration leads us in this direction. The Bible says: "The Kingdom of God is within you." (9) The Kaṭha Upaniṣad in the same strain says:

"K̄scid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmanam aikṣad
Āvṛtta-caksur aṁṛtatvām icchān." (10)

meaning "Some rare seeker of life eternal turned his gaze inward and saw God face to face." God is both within and without. The difference is, however, that God without is simply known whereas God within is actually felt. The hunger of another person is simply known; but one's own hunger is keenly felt. And knowing and feeling are worlds apart. Other thinkers simply knew that the world is full of misery, whereas Gautama Buddha actually felt it. Other Indians knew that India was in bondage, whereas Mahātmā Gāndhī actually felt it. In the same way, philosophers simply know that God is everywhere, whereas saints actually feel his presence everywhere. That is why the hearts of the latter are full of compassion for
even the tiniest of creatures.

10. Moreover, even where God without is known, it is so always with the help of the mental apparatus that lies within. So let us direct our gaze inward. Doing so, we find that our enlightened mind is full of certain notions. And one very important notion among these is of infinity. Almost all the objects of our experience are finite, i.e., limited in time, space, and substance. And the finite nature of these objects leaves us dissatisfied. We hanker after more and more. Take for instance, our knowledge. This knowledge is a very vital part of our nature. It is this knowledge, this ever-expanding knowledge that has made man the master of things. The progress of civilization is no less due to this ever-expanding knowledge. The amount of knowledge that has gradually accumulated during the recent decades is simply tremendous. Nevertheless it is limited, and it has left humanity dissatisfied, which as such hankers after more and more of it. Now, a very pertinent and a searching question can be asked: How are we to explain this notion of infinity and the consequent sense of dissatisfaction? Moreover, there is a definite progress; and besides this there is also now an undisputed fact of evolution. But we can ask here also: Granted that there is a progress or an evolution, but in what direction? Certainly not in the direction of that which is not. Such a belief is simply shocking. As much shocking as the belief that something comes out of nothing. As for this latter belief, it is referred to and refuted by a
a direct appeal to the heart even in the Upaniṣads.

"Tad ha eke āhuḥ;
Asad eva idam agre āsīt. ... Tasmāt asatāḥ
sat jāyata. Kutaḥ tu khalu Somya evam syāt. ...
Kathām asatāḥ sat jāyeta." (11)

It is here said: "Some say that what we perceive today was absolutely nonexistent in the past. But, my dear, how can it be possible? How can something come out of nothing?" The Greeks put their golden age in the past, we put it in future. They believed that such a golden age did exist in the past; and we believe that our future golden age is not merely a wishful thinking. The historical current of the past as well as the present centuries definitely points in that direction. We may or may not believe in a Personal God ruling over the universe like a king either despotic, just, or benevolent. But no sane man can deny this ideal state of bliss which either was in the past or will be in the future. And if we equate this ideal state with God, there remains no difficulty whatsoever in believing in the existence of God. Mahātmā Gāndhī, a staunch believer in God, could convince others only when he made Truth his God. Theists or no-theists, saints or scientists—all without an exception are votaries of Truth. And there is no harm whatsoever in inverting our position. Instead of making questionable God our ideal, let us make our definite ideal our God. The word 'Paramātmā' for God in Indian Theology has this inversion at its root. God is an ideal state of Ātma, the soul.
11. Though the method adopted by Indian Philosophers and Religionists appear to be dogmatic, their great authority, the Vedas, especially the Upaniṣadic portions, appear not to have adopted the same. The questioning spirit which permeates them is simply admirable. Take for instance, the opening portion of the Śvetāsvāropaniṣad:

"Aum! Brahmavādino vadanti:
Kim kāraṇam Brahma? Kutaḥ sma jātāḥ?
Jīvāma kena? Kva ca sāmpratiśṭhāḥ?
Adhiśṭhitāh kena sukhetareṣu
Vartāmahe Brahmavidyo vyavasthām?" (12)

meaning "Philosophers ask such questions as: What is the Ultimate Cause? Who is responsible for our creation? What sustains us? What supports us? What drives us in the direction which we are least willing to take?" Is there anything dogmatic about this? To take another instance, let us turn to the Śvetaketūpākhyāna of the Chāndogypaṇiṣad. Here Śvetaketu returns conceited from his preceptor after completing his studies. His father in order to humble his pride asks him:

"Śvetaketu, yan nu, Somya, idam mahāmanā anucānanāṁ ānubhaḥ asi, uta tam ādesam aprāksayah yena aśrutam aśrutam bhavati, amatam matam, avijnātam vijñātam iti" (13)

meaning "My dear Śvetaketu, you think yourself great, you
think you have studied everything, you feel proud; but have you learnt that from your preceptor, which enables you to know even that which you have not learnt, to know that which you have otherwise not known, and to visualize that which you do not face?" There is nothing absurd about such a sweeping question. Look to money in our ordinary commerce. Does it not enable us to procure so many things though by itself it is one. Take another instance. Does a microscope though one not enable us to see so many minute things not otherwise seen? Is this attitude dogmatic? As to the fundamentals even the scientists and logicians have to believe in them. Even a doubter cannot doubt everything. He has to believe in himself and in his doubting method.

12. The last-quoted instance is relevant to the point under consideration. We go on adding and adding to our knowledge, and still we want to know more and more. Will this hunger ever be satisfied? The Upaniṣads say 'yes'. They say:

"Bhidyate hṛdaya-granthih,
Chidyante sarva-saṃśayāḥ;
Kṣiyante cāsyā karmāṇi
Tasmin drṣte parāvare." (14)

meaning "The knot tying the mind snaps as-under, all the doubts are set at rest, there remains nothing to be done when once the Highest Reality is caught hold of." The true grasp of the Highest Principle brings about complete satiation. The
Bhagavadgītā also says:

"Yam labdhvā cāparam labham
Manyate nādhiṃkam tatāh;
Yasmin sthito na duhkhena
Guruṇāpi vicālyate." (15)

meaning "Once you have had this greatest gain, you feel that nothing more is required. Nay more ! Let all calamities beset you - all at the same time. But you remain perfectly unruffled."

13. After referring to knowledge in its infinite aspect, let us now turn to power. Although it is being popularly said that 'Knowledge is Power', yet they are essentially different, and this general statement is merely metaphorical. And the difference between them can clearly be grasped from the popular parable of the blind and the lame persons. The lame person had only the knowledge of the road, whereas the blind person had only the power to move on the road. Coming to the point, practically all of us do possess some power, however limited in extent it may be. But, as in the case of the knowledge so in the case of this power too, we want to have more and more of it.

14. Now let us combine these two vital aspects of humanity, knowledge and power, and also combine them with the notion of infinity which alone can explain our hankering after
more and more of them, and still further combine them with the already discussed principle of "Something can never come out of nothing," an entity having infinite knowledge and infinite power can very easily be postulated though not proved. And we can conveniently term such an entity 'God'. And this very well conforms with the general notion of God as omniscient and omnipotent, i.e., all-knowing and all-powerful. And let us not forget that in an intelligent being these two factors will always remain together. For we know from our own experience that most of our powerlessness arises from our ignorance. We may have power but for want of knowledge it becomes of no use. And it is just this that has given rise to the adage "Knowledge is Power." Moreover, the present human mastery over physical forces is due solely to the vast amount of knowledge acquired during recent decades.

15. Now, besides these two, namely, knowledge and power, there is a third very important element in life. And this is goodness. Kindness and loveliness are mere variations of goodness. So they need not be considered separately. By themselves knowledge and power are neutral. They can be used for good as well as bad ends. Gods possess knowledge and power to a considerable extent. Demons also do the same. But, whereas the former use them for good ends, the latter do so for bad ones. This is the only difference between gods and demons. As for this goodness, we do have it in life, but to a limited extent. To remain healthy is good; but we are
not ideally healthy. To be wealthy is good; but we do not have wealth to the extent we would like to have it. We can combine the notion of goodness with that of infinity. And we have the notion of infinite goodness, not finding which we remain ever dissatisfied. Now, this infinite goodness also is closely related to infinite knowledge and infinite power. For ignorance and weakness are generally not good.

16. Now, the close association of these three infinite elements will necessarily bring a fourth element, namely, that of omnipresence, i.e., presence at all places and at all times. To understand the necessity of this omnipresence, let us take a concrete example. A has a son B, who has gone to England for study. After studying for a few years, this latter is due for a very important examination. In what way can his father A who lives in India be of actual help to him in his examination? If this A has living faith in an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnigood God, he can at best pray to this latter. But if this latter, i.e., God to whom A has prayed to help his son B in the examination in England is not present there at the time of the examination, how can he help B? So without being omnipresent, God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnigood will be able to do nothing; and so without omnipresence these three previous
qualities will cease to be what they are. So, if there is God, he must be omniscient, omnipotent, omnigood, and omnipresent. With our limited intellectual faculties it is impossible to visualize, i.e., to comprehend such Almighty God. And hence the necessity of Faith.

17. Science which proceeds with doubt, which is proud of its own achievement, which wants to give shape to things unknown in the light of the limited knowledge it possesses, and which roughly brushes aside as imaginary whatever it cannot satisfactorily explain, and which nevertheless does not admit its own inability, can never lead us far. It is the Faith, the instinctive faith of a highly noble, a highly humble, and a highly imaginative mind, that alone will enable man to grasp the farthest and the deepest mysteries of the universe. "No trusting without testing" is a very valuable maxim; but to deny the existence of a thing altogether simply because one has no knowledge thereof is disastrous to the progress of science. Sir J.C. Bose successfully demonstrated that life permeates even so-called lifeless substances. But this idea he had inherited from the sages of the past who had arrived at it instinctively. It is the haughtiness of physical sciences, which are dazzled with the excessive light of their positive material achievements, that has arrested their progress from proceeding to and exploring
innumerable other spheres. In this connection the following verse is very instructive:

"It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes.
But it is wisdom to believe the heart:
Columbus found the world and had no chart." (16)

And even in the sphere of physical sciences, greatest inventions had their roots in human imagination. Television, the greatest of modern inventions, took its shape first in the imagination of its inventor, Dr. Baird. In denying spirit and its infinite potential capacities, physical sciences are suffering from the vice of "little learning" spoken of in the following lines:

"Little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep or taste not Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again." (17)

After this much consideration, it will be amply clear that the belief in some Ideal Ultimate Principle, conveniently called God, is not altogether without rational foundation.

18. Now, we may safely turn to the Vedas and to the philosophic system of Śrī-Vallabhaśārya, which is founded
on them, for what they have to say in connection with so rich an entity as God.

19. The Vedas declare:

"Sad eva Somya idam agre āsīd, ekam eva advitīyam." (18)

which means: "There was, in the beginning, only one real substance, and that too, without a second." Later on it is stated that the universe with all its rich variety proceeded from it and after some time (it is immaterial how vast it is) this universe will return to it and will become one with it. The language employed here is metaphysical. Paraphrased into the theological one, it comes to this: God, one and without a second, created this universe out of himself and will after some time take it back into himself. But, here our chief concern is with one point only, namely, God is one and that too without a second. And it is this point which is going to be taken up for detailed consideration here.

20. The statement to be considered here is: God is one; and that too without a second. This statement is capable of being interpreted in two ways. And these two ways arise from the two ways in which the word "second" is interpreted. If by the word "second" is meant a second
God, the statement means that there is only one God and there is no other God, in other words, there are no two Gods; but there can be entities other than God. The dualistic philosophers like Śrī-Madhvacārya adopt this interpretation. If, however, by the word "second" is meant a second entity, the statement means that God is the only Ultimate substance in the universe, in other words, there is no entity other than God, God is the only entity in the universe. This is the interpretation adopted by monistic philosophers like Śrī-Vallabhaścārya. There is one extreme view as regards the second interpretation. And this extreme view arises from the logical limitation, namely, one is always one and is never two. Śrī-Saṅkaracārya takes this extreme view. According to him everything other than this one Ultimate Substance, which may happen to appear, is only apparent and not real. Take for instance a rope lying in semi-darkness. A rope is a rope. It cannot become a serpent. One thing cannot become another. The serpent that appears instead of the rope is only apparent and not real. Śrī-Vallabhaścārya does not go to this extreme. According to him the other substance is a modification of the first. An illustration will serve to make the point clear. Suppose for argument's sake that water is the ultimate substance. Now ice which is a modification of water appears as ice
and not as water, i.e. it appears as something other than water. So, according to Śrī-Śaṁkarācārya it is apparent and not real; in other words, it does not exist at all. But, according to Śrī-Vallabhācārya, it is a modification of water, it is water itself in another form, and it is as real as water.

21. Though not very relevant, the first interpretation may be discussed in detail as it has got some philosophical importance. According to this interpretation, there can be only one God and not two. Why so can be shown as below: Above, we have shown that God fulfils a philosophical necessity. To explain satisfactorily our notions of infinite power, infinite knowledge, and infinite goodness, we have to postulate some such entity endowed with these qualities; and we have for convenience sake termed this entity "God". For our present purpose the consideration of the first of these three qualities is quite sufficient. And this quality is infinite power. Now suppose there are two Gods, quite distinct from each other. For convenience sake let us call them A and B. Now they are distinct, so their powers also are distinct. Take for instance two roses. Both of them have fragrance. But the fragrance of one is quite distinct from that of the other. They are similar but not the same. In the same way, the power of A is not the power of B and the power of B is
not the power of A. Now, if a lacks the power of B, his power becomes finite; and the same is the case with B. For, by infinite we mean all-comprehensive. Next, if there are two Gods, distinct from and independent of each other, they are at some time bound to have different wishes; and to gratify them, both being powerful, they are bound to quarrel; and this quarrel would either be eternal or would end with the triumph of one and the defeat of the other. In the first case, there would remain no hope for eternal peace which all of us hanker after; and in the second case the triumphant God remains the only God. We who hanker after eternal peace would prefer the second alternative to the first, and admit that there cannot be two Gods, each having infinite power.

22. Now, leaving aside the extreme view of the second interpretation, according to which anything appearing different from the Ultimate Reality is altogether non-existent, as it is not very relevant to our purpose, we may consider at some length that view which Śrī-Vallabhācārya has adopted. According to this view, God is the only real substance; and other substances are only modifications of God, and as such are as real as God. Ice and steam do exist. They have not the appearance of water. They appear somewhat different from the water. Nevertheless they in substance are not no-water. They are only the different forms of the self-same water. They are water
but only in a different form. When an ingot of gold is given the shape of an ornament, it does not cease to be gold. There is the change of form only and not of substance. From these instances, we may now turn to God, the Ultimate Substance. Besides God about whom we ordinarily know only through the Vedas or similar other works of revelation, we find two other substances unmistakably presented to our healthy senses. They are animate souls and inanimate substances. According to this second interpretation, these animate souls and inanimate are but the modification of that self-same one God; in other words, they are that one God in different forms, as is the case with ice and steam which are the self-same water in different forms. Why so? There is some capacity inherent in water which enables it to become ice and steam. We have to admit it because we see it. The same is true of this one God of Scriptures, who possesses an infinite number of powers. One of these inherent infinite powers enables God to assume any form he likes. In this connection Śrī-Vallabhācārya's dictum,

"Sarva-bhāva-samarthatvād
Acintyaisvāryavad Brhat." (19)

meaning "The Ultimate Entity can assume all forms whatsoever. As such its powers are simply incomprehensible." very well expresses this idea.

23. Relying on the Vedas, Śrī-Vallabhācārya believes
that in the beginning, i.e., before this Creation came into existence, the Ultimate Reality was the only entity; and it was this one Ultimate Reality which became many. And it is this act of becoming many that is responsible for the coming into existence of this Creation. Now this fact of creation also when closely considered lends rational support to the doctrine of Sūdhādvaita or pure Monism.

24. Now, look at this creation! It is not so simple an object as a pot made by a potter. And even to make a pot is not an easy thing. To make such a pot also requires a lot of skill, time, and trouble, and a fairly long process as well. Now, looking to the universe, we find in it, first of all, the most wonderful design, the most wonderful order, the most wonderful self-operating processes, the most wonderful self-enforcing laws, still more wonderful psychological entities like intellect, intuition, will, emotion, and so on and so forth. Looking to all this do we not feel that this universe is simply wonder incarnate? Next think of the entity, whether personal or impersonal, that has brought about all this! Śrī-Sāmakācārya in his Sārīraka Bhāṣya on the Brahma-sūtras, in this connection, writes to the effect that, looking to the universe one finds in it an infinite variety of names and forms, an infinite variety of persons who incessantly go on doing something or another,
an equally infinite variety of persons voluntarily engaged in pursuit and enjoyment of pleasures or involuntarily suffering a lot of pain, and over and above all these, strict laws governing time, space, and the various events taking place therein; and then adds that it is impossible to conceive mentally even how all this comes to pass, with the further remark that one that is responsible for all this must certainly be omniscient and omnipotent. (20) Śrī-
Vallabhācārya also in the same context writes to the effect that, to create without the least effort this universe wherein we find a number of elements, organisms, gods, men, beasts, and innumerable wonderfully designed worlds, to sustain it, and again to dissolve it, is certainly not ordinary. (21)

25. Now there arises a very important question: A potter makes a pot out of clay. A goldsmith makes ornaments out of gold. Out of what, then, does the Creator create this universe? Without clay the potter is helpless. For, without it he cannot make a pot. Similarly, the goldsmith cannot make ornaments without gold. Moreover, the potter requires a wheel; and the goldsmith his tools. Without these also they can do nothing. Does the Creator, too, then require any tools with which to fashion the universe? The clay and the wheel are other than the potter; the gold and the tools are other than the goldsmith. Now, if the Creator were to need a material like clay or gold; or
were to depend on instruments like the potter's wheel or the goldsmith's tools, would it not curtail his independence to that extent? How would this be compatible with his infinite power or omnipotence? Śrī-Madhvacārya very forcefully brings out this aspect of the Almighty in the following stanza:

"Paratantro hyapekṣeta; 
Svatantrāṁ kīm apekṣate? 
Sādhanaṁ śādhanatvāṁ 
Yateḥ kīṁ āsya śādhanaiḥ?" (22)

where it is stated: One who is not independent may have to depend on other factors. But would one who is absolutely independent have to depend on them? On the contrary, these very factors have to depend on God. Would such a God have to depend on such factors which by themselves without this God can do nothing? The following parable from the Kenopanisad is highly instructive in this connection:

Once upon a time, gods won a very great victory. This victory was won simply through the grace of God who always works and helps imperceptibly. The gods, however, thought that it was won through their own valour; and on account of it began to hold their heads high. God, the Almighty, out of infinite grace, wanted to bring them back to their senses. Accordingly, he assumed a mysterious form and appeared before them. The gods in order to know what
this mysterious being was first sent Agni, the God of Fire. When Agni approached God, God asked him, "Who are you and what type of power do you possess?" "Agni am I; and I can reduce to ashes whatever comes in my way, even if it be the whole of this Earth" said he. Then God held forth a bit of straw and asked Agni to burn it. Agni exerted his utmost, but was unable to burn it. He felt dejected and returned to the gods disappointed. Next came Vayu, the God of Wind, and Indra, the God of Rain. But they too shared the same fate. Thereafter God disappeared; and there appeared a woman of exquisite beauty, who taught the gods that the mysterious being was no other than God the Almighty, through whose Grace alone they had won their victory. In this way they learnt what the true state of things is. (23) Would such an Almighty God require the help of other factors?

26. Śrī-Vallabhācārya in his Aṣṭa Bhāṣya on the Samanvaya-Sūtra of the Brahma-sūtras (24) has discussed this point. And there he says: When it has been shown that Brahman, i.e., God or the Ultimate Reality, has created the universe, the following questions necessarily arise: Is this Brahman the material cause only, or the instrumental cause only, or merely an agent depending on these two causes? If it were all in one, there would be no difficulty whatsoever. But, if it were only one of them, that would render it helpless in the absence of any one of the other two factors. It would be in a line with clay which by itself
cannot take the shape of a pot, or with the potter's wheel which by itself is quite useless, or like the potter who can do nothing without the other two. To escape from such an undesirable contingency, we are compelled to believe that God, the Creator, is all in one; and that he creates the universe out of himself without any extraneous help whatsoever. And the Śruti Passage,

"Sa ātmānām svayam akuruta" (25)

states this very thing. In this way also the fact of creation by God the omnipotent lends rational support to the doctrine of Śuddhādvaita or Pure Monism. Incidentally, the difference between the Kevalādvaita or Absolute Monism of Śrī-Sāmkārā-cārya and the Śuddhādvaita or Pure Monism of Śrī-Vallabhā-cārya, may with advantage be pointed out here. According to the latter, the world being a modification of the Ultimate Reality is as real as the Ultimate Reality. A gold ornament is not less gold and less real than an ingot of gold. According to the former, however, the Ultimate Reality is incapable of any modification, so the world is merely an appearance and not a reality. The latter doctrine favours the path of devotion, whereas the former favours that of contemplation.

27. Now one more consideration also favours Śuddhādvaita. And this is the consideration of the state of "Abhaya" or fearlessness. Fearlessness is the first requi-
site of spiritual life, the essential constituent whereof is perfect peace, the peace which nothing can disturb, Late American President Roosevelt, it is reported, used to say that the only thing one need fear is fear itself. Bhagavadgītā, while enumerating spiritual virtues, places this "Abhaya" at the head of the list. (26) The goal of all spiritual pursuits, according to the Upanisads is "Abhaya". Take for instance the following passages:

"Abhayam vai Janaka prāptosi iti hovāca Yājñavalkyaḥ" (27) meaning "'Oh Janaka, you have reached the state of perfect fearlessness' as so said Yājñavalkya."

"Sa vā eṣa mahān ajāh Ātmā ajāraḥ, amaraḥ, amrtah, abhayah Brahma. Abhayam vai Brahma." (28) meaning "When this very soul, which is potentially great and unborn (i.e., eternally existing) rises above old age and death, it itself is God who is absolutely free from fear. This very fearlessness is itself Godhead."

28. Now, in this connection, we find in the Upanisads, a very significant passage:

meaning "That God (when alone i.e. before he created this universe) felt afraid. That is why a person when alone feels afraid. But (the very next moment) it occurred to him: 'Why should I feel afraid since there is nobody here except myself?' This thought instantly drove away his fear. Why should he have felt afraid? The feeling of fear is caused by the presence of another." This analysis of the nature of fear is really wonderful. This shows how keen the psychological insight of the Upaniṣadic Seers was.

If we closely study this passage two points clearly emerge: Not only do we feel afraid, but we want at the same time to become free from that fear. This feeling of fear can be compared to the state of our ignorance. This state of ignorance is not a state of bliss for us. We have an inborn desire to get out of it. Our curiosity is a mild form of this desire. At the root of all scientific and philosophic progress it is this desire in an intense form. If, however, in spite of our desire to get out of this state of ignorance, we acquiesce into it, it is simply because we are unable to get out of it. In this matter we are like a person caught in a morass. It is not that he stays there because he is happy there. It is simply because of his helplessness that he continues to remain there. The same is the case with us. Our inborn curiosity, our strenuous efforts to acquire more and more of knowledge, and our subconscious dissatisfaction with the state of ignorance in which we
happen to be - all these point to the fact that the ideal state of our soul is that where there is all light and no darkness. Coming to the feeling of fear, we can say the same thing. That we feel afraid is a definite fact of our nature. There are a number of fears lurking in our heart. We are, however, fortunate that they generally do not come up to the level of consciousness. Otherwise our life would have been unbearably miserable. And it is just in this connection that it has been said "Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise." In spite of all this the fact that we want to get out of this feeling of fear and subconsciously we desire to have that state of absolute fearlessness is equally true. But this ideal state of absolute fearlessness is possible only if the Ultimate Reality is one without a second. Thus Suddhādvaita, the state of one without a second becomes a philosophical necessity when we consider it from the viewpoint of fear-complex.

29. The consideration of the problem of evil also leads us in this direction. Barring Illusionists who believe everything to be unreal except the underlying substratum without which the very illusion becomes impossible, all Vedāntic philosophers believe that the evil does exist, believing at the same time that God or the Ultimate Reality is fully free from all evil, nirduṣa. As long as this free-from-all-evil God is kept aloof from the universe, no trouble can arise. The God of Jainism is just like this. He is not at all -
responsible for anything good or bad in the universe. The inexorable Law of Karma, in this eternal universe, with innumerable individual, ignorant, eternally existing souls, will explain everything either good or bad in this universe. God is nothing but one or other, of these souls, that has freed himself from all evil. Not God but past acts of individual souls are responsible for anything good or bad in their lives. But, for the Theists who believe God to be the whole and sole in this universe and according to whom not even a blade of grass can move without his will, it is not so easy to absolve him from all evil. Had there been no evil in this universe, had this universe been as free from all evil as God, no trouble would have arisen at all. But unfortunately, this is, however, not the case. The case is just the opposite. Evil we meet with at every step in this universe. There is a lot of misery; there is a lot of partiality; there is a lot of cruelty. And all these are found not in a tolerable degree but in a degree extremely shocking. There is nothing wrong if we go to the length of saying that evil is the law and good an exception in this universe and thus acquiesce into it. But, then, how shall we justify our instinctive desire to get over the evil? It is a patent fact that all sensible persons intensely desire to get away and free themselves from this evil. They leave no stone unturned in their efforts to secure this freedom. So it is no use either acquiescing into it or totally denying it.
30. Other Vedāntācāryas have tried in their own way to solve this problem of evil. Their primary concern is not so much to explain the evil in this universe as to protect the Ultimate Reality or God from it. Śrī-Sāmkaraśārya sweeps the platform clean by denying evil altogether. According to him, this very world has got no existence, much less the evil therein. If the very rope-serpent (a rope believed to be a serpent in the dark) does not exist, much less the poison in its fang. As the rope remains absolutely untouched by the rope-serpent and its supposed poison, so his God or Brahman (by which name he prefers to call his God) too is absolutely free from the world (superimposed on this Brahman) and the evil supposed to be therein, but in reality not existing at all. As for Śrī-Rāmānujaśārya, the souls and the world constitute God’s body. So just as the soul remains untouched by the defects of the body, so God remains untouched by the evil either in the souls or in the world. So his God also is free from the evil. As for Śrī-Madhvacārya, God, the souls, and the world are three distinct entities, so his God also is absolutely free from all evil. The real problem is from the Suddhādvaita point of view of Śrī-Vallabhacārya. According to him the souls are the real and not supposed parts of God and the world is in reality nothing but God in another form as the ornaments are nothing but gold in another form. As such the evil in the souls and in the world is as much his
as theirs. The body cannot remain free from the defects of the leg. If the leg is lame, the body is bound to limp; it cannot escape from that defect. If the golden ornament receives scratches, the gold in it is bound to have them also and it cannot remain free from them. So it is not the other Vedāntācāryas, but it is rather Śrī-Vallabhaścārya that has to face the full force of the fire point-blank. And he fully meets the challenge and in the way which is unique in the whole field of Indian philosophical thought; for so far as my knowledge goes it is not to be found anywhere else.

31. For a full appreciation of the way in which Śrī-Vallabhaścārya solves this problem of evil, let us first state it at some length. According to Śrī-Vallabhaścārya, God is both the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. Taking God to be the material cause of the universe, we have to believe that he himself has become the universe in the same way as clay becomes a pot. Then just as clay and the pot are one, so God and the universe are one. Now if there is evil in the universe, it is as much in God as in the universe because they are one. Next, taking God to be the efficient cause, we have to believe that he is responsible for all the evil in the universe. The misery and the cruelty in this universe are all due to him. Such a God ceases to be God who is free from all defects. It is in this way that the non-theistic philosophers assail the
theistic ones. They say: Some are very happy, e.g., the denizens of heaven; and others very unhappy, e.g., the denizens of hell. And even for one who denies such imaginary heaven and hell, there is a lot of happiness and unhappiness in this day-to-day world of our actual experience. Although unmixed ideal happiness is not to be found anywhere upon this earth, yet the disparity is to be found in a marked degree. Some are relatively extremely happy, whereas the lot of others is relatively extremely wretched. If all this is due to God, is he not open to the charge of partiality? How can he boast of his impartiality? In the Bhagavadgīta he says:

"Samo'ham sarva-bhūteṣu, na me dvesyo'sti na priyah"

meaning "I am impartial towards all creatures. No one do I hate; no one do I love." But if God is responsible for this disparity and the differential treatment of creatures, these words of his become a meaningless idle boast. Moreover, if God is all-kind and a veritable ocean of grace, why should he permit so much cruelty in the universe? For dualistic philosophers this is not a serious problem at all. Their theory is: God is God, and the Universe is the Universe. They are eternally separate. All good belongs to God, and all evil belongs to the universe. To explain the disparity they bring in the different Karmas or actions of the different souls. God is not responsible for them. He is merely an administrator, a dispenser of justice. He is impartial in the real sense of
the term. According to Śrī-Vallabhācārya such a God, however, ceases to be God as he has no freedom whatsoever of action, he is always bound by the Law of Karma. If he is bound by Law, how is he free? If he is not free, how can he free others? And if he cannot free others, what is the use of approaching him for securing freedom? Moreover, the dualistic theory is incompatible with the omnipotence of God as has been shown in foregoing pages. So the challenge has to be met with from purely non-dualistic point of view. And Śrī-Vallabhācārya does it both ably and admirably.

32. He boldly says:

"Ātmāsṛṣṭer na vaisāmyam
Nairghṛṇyaṁ cāpi vidyate" (31)

meaning "Because God himself has become universe, and the universe is nothing but God himself, either partiality or cruelty has no scope whatsoever." This is how he frees his God completely from every taint of evil. There is a real evil from our dualistic point no doubt. And if we want to be absolutely happy, we have to go on shunning this evil, and we have to go on and on doing so till that very evil ceases to be evil altogether. But from God's strictly non-dualistic point of view, there is no possibility whatsoever of any evil in the form of partiality and cruelty. How this is so will be clear from the following few considerations. The evil attaching to God appears in two forms: cruelty, and partiality.
Of these two, let us first analyse the nature of partiality. Now, even a slight thought will reveal that partiality requires at least three intelligent persons; for an unintelligent object is never open to any charge. At the most it is neutral. It is good if you make a good use of it, and bad if you make a bad use of it. A, one person, can be charged with partiality if he favours B, another person, and not C, a third person. Has such partiality any scope whatsoever in Suddhādvaita, Pure Monism, where there is only one Ultimate Substance and that too without a second? In the same way, cruelty requires at least two persons. A, one person, is cruel to B, another person, if the former ill-treats the latter. But has such cruelty also any scope in such a Pure Monism? Moreover A cannot be cruel to himself, according to the maxim,

"Nāgner hi tāpo na himasya tat syāt" (32)

meaning: The heat of fire is not painful to fire itself, nor the coldness of ice is painful to ice itself. Next let us turn to the nature of evil itself. As stated above a thing cannot be evil to itself. So what scope is there for any evil whatsoever in the Suddhādvaita System of Vedānta as envisaged by Śrī-Vallabhācārya?

33. To drive the truth of this doctrine home a funny instance may be cited with advantage. Our body is one.
Although it is made up of many parts, we never feel that it is many. Now, we always hold our head high above and keep our feet down below. But have we ever had even the slightest idea that we are open to the charge of partiality on account of the differential treatment of these two limbs? And if some other person were to charge us that way, would we mind him? and, in order to absolve ourselves from that charge, would we keep our legs high above and our head down below at least even for a few days? Śrī-Rāmānujacārya would have with advantage utilized this illustration. For, according to him, the souls and the world constitute God's body.

34. By this time, it has been made sufficiently clear that this System of Sūddhādvaita Vedānta not only finds full Vedic support, but it has at the same time full rational justification. For first of all it completely satisfies the instinctive internal hankering after some one unifying principle behind all these diverse phenomena of our world of experience; and next, it alone makes abhaya or absolute freedom from all fear possible. Moreover, not only does it absolve God from all taint of evil retaining at the same time his Godhead immaculate, but it is also in complete consonance with the idea of One Omnipotent Creator. Having dwelt so much on this one, the most important of all, aspect of the Ultimate Reality, we may safely turn to other aspects thereof.