Chapter-II

The Nature of Appearance

The enquiry into the concept of appearance arises as a natural consequence of the enquiry into the concept of ultimate reality. Ultimate reality for vedānta, in true sense is that which in all ways 'is', which is uncaused, which undergoes no change and is not dependent on anything. Thus the vedānta identified reality with Being which is beyond time, space, beyond cause and effect, beyond all distinctions- external and internal.

Now, if reality be pure being, one without a second (Ekam eva advitiyāṁ) then what is the vedāntic view of world appearance? Is it a mere appearance, without being, a shadow without substance? Surely not, vedānta is not nihilist. Vedānta does not view the world as a non-entity Rather it contradicts the void doctrine (Sunyavāda) of Nāgārjuna. Thus the aim of vedānta is not to prove the unreality of the objective world, but to maintain the supreme reality i.e. Brahman underlying the world. Thus behind the world appearance there is faint gleam of Its presence everywhere. Thus in every case of appearance, there arises always the question, as to “appearance of what”? And the answer is it is the Real, that makes its appearance. It is for this reason the notion of appearance is not different from the notion of reality. Appearance is the superficial or surface aspect of reality. In the order of existence, reality is the first, but in the order of knowledge, appearance is the first. Thus the appearance and reality are not two distinct thingsbut only two stages or aspects.
dependence, i.e. the real can exist without the appearance, but the appearance can not exist without the real. Thus Brahma can exist without the world appearance. But the world appearance can not exist without Brahma, just like the appearance of the snake can not exist without the rope, whereas the rope can exist in itself without being snake. So behind the world appearance there is one ultimate Being as its ground.

From the beginning of the philosophical history in India, we find that there are various interpretations of ultimate reality in ancient Indian literature. Śaṅkara was also such an interpreter, and he himself insisted that he was expounding the true vedāntic view which was already there in the Upaniṣads and other ancient literature. As has already been said, Śaṅkara, himself, most humbly propounded the view that he was not the founder of the school of vedāntism. He was only expounding the idea which was contained in the Vedas and Upaniṣads. In the word of S. Radhakrisnan, "he is voicing an old and weighty tradition which has been handed down to us by an unbroken series of teachers". Thus we find that Śaṅkara never claimed to give an original view of reality of his own. Again he was not even a blind follower of upaniṣadic thought, rather he formulated a new theory of vedānta which is enriched with the suitable quotations from the Upaniṣads. So let us examine the nature of appearance in relation to reality as it is depicted in our ancient Indian literature which is honoured as the basic foundation of the Advaita vedānta philosophy.
Historical Sketch of Advaita Vedānta :-

The whole history of Advaita vedānta from the Upanisads onwards may be divided into three periods- (i) pre-Śaṅkara, (ii) Śaṅkara and (iii) post-Śaṅkara. The three foundations of Vedānta (Prasthānatraya) viz- the Sruti, the Brahmasutra and the Bhāgavadgītā come under the first period. Further, as Gauḍāpāda is regarded as the first systematic expounder of Advaita vedānta, so Gauḍāpāda also fall within this period. All the commentator and exponent of Advaita vedāntic tradition of Śaṅkara, beginning from Suresvara are included in the post-Śaṅkara period. However this third period is not our concern. We will here concentrate our attention only in the first period in order to clarify the nature of appearance.

(i) The Śruti- the Rg Veda :-

For any adequate knowledge of Indian philosophical teaching, a thorough understanding of vedic literature, specially the Rg veda is indispensable. The Veda is not a literary work like the Bhāgavadgītā or a collection of a number of books like the Tripitaka of the Buddhists philosophy or the Bible of the Christian. It is a collection of the whole literature which arose in the long journey of intellectual brain of our ancestors which was handed down from generation to generation through oral transmission.

The philosophical teaching of the vedic religion, which gradually developed from the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas, is generally regarded as a transition from the polytheism to monotheism and then to monism. Thus the early vedic Aryans, began to wonder at the charming and tempting natural phenomena and to fear the terrible and destructive aspect of nature, personified
them in an anthropomorphic fashion and called the Gods and Goddesses and began to worship them. This stage may be regarded as the naturalistic and anthropomorphic polytheism. In this stage we can see a tendency of God making in the factory of human brain.

Their next problem was how to deal with the multitude of Gods and Goddesses. Then various attempts were made to reduce the number of deities under various occasions. Thus at one time Indra was placed as the head of the Gods, but at another time they dethroned him and placed Varuna in his place. In this way polytheism gradually yielded place to monotheism and the latter to monism. The vedic seers who were dissatisfied with the old mythology, gradually started upon seeking after not only the cause of natural phenomena, but also their first or ultimate cause. Max Muller introduces the word 'Henotheism', in place of monism, which means 'belief in only one God' as distinguished from monotheism or 'belief in one only God'.

But a little reflection will make it clear that there is no question of development from polytheism through monotheism to monism, but only of monism from the first Mantra portion to the last upaniṣadic period. According to Dr. C. D. Sharma it is due to the ignorance of the vedic religious philosophy, that the critics misinterpret the vedic literature. "Neither polytheism nor henotheism nor even monotheism can be taken as the key notes of the early vedic philosophy". The main cause of such misinterpretation is mainly due to the western influence where they mistakenly believe that the vedic seers were simply inspired by primitive wonder and feared the forces of nature. The true view seems to be that the vedic seers were really intellectual and basically
spiritual in nature. In their mystic experience they came face to face with Reality and attained the direct intuitive spiritual insight of absolute reality. Such absolute monistic principle which is the identity -in-difference holds both monism and pluralism within its bosom and which ultimately transcends both, are beautifully expressed in the Upaniṣads. So instead of saying 'Henotheism', Max Muller could have suggested that the various Gods are merely the manifestation of one supreme Lord, and when one God is praised he is not praised in his individual capacity, but merely as the manifestation of the supreme God.

There are so many evidences in the Rg veda, where it is evident that all the anthropomorphic elements can be stripped off and only one impersonal reality is to be treated as 'Saṅ'. This idea is beautifully expressed in one of the mantra of Rg veda that "Reality is one and that sages call it by many names as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Gurūtman, Yama and Mātarisvānī". In the Purusa sukta, this idea has been further developed. The Puruṣa-sukta says that all the beings constitute one quarter of Purusa, "purusa pervades the whole world by one-fourth of himself". This 'puruṣa' is described as 'Brahmā' or 'the greatest in the Satapatha Brāhman. The idea of upaniṣadic monism is most clearly expressed in the 'Nāsadiya-sukta' of the Rg veda. Here the highest principle is described as 'Tadekaṁ' (That one). In this hymn the vedic seers not only traces the whole universe to a single source- Tadekaṁ, but also discusses the problem of what its nature is. He declares that 'Tadekaṁ' is different from both being and non-being.

The first idea of the māyā doctrine of Advaita vedānta is also traced to this Sukta of the Rg veda. Further, Indra with whom all things have been
identified, is said in the Rg veda to have assumed many forms through maya. Thus the word 'māyā' and the doctrine around it are preserved in their original form in the Rg veda.

The main thesis of Advaita vedānta viz. 'the jiva-Brahma-identity is also found in the Vāk-sukta,¹³ and the Asyavamiya-sukta¹⁴ of Rg veda. In the Vāk-sukta, Ambhrni-Vāk identifies himself with everything of the world- the Gods and all other things. Also she describes herself as the creator of all. In the Asyavamiya sukta, Vāmadeva declares that he has become all- Manu, Surya, the sages Kaksivan, Uśanas, Indra etc.

As regards the world appearance, the vedic seers never questioned for its unreality. It is a real creation of God. In some hymns it is said that water was first created and everything else sprang from it afterwards. Sometimes it is stated that the world have been generated to whom the heaven and the hell are being its parents. In some other hymns, the world is regarded as due to the result of sacrificial art. The famous hymn known as 'Purusa-sukta' explains that the cosmic man emerges from a transcendental Being which is regarded as the material for the entire variety of the universe. "The moon was born from his mind; from his eyes, the sun; from his mouth, Indra and Agni; and from his breath, Vāyu. From his navel came into being the mid region; from his head, the sky; from his feet the earth; from his ear, the quarters".¹⁵
In another hymn of the Rg veda we find that the universe in all its past, present and future is due to one and single principle which is also described as Prajāpati (the lord of creatures). It is also said, "Prajāpati, occupies the highest in the pantheism, until he is displaced by two other more philosophical concepts-Brahman and Ātman. These three names Prajāpati, Brahman and Ātman dominate the whole philosophical development from Rg veda to the Upaniṣads." In the Upaniṣads, the term Brahman and Ātman which are identical are used to explain the ultimate reality and the term Prajāpati is used as only a mythological concept.

Thus in the Rg veda, we find the concept of an eternal entity, behind the world appearance, which the Hindu philosophy calls as Brahman. For "Prajāpati does not create a world, he transforms himself, his body and his limbs into the different parts of the universe."  

From our above discussion, it is clear that the germ of Advaita philosophy is originated in the vedic period, specially in the mantras of the Rg veda. And this non-dual principle is clearly developed in the Upaniṣads. So let us discuss about the principal Upaniṣads which are revealent to our discussion.

(ii) The Upaniṣads :-

The Upaniṣads occupy a very unique place in the spiritual and philosophical thought of India. The impact of the Upaniṣads are so deep in our life that even in the twentieth century, today, though we are oriented by western civilization and western culture, supported by modern science and technology, we the people of India, are able to solve any difficult problem in our intellectual journey with the help of upaniṣadic literature. According to R. D. Ranade, "The Upaniṣads
are capable of giving us a view of reality, which would satisfy the scientific, the philosophic, as well as the religious aspirations of man ... .

The etymological meaning of the term ‘Upaniṣad’ is ‘upa’ means ‘nearby’ ‘ni’ means ‘devotedly’, ‘sad’ means ‘to sit down’ or ‘to destroy’ or ‘to loosen’. Thus ‘Upaniṣad’ means “sitting down of the disciples near the teacher in a devoted manner to receive instruction about the highest Reality which loosens all doubts and destroys all ignorance of the disciples”.

The mystic syllable ‘AUM’ is the main subject of the Upaniṣads. Thus the explanation of ‘Tajjālān’, ‘Param guhyām’ which are very mystic and have full depth of meaning are the basic point of discussion in the Upaniṣads, which are intelligible only to the selected few. Thus ‘Upaniṣad’ implies the ‘Rahasya Vidyā’ for most of the Indian thinkers. According to Paul Deussen Upaniṣad means “secret sign, secret name, secret import, secret word, secret formula, secret instruction and that therefore to all the meaning the note of secrecy is attached.”

According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan also, Upaniṣad includes the secret knowledge, “Upaniṣads become a name for mystery, a secret rahasya communicated only to the tested few.”

That the teaching of the Upaniṣads was regarded as a mystery and that much care and anxiety were needed to select the best and to disqualify the unworthy one, are clearly explained in several Upaniṣads, which may create much misunderstanding among the scholars both Indian and Western. In the Prasna upaniṣad, eg. six pupils like Sukeša, Satya-kāma, Gārghya, Kausalya, Bhārgava, and Kabandhi go to great Pipālada seeking instruction from him in respect of the highest reality, but he asks them to live with him for a year with
the life of austerity, chastity and faith, before instructing them. Obviously the purpose was to watch them and satisfy himself of their fitness to be taught the Brahmavidyā or the knowledge of highest reality. The story of Upamanyu, Āruni etc are no less important in this case. Again the best examples are found in the Katha upaniṣad, where the Lord of Death (Yama) tested the young Nāciketā before imparting instruction on the nature of soul and its fate, only after the young boy had steadily rejected all attempt to divert him from his wish. Similarly the manner of testing the inner capacity of the pupil which can be traced like Indra dealing with Pratarogna, Prajāpati with Indra and Virocana Satyakāma with Upakosala, Yājñavalkya with Janaka, Prabohana with Āruni etc. All these examples are sufficient to maintain that the secret knowledge is to be imparted to the selected person, whom the Guru choose to be fit or appropriate. In Saṅkara’s philosophy we will see that he strictly maintain “Four requisites” necessary for the study of Vedānta.

Thus the term “Upaniṣad” signifies only the secret meaning, secret instruction and also to make derivately that the root ‘sad’ means sitting as associated with ‘upa’ (nearby) and that not in the ordinary sitting but in the sense of ‘ confidential secret sitting’, for the purpose of ‘secret instruction’ imparted by the Guru to the pupil. And the Indian writers are practically justified to call Upaniṣad as ‘Rahasya Vidyā’.

The Upaniṣad, the Brahmastra and the Bhāgavadgītā—all these three are inter related treatise. In fact, the whole of the Vedānta philosophy in its various schools has been based upon these three ‘foundation stone’ known as ‘Prasthāna traya’. According to R. D. Ranade, “the relation of the Upanisad
to the Brahmasutra is no less interesting and no less important than the relation of the Upaniṣads to the Bhāgavadgītā. Thus all the various branches of vedānta, whether it is the school of Madhva, or Rāmānuja or Śaṅkara, all are based on the Prasthāna-traya and interpret in their own way. And whether they taught the dualistic vedānta or qualified monistic vedānta or the monistic vedānta, we are not at all concerned here with these problems. Our main interest will be how Śaṅkara has taken them into account in his Advaitavāda.

There are over 200 Upaniṣads, although the traditional number is 108. Of these, the principal Upaniṣads are ten—Tsa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittiriya, Aitereya, Chhāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. Śaṅkara wrote commentaries on all these Upaniṣads and also Svetāsvetara upaniṣad. He also referred to the Kausitaki and Mahānārāyana and also Maitreya upaniṣad.

In the Upaniṣads, different views about the nature of the Absolute, the individual self and the world and about their mutual relations are found, which are interpreted by various schools in their own way. According to the Vaiṣṇava vedāntist school for instance, the Absolute is endowed with all infinite and good qualities, the jiva is a part of Brahman and the world is an expression of His power. According to Śaṅkara, however, the central theme of the Upaniṣad is Absolute non-dualism. In his view, it is only from the phenomenal point of view that the Upaniṣad describes Brahman as Saguṇa or qualified Brahman and as different from the individual self and the world. But in the ultimate sense, there is only one Brahman without a second, and the world and the individual self is non-different from Brahman.
Ultimate reality is described as Brahman in the various Upaniṣads, the nature of which is described as, "The Absolute is one, without a second. It is Truth, Knowledge and Infinite." It is of the nature of "Sat-cit-ānanda—Existence, consciousness and bliss". It is bhumān or infinity, it is eternal, unchangeable, Indescribable, unaffected and unfettered, is devoid of growth and decay. It is thus imperishable, inexpressible.

In the Kathopanisad, Āruni told his son Svetaketu that "just as by the knowledge of the lump of earth, everything that is made of earth can be known just as by the knowledge of a piece of iron, everything made of iron becomes known, all being merely a word, a name, a modification, similarly the knowledge of Brahman is in a way the knowledge of the mystery of this world appearance."

Regarding the world creation and its relation with Brahman, the Upaniṣads have given various suitable examples which are adopted by Saṅkara also in his philosophy. Thus in the Mundakopaniṣad it is said "Just as a spider creates and retracts its thread, as the herbs and trees grow upon the earth just as from a living person the hairs of the head and the body grow, similarly from this immutable Brahman does all this universe spring."

Thus the highest monistic philosophy, which we find in Rg veda, as one Reality (ekāṁ sat), which realises itself in all the variety of experiences, is found in a more logical way in the philosophy of Upaniṣads, which is known as Brahman. And there are many passages in the Upaniṣads which clearly show how the Absolute or Brahman is the only reality and what we call the world creation, are only empirically real but transcendentally non-different from the Absolute. In another passages of the Mundaka upaniṣad, it is stated, "just as
from a fire well lit thousands of scintillations arise, and into it are resolved similarly, from this immutable Brahman manifold beings come into existence and into it are merged". 29

**Doctrine of Maya:**

R. D. Ranade has pointed out three different theories as to the origin or source of the doctrine of Maya. According to the first, the doctrine of Maya is a mere fabrication of the fertile genius of Sañkara; according to the second, the doctrine of Maya as found in Sañkara is to be traced entirely to the influence of the Sunyavāda of the Buddhists; according to the third, Sañkara's doctrine of Maya is to be found already full-fledged form in the Upaniṣads, of which he is merely an exponent. 30

Now without going into details, we may say that none of these theories can satisfactorily explain the doctrine of Maya. For to accept the second view is to accept a nihilistic interpretation to Sañkara. Again to support the view that Maya is found in full-fledged form in the Upaniṣad which is borrowed by Sañkara will be to underestimate the extra-ordinary talent of Sañkara.

The real view seems to be that the doctrine of Maya occurred frequently in the Upaniṣads, and so far as Sañkara's contribution is concerned he had fabricated the doctrine, under the influence of nihilistic school of thought. As a true revolutionary thinker, he has elaborated the idea of Maya of the Upaniṣads, under the inspiration of Gauḍapāda's idea, his great grand teacher.

The trace of the Maya doctrine is found in the Upaniṣads as an idea instead of as words. Thus in the Ṭisopaniṣad it is said, "Truth is veiled in the universe by a vessel of gold, and it invokes the grace of God to lift up the
golden vessel and allow the truth to be seen". Here the concept of "veil prevents truth being seen.

Another passages in the Kathopaniṣad says that "how people living in ignorance, and thinking themselves to be wise move about wandering, like blind man following the blind, in search of reality, which they would have easily seen had they lodged themselves in knowledge instead of ignorance". Again the Chāndogya upaniṣad says, "Knowledge is power, and ignorance is impotence", we who are moving in this world, without having attained to the knowledge of Ātman, are exhibiting at every stage the power of the impotence that lies in us".

The famous prayer in the Brhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad in which a devotee is praying to God to carry him from "Not-Being to Being, from Darkness to light from Death to Immortality, merely voices the sentiment of the spiritual aspirant who wishes to rid himself of the power of Evil over him, unreality is compared to Not-Being, to Darkness or to Death".

"Asato mā Sadgamaya
Tamaso mā Jyotiramay,
Mṛtyumān mṛītam gamaya".

The Chhāndogya upaniṣad states that, "a cover of untruth hides the ultimate truth from us, just as the surface of the earth hides from us the golden treasure that is hidden inside it". Māyā is compared here to a 'cover of untruth'. Again in the Praṣṇopaniṣad, the word 'māyā' is used directly and almost in the sense of illusion as that "we can not reach the world of Brahman unless we have shaken off the crookedness in us, the falsehood in us, the illusion (māyā)."
in us". Even in the Svetāsvatara upaniṣad, the word ‘māyā’ is used in the sense of cosmic illusion as that, “it is only by meditation upon God, by union with Him, and by entering into Him being that at the end there is the cessation of the great world-illusion.

Thus from the various passages in the Upaniṣads, if we examine thoroughly, we will find that though the word ‘māyā’ may not have been used directly in the Upaniṣads, still the conception that underlies ‘māyā’ is already present there. According to R. D. Ranada when we consider the concept of māyā, we have to consider it from the conceptions of a veil, of blind-foldness of a knot, of ignorance, of not-being, of darkness, of death, of unreality and uncertainty, of untruth, of crookedness and falsehood and illusion, of the power of God, of this power as identical with nature, of meshes, of semblance, as if were an appearance, of a word, a mode and a name, let no man stand up and say that we do not find the traces of the doctrine of māyā in the upaniṣads.

In many passages of the Upaniṣads the individual self is identical with the Absolute. Thus, passages like ‘That thou art’, ‘The self is Brahman’, ‘I am Brahman’ etc. declares identify between the individual self and Brahman. It is only because of ajñāna or ignorance that the individual self can not realise its real nature and thinks itself as different from Brahman. As a result it moves in the cycle of birth and death and experience pain and sorrow. When true knowledge dawns, the self attains liberation, which is nothing but the realisation of the identity between the individual self and Brahman.

In short, all the ideas of the philosophy of Śaṅkara is implicitly contained in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. In fact, the Upaniṣads are the
records of the mystical experience of the sages. But, the philosophical thought contained in them are not found in proper arrangement. It is in the Brahmasutra of Bādarāyana that the first attempt to systematise the upaniṣadic thought is made in a proper manner. Later on Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and other philosophers have developed this philosophy in its proper perspective.

(iii) The Brahma Sutra :-

The Brahma sutra is one of the three prasthānas of vedāntic thought of India. The main aim of Brahma sutra is to establish the ritualistic vedic thought on the foundation of spiritual knowledge. Thus the traditional vedic religion is reinterpreted and systematized by the commentators of the Brahma sutra.

The Brahma sutra is the exposition of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads; where various strands of the Upaniṣads are systematized. It is also called Uttara-Mīmāṁsā or the investigation of the later part of the Vedas as distinguished from the Mīmāṁsā of the earlier part of the Vedas and the Brahmana, which deal with the ritual or karma-kāṇḍa. It is also called ‘Sāriraka-sutra’ as it also gives an exposition of the self bounded in the ‘sarira’ or body.

The Brahma sutra is a necessary outcome to systematize the various lines of thinking of the Upaniṣads, as Upaniṣads do not contain any consistent systematic study. And the glory of systematising the various idealism and composing the Brahma sutra is ascribed to Bādarāyana only. But though Bādarāyana might be the best, yet he is not the only person who wrote the Brahma sutra. Thus according to Swami Vireswarananda Sastri, “From the Brahma sutra, self there were other schools of vedānta which had their own followers. We find the names of Audulumi, Kāsakṛṣṭna, Bādari, Jaimini.
Karshnajini, Asmarathya and other mentioned. These references shows that even before Bādarāyana, there were many renowned teachers of vedānta who wrote their own Brahma sūtras. However, these Brahma sūtras are now completely lost for good and only references of them are to be found out. And therefore perhaps, all the sect of India now, hold the Brahma sūtra of Bādarāyana to be the great authority of Vedānta philosophy.

**Metaphysical Views of Brahma Sutra:**

The Brahma sūtra has four chapters or Adhyayas and each of them is divided into four pādās or parts. Each of these pādās is subdivided into Adhikarāṇās or sections made up of sūtras or aphoristic statements. The number of sūtras in each section depends on the size of the topic dealt there in.

The first chapter of the book is 'Samanvaya' or the coherent interpretation of the different texts of the Upaniṣads. It starts with the sloka "Athato Brahmajijnāsa" ‘Now, therefore, the desire to know Brahman (the ultimate Reality)’. We have in the first chapter, an account of the nature of Brahman, its relation to the world and individual soul.

The second chapter is called ‘Avirodhadhāya’, which starts with — "Smṛty-anavakāsa-doṣa...............................” etc. The purpose of this Adhyaya is of propounding the refutation of the opposition of Smṛti and Nyāya. Thus it meets objections brought against its vedāntic views and criticises rival theories. It also deals with the nature of the dependence of the world on God and the gradual evolution of God into the world. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "there are interesting psychological discussions about the nature of the soul, its attributes, its relation to God, body and its own deeds".
The third chapter is called 'Sadhanadhaya'. It is a discussion of the ways and means (sādhanā) of attaining Brahma-Vidyā. It start with the sloka “Tadanantara prati patipattan rahanti .....................” etc. “The first part of this chapter explains the significance of the different texts, removes doubts and attempts to produce a sense of dispassion for the world by discussing its imperfections. The second part tries to produce a yearning for Brahman by a discussion of His attributes. The third part describes the different parts of meditations, their point of agreement and difference. The fourth part considers the question whether the highest end of human is derived from knowledge or action or both.”

The fourth deals with the fruits (phala) of Brahma Vidyā. It is known as ‘Phaladhāya’. Here, in the first section, the state of Jivanamukti is discussed and the remaining section deals with the nature of liberation, about the attainment of Saguṇa Brahman and the state of the soul after the attainment of liberation. The last sloka runs as follows, “Anavrittiḥ Sabdāt, Anavrittiḥ Sabdāt” 4-4-22. Meaning- ‘There is non-return (for these released souls), according to scriptures; non-return according to scripture’. Thus, those who have attained the world of Brahman, whose darkness of ignorance has been dispelled by perfect knowledge, and who have attained the eternal state, there is no return which implies the attainment of immortality.

Commentators on the Brahma Sutra :-

The Vedānta sutra of Bādarāyana is a systematic work of the upaniṣadic teaching. In the Sutras, the whole teachings of vedānta system is developed. As the Sutras consists mostly of two or three words each, these are
unintelligible by themselves for which the various interpreters try to motivate them in their own way. There are numerous commentators of Vedānta sutra of whom the chief are Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa, Rāmānuja, Kesava, Nimbārka, Madhva, Baladeva, Vallabha, Vijnānabhikṣu etc, and it is not necessary that all of them develop the same view, and it is also not easy to determine which one of them is accepted to be the best for right understanding of the Sutras. For their main aim is to develop their own philosophical views on the foundation of the mighty Brahma sutra. And the interesting point is that Brahma sutra is such a valuable collection, where each system of vedānta with their own merit can be found with their own solution.

Among the various commentators only five of them have a large number of followers- Śaṅkara- the exponent of Monism, Rāmānuja- the exponent of Viśistādvaita or qualified Monism, Nimbārka- the exponent of Bhedābheda or the theory of difference and non-difference, Madhva- the exponent of Dualism and Vallabha- the exponent of Suddhādvaitavāda. All these commentators agree more or less on certain points, specially in respect of vedāntic thinking as a whole. Thus they hold that Brahma is the cause of this world and that knowledge of Brahma leads to the mokṣa which is the goal of our life, that Brahma can be known only through the scriptures and not by mere reasoning and the like. But they differ amongst themselves as to the nature of Brahma, Its relation to the world, the relation between the Jiva and Brahma and the condition of the soul in the state of mokṣa etc.
Śaṅkara's Interpretation :-

Śaṅkara attempts to build a non-dualistic (Advaita) philosophical view on the basis of the Prasthāna traya. Thus his commentary on Brahma sutra is purely on spiritual interpretation. According to S. Radhkrishnan, “the end of all knowledge is spiritual realisation, 'anubhavavāsanāri eva vidyā-phalaṁ'”4: Thus a mere intellectual understanding of reality is not enough. And this spiritual realisation or spiritual experience is recorded in the Upaniṣads, of which the Brahma sutra is the cream.

Śaṅkara's commentary is known as 'Brahma Sutrābhasya'. It is a famous work on Advaita vedānta and most of the followers of Śaṅkara wrote commentary on it in support of Śaṅkara. Thus Mandana Misra, known as Suresvara wrote his famous work 'Naiskarma-Siddhi'. Ānandagiri, another disciple wrote a commentary on Brahma Sutrābhasya as 'Nyāya-Nirnaya' and Govindānda wrote another commentary as 'Ratna-Prabhā'. Vācaspati Misra wrote another commentary, called 'Bhāmati'. Amalānanda wrote 'Kalpa-Taru' Appaya Dīkṣita wrote the 'Kalpa-Taru-Parimala' on the Kalpa-Taru. Padmapāda wrote his 'Pancapādika', Prakāśatman wrote a commentary on Pancapādika known as 'Panc-Pādika-Vivaraṇa', Vidyāranya wrote 'Vivaraṇa-Prameya Sarhgraha', Sarvajñātma-muni wrote 'Saṁkṣepa-Sariraka', Madhusudana Sarasvati wrote 'Advaita-Siddhi'. His other famous work on vedānta are 'Vedānta Kalpa-latiṅkā', 'Siddhānta-bindu' etc. There are many other treatises on Advaita vedānta composed by the followers of Śaṅkara.
Brahman and the World Appearance :-

Bādarāyana starts his Brahma sutra with the aphorism as, "Athato Brahma jijnasa", which means, 'Now, therefore the inquiry to know Brahma'. There are several interpretations of the word 'atha' by different commentators. Saṅkara considers the 'atha' to mean 'after acquiring the four Sadhanas (requisites), which are indispensable for the study of vedānta'. According to Saṅkara, "the inquiry into Brahma should invariably follow the acquisition of the four requisites, whether the aspirants are householders or sannyāsins or those who do not belong to any āśrama or are even devas". Thus in his commentary on the first Sutra of the Vedānta sutra, he explains four conditions essential for the student of vedānta, which are known as the 'Four-fold aid (Sadhanā-catustayah).

The first condition is the knowledge of the distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal. 'Nityānityavastuviveka'. Thus one should realise that the self alone is real and everything else is transitory and perishable. The second condition is 'renunciation of the enjoyment of reward here and in the other world. 'Iha-amutārtha-phala-bhoga-virāga'. It is thus the detachment from all selfish ends and an attainment of Niskāmakarma. The third is 'Sama damādi Saṅhana Sampād'. It implies that an aspirant must have self control over the senses as well as the mind. There are six means which the aspirant must fulfill. They are- Sama and Dama, i.e. the control of mind and senses. The next one is Uparati, which is renunciation in spirit; the next one is Titikṣā, which means resignation and then Samādhi, which means concentration and last of them is Sradhā i.e. the belief in the teaching imparted. The fourth-
and the last requirement is 'Mumukṣutvam' i.e. the longing for liberation. This longing, the desire for self-realisation, the inner urge for liberation can help man to attain the state of perfect knowledge. However we will make a discussion in details on this point in our VIth chapter.

Śaṅkara does not accept Jñāna-Karma-samuccaya-vāda of Gitā, rather he accepts the path of knowledge only. Thus according to Radhakrisnan, "the result of the performance of religious duty may lead to earthly prosperity even residence in heaven, knowledge of Brahman leads to liberation from bondage." ⁵₀

The aim of Brahma sutra is the knowledge of Brahman, "Brahma-jñāna", which does not imply any epistemological enquiry, but the spiritual realisation of Brahman. There is a general belief that the spirit of science is opposed to the spiritual view of the world. But Brahma sutra itself is an example of spiritual view of the world, which is still relevent to the scientific view of the world. According to Radhakrisnan, in and through our religious achievement we can not ignore scientific outlook in any field of knowledge. Even "the oxford group of scientists who founded the Royal Society of England were religious-minded". ⁵¹ In India also the foundation of vedāntism are based on scientific basis.

Now, in consistent with the first, the second Sutra define Brahman as "Janmadyasya yataḥ", which means, "Brahman is that Omniscient Omnipotent cause, from which proceeds the origin etc (sustenance and dissolution) of this world." ⁵² Thus the second Sutra shows that the world has a pattern and it is the duty of a philosopher to find it out. According to Radhakrisnan
while science explain 'how' things happen, it does not tell us 'why' they happen.
In the Brahma sutra, the 'how' and 'why' of the world creation is explained by
the Sutrakāra. Thus "from the nature of the world, the Sutrakāra infer the
existence of one supreme, personal, self-subsistent Mind to whose creative
and ruling activities of the world owes its existence, nature, coherence and
consummation".53 This is the Tatastha lakṣana of Brahman and its Svarupa
lakṣaṇa as scripture declare is as "Truth, Knowledge and Infinity' (Satyam,
Jñānām, Anantam Brahman).

Sāṅkara in his commentary on Brahma sutra brings together a
cosmological and teleological argument of Brahman. For him, "We can not
trace the world with its order and design to 'non-sentient pradhāna or atoms or
non-being, or a being subject to rebirth to its own nature or to a human creator.
It can not be traced to the world-soul or 'Hiranya-garbha' for he is subject to the
changes of the world. The universe has its root in being, san-mula, has its
basis in being, sad-āsraya, and is established in being, sat-pratisthā".54 This
Being, which transcends all distinctions of subject and object is the Supreme
Brahman. And when we view this Supreme Brahman as the creator and governor
of the universe, He is said to be the Tāvāra, or the personal God.

According to Sāṅkara, the two-fold characteristics of Brahman as
presence of qualities 'sva-viśesatva' (Saguṇa) and absence of qualities
viśesatva' (Nirguṇa) can not belong to the highest Brahman at the same time.
Brahman is beyond all these levels, beyond all the qualities. The presence of
quality is just like redness of a flower reflected in a crystal which does not
change the nature of the crystal which is colourless. The immutation of redness
is due to ignorance and is not real. The various qualities of Brahman, described by the Sruti are only for the sake of upāsanā or worship and it is not its real nature. Thus for Śaṅkara, the different forms of Brahman are comparable to the images of the sun reflected in the water and the like. according to Śaṅkara, Brahman is the only reality, and the world is non-different from Brahman. Here non-difference does not mean identity, for the world is not identical with Brahman. Hence non-difference means that the world has no existence apart from Brahman which implies the apparent identity or the illusory nature of the world even as the illusory snake is seen in the rope. Thus in the Brahma sutra it is seen how Brahman in spite of being Omniscient and Omnipotent is the creator of the world of both good and evil. And it is just like, "from the same material earth, stones of different values like precious jewels as also useless stones are produced, so also from Brahman, which is bliss, a world of good and evil can be created."

Thus according to Śaṅkara, the relation between the world and Brahman is one of non-difference (ananya) like the pot and the clay. For Bādarāyana "the world is not an illusion, or a dream-like structure, but a real, positive something, which has its origination, existence and absorption in Brahman." Bādarāyana believe that the power of creation belong to the pure, stainless Brahman, even as heat belong to fire. Brahman, without undergoing any change develop itself into the world. According to Radhakrisnan, Bādarāyana does not make it clear how Brahman develop or create this world. He does not care to explain how Brahman turned into the world which is not acceptable from the philosophical point of view. Rāmānuja taking this advantage opinions
that the world is the creation of the Lord by his wonderful power which create
this world. Śaṅkara holds that ultimate reality is the Brahman. So there is no
question of granting reality (real status) to the world. He explains the situation
philosophically and maintains that Brahman is not transformed into the world
(parināma) but appears as the world (vivarta). And he introduces the concept
of māyā in order to explain the situation. Thus the concept of māyā is a
necessary out come of Śaṅkaras concept of world appearance, which is as
has already been said, is a borrowal from the Prasthāna traya.

The Concept of Māyā:-

Now, as regards the concept of māyā, Bādarāyana does not use the
term explicitly in order to explain the world creation. But the concept is not
altogether foreign to the author. We can trace the idea of māyā in order to
explain the world creation in the Sutras like 11-1-13, 11-1-13-20 etc. Even in
some Sutras such as “Māyāmātram tu kārtsnyenānabhiyakta-svarupatavat”
Which means “But (the dream world) is mere appearance on account of its
nature not being manifested with the totality (of attributes of the waking state)”
Here ‘māyā’ is used for appearance.

As the Sutrakāra is not using the Māyāvāda explicitly, the various
commentators accept it in their own way. According to Śaṅkara, māyā possesses
the two-fold powers of concealing the Brahman (āvaraṇa-sakti) and manifesting
the universe (vīkṣepa-sakti). ‘Other schools deny the āvaraṇa-sakti of māyā
and assert that it has only the vīkṣepa-sakti’. Thus it is said, “The theory of the
unreality of the world seen in the Advaita, is a logical consequence of attributing
the āvaraṇa-sakti to māyā, by which the prapāṇa (phenomenal order) is to be
traced to superimposition on Brahman caused by māya. And as soon as the down of 'Tattva-jñāna' or 'knowledge of Brahman', the āvarana and vikṣepa sakti of māya together with the phenomenal world described, vanishes.

Śaṅkara in his commentary on Brahma sutra has used the word māyā, avidyā, and ajñāna in one and the same sense. The English terminology of these words as illusory power, nescience and ignorance are also synonymous in use. In the Brahmasūtrābhasya Śaṅkara explains the māyā as- “This potential power of the seed is of the nature of Nescience (Avidyā) and it is indicated by the word 'undeveloped' (Avyakta) and has the Highest Lord as the basis, and is of the nature of an illusion (Māyā), and is the great sleep in which transmigratory jiva-selfs, unaware of their own true nature (Rupa) continues to slumber on” (B.S.S.-I-IV-3).

In another place, Śaṅkara says “It is declared by both the scriptures and the śruti, that the names and forms which are imagined through Nescience, and which are as it were the self of the Omniscient Lord, and about which it is impossible to say either that they are one with, or that they are different from Brahman, and which are seeds of this entire expanse of transmigratory existences, are the illusory power of the Lord” (B.S.S.B.- 11.14).

Thus from the above discussion it is clear that the entire topic of Brahma sutra centres round the problem of Brahman and māyā or the phenomenal world. The realisation of Brahman is the primary and the renunciation of this phenomenal world is the secondary goal of the Sutras. According to Śaṅkara, one need to know Brahman and not His māyā. Māyā is Brahman's nature or prakṛti. In the Svetasvāra upaniṣads it is said, “Māyāṁ to
prakṛtim viddhi, māyām tu Mahesvarāṁ', meaning is, “know then that Prakṛti is Māyā and the wielder of māyā is the great Lord”.

Śaṅkara's Brahmasutra Bhāṣya is the oldest available commentary on Brahmasutra. All the other commentaries are later creation. The sole purpose of his commentary is to explain the vedāntic tradition of Bādarāyana. And the main significance is that he is the first commentator to explain the vedāntic tradition of Bādarāyana in a scientific manner. He has first faithfully offered a rational explanation of his opponents, and then tried to give a more rational view of his own. Thus he has not dismissed the view of any vedāntin as nonsense and tried to accommodate them in his own theory. On the other hand, the other commentators are sworn enemies of Śaṅkara and they are largely responsible to misinterpret the vedānta of Śaṅkara. Sangam Lal Pandey has rightly said: “Bādarāyana would not have been what he is understood today had Śaṅkara not written his commentary upon the Brahma Sutra.”

Thus from the above discussion, we may safely conclude that Bādarāyanas philosophy of vedānta is a monistic type and of the various commentators of vedānta, Śaṅkara is more akin to Bādarāyana in establishing his Advaitavāda than any others.

(iv) The Bhāgavadgītā:

The Bhāgavadgītā literally means 'the Lord’s song'. It is contained in the Bhīṣma-parva of the Mahābhārata, the great Sanskrit epic, written by Vyāsa.

The Bhāgavadgītā shared the honour of being the guide of Hindu philosophy along with Upaniṣads and the Brahmasutra as the three are regarded as the Prasthānatraya. But though these three are regarded as the most
authoritative work of the Hindu culture gradually the other two were thrown into background and the Holy book of Gita emerged as the supreme scripture and occupy an unquestionable Holy scripture among the Hindu. Thus in a popular verse it is said, "Gita Sugita kartavya kinh anyaiḥ śāstra vistriḥ" i.e. "It is quite enough if one thoroughly studied the Gita, what is the use of debating in the other (scripture)". 68

The Gita has such deep influence in the Indian society that no scholar could ignore to study the sacred poem if he wanted to acquire knowledge of our ancient lore. Not only this, any thinker or writer desired to propound a new theory of his own, it was expected that he could do so only by seeking the support of the Gita, otherwise there was little chance of his securing the approval of learned scholars of India. It is for this reason we find that the idealist philosophers who flourished in India during the medieval period like Saṅkara, Rāmānuja, Maddhva, Vallabha, Jñāneshvara, Janaka, Yājñavalkya, the Buddha and in modern time Rāmakṛṣṇa, Vivekānanda, Sri Aurovindo, Tilak, Gandhi and many others had their own commentaries on the Gita which are the valuable treasures of our ancient literature.

The Bhāgavadgītā is more a theistic work or religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is not a metaphysical thinking, rather it is a theistic treatise that has emerged from the religious life of mankind. According to S. Radhakrisnan, "It represents not any set of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality, without limit of time or space". 69
The Bhāgavadgītā, therefore, may be regarded as both metaphysics and ethics, Brahmavidyā and Yogaśāstra; the science of reality and the art of union with reality. The different elements of philosophical importance are brought together and integrated into a comprehensive synthesis and are found in the Gītā. S. Radhakrishnan therefore rightly says, "The teacher refines and reconciles the different current of thought, the vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upaniṣad teaching of the transcendental Brahman, the Bhāgavata theism of tender piety, the Sāṅkhya dualism and the Yaga meditation."⁷⁰

**Influence of the Upaniṣads :-**

The philosophy of Bhāgavadgītā is highly influenced by the Upaniṣads. The traditional account of the relation between the Gītā and the Upaniṣads is contained in a popular and famous verse, that

"Sarvopaniṣada gāvo dogdhā Gopālanandanaḥ,
Pārtho vatṣaḥ suthir bhaktā dogdhaṁ Gitāmṛtam mahat"

**Meaning-** "All the Upaniṣads are, so to say, cows, the Blessed Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa is Himself the drawer of the milk (milkman), the intelligent Arjuna is the drinker, the calf (which causes the flow of the milk in the cows and when these unprecedented circumstances have come about), the milk which have been drawn, is the Gītā-necture of the highest order".⁷¹

Infact, the Upaniṣads are the source of the teachings of the Bhāgavadgītā. That the Bhāgavadgītā is indebted to almost all the Upaniṣads specially the five Upaniṣads, namely, Īśa, Katha, Mundaka, Chāndogya and Svetāsvatara is evident from various illustrations which shows that the Gītā borrows ideas, phrases, and even sentences from the Upaniṣads.⁷² Thus in the
Kathopaniṣad it is said “The Ātman is never born nor becomes anything, he is unborn, imperishable eternal, has existed from all eternity, and is not killed even when the body is killed”.  

“Na jāyate mṛiyate vā vipaśhri māyam
kutaścinna babhūba kaśchit I
Ajo nityaḥ śāśchatohayam puṟāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śasīre II” (Ka.Upa. 1.2-18)

This verse is reproduced almost word by word in Bhāgavat-gitā II-20.

In another verse of Kathopaniṣad, tells us that “When a killer thinks he is killing and when the killed thinks he is being killed, neither of them verily knows, for the Ātman is neither killed nor even kills”.  

“Hantā cenmanyate hantuṁ hataśchenmanyate hatuṁ.
Ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate.”

(Ka. Upa.1.2-19)

This verse is also reproduced almost word by word in Bhāgavadgitā-Il-19.

Another sloka of the Kathopaniṣad which tells us that “What word the Vedas declare, what word the penances busy themselves about, What word inspires the life of spiritual discipleship, that word, briefly I tell thee, is Om.” -(Ka. Upa. 1.1-15) 

This verse is also reproduced almost same in Gitā VII-13.

The idea of the Viśvarūpa, which was probably first originated with the Puruṣa-Sūkta, which is developed a little more in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad is
fully developed by the Bhāgavadgītā in its XIth Chapter. Thus in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad we have the description of, “The cosmic person with fire as his head, the sun and the moon as his eyes, the quarters as his eyes, the Vedas as his speech, air as his prāna, the universe as his head, and the earth as his feet.”

Such example clearly shows that the Gītā has not only borrowed, but also developed, transformed the teaching of the Upaniṣads, so as to suite its own particular philosophy.

According to B. G. Tilak, before one understands the main teaching of the Bhāgavadgītā, one is to understand the historical significance of the introduction of Gītā as an important treatise of Hindu religion and philosophy. The vedic religion was not purely ritualistic (tāntric) and the Upaniṣads, as they are written by different seers at different times, contain various kinds of thoughts. Bādarāyana has reconciled these various thoughts and harmonised them in his Brahma Sutra or Vedānta Sutra. But as the Vedānta Sutra has been written only with the intention of harmonising the Upaniṣads, we find nowhere in the Upaniṣads, any detailed and logical exposition of energetic vedic religion. Therefore “the Energistic Bhāgavadgītā for the first time supplemented the philosophy of the Vedic religion it becomes ..................................... and later on...”

the Upaniṣads, the Vedānta Sutras and the Bhāgavadgītā acquired the collective names of ‘Prasthāna- trayi’ (the Trinity of systems)”. And when once the ‘Prasthāna- trayi’ comes to be firmly established, all religious opinions or cults which were found inconsistent with these three works, came to be considered as inferior and unacceptable by the followers of the vedic religion. The net result was that all the promising Ācāryas which came into existence in India.
after the extinction of the Buddhistic religion had to write commentaries on all
the three Prasthānas.

The Bhāgavadgītā believed to be a dialogue between Arjuna (one
of the five Pāṇḍavas) and Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was the charioteer of Arjuna, in the
battle field of Kurukṣetra. The orthodox Hindus believe that every word of the
poem was uttered in the battle field of Kurukṣetra, which may give rise to some
confusion among the scholars, both Indian and Westerns, as the Holy poem of
700 verses which are unusual to be uttered in the spot, which undoubtedly
require a lot of time. So there is ample reason to believe that though the main
points of discussion might have been raised and answered in the battle field
their elaboration and verification was a subsequent work of Vyāsa, the legendary
author of the Mahābhārata.

Again, one thing we should not ignore that Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself is
the Paramātman, the Divine Soul, to whom there is nothing impossible, so that
the whole of the Bhāgavadgītā was actually taught in the battle field. As
Omniscient Being, time and space are His own creation and they move through
the influence of His māyā which is so mysterious that even the great seers
could not know His unfathomable secrets. The fact is that all the Divine deeds
of Lord are beyond the influence of time and space and so it is reasonable to
believe that the whole of the Gītā was preached in the battle field and to
demonstrate His Viśvarūpa in a Divine manner in the befitting place. Thus we
should not think of the Divine Lord in the manner as we think of the ordinary
human being. And from these we may atleast come to a decision that the entire
teachings of the Bhāgavadgītā was imparted by Lord Kṛṣṇa on that very crucial
occasion. Otherwise it may create much confusion to the innocent devotee for whom the Bhāgavadgītā is a genuine piece of Divine teaching.

**Śaṅkara's Commentary on Gitā:**

The first and the most important commentary (Bhāṣya) on Gitā was made by Śaṅkara who established his own Non-dualistic (Advaita) doctrine. The main intention of Śaṅkara is to establish that the Gitā is not in favour of the combination of Knowledge with Action, which was prescribed by the other commentators and to show that the Blessed Lord has in the Gitā preached to Arjuna that Action is only a means to acquiring knowledge and is inferior and that release (mokṣa) is ultimately obtained only by knowledge (jñāna) combined with renunciation of action. Thus the ‘Karma-Yoga’, the path of action advocated by the Lord are for the ignorant, the common people, who are desirous of liberation. And the action has no place in the ultimate experience of ‘Naiskarmya-Siddhi’ and even in the upper stages of spiritual progress. In support of the Jñāna-mārga, Śaṅkara has quoted such sentences from the Gitā as —

(i) Jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāni bhasmasāt kurute. i.e. “All action (karma) is reduced to ashes in the fire of Jñāna” - (B. G. - IV-37).

(ii) Sarva karmakhilaṁ Pārtha jñāne parisamapyate”. i.e. “All actions culminate in Realisation (jñāna)” - (B.G. - IV-33). etc.

Thus, though Gitā represents a synthesis of Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti mārga for the attainment of mokṣa, yet the main emphasis of the entire teaching is on perfect knowledge. According to Śaṅkara both action and devotion culminate in knowledge. It is very difficult to state clearly the reciprocal relation
among these three. It may, however, be said that knowledge is at the root of both action and devotion. Without knowledge neither can there be any action nor can there be any devotion. But this knowledge should not be confused with the highest knowledge which is the direct means of liberation. This highest knowledge (Parama Jñāna) is attained by the highest devotion. Arjuna did possess, all the ordinary knowledge but that did not help him in the battle field. The Lord imparted him the Highest Knowledge which alone could remove his delusion, only when he showed his highest type of devotion i.e. prapatti or Ātmanivedana, and thereby proved his entire fitness for receiving the secret knowledge. And the highest devotion becomes manifest through action meaning upāsanā etc. and it does not stop even after attaining the stage of Prapatti. This sort of action continues even when the True knowledge has become manifest as we find in the case of Sthitaprajña or Jivanamukta.

**Ultimate Reality:**

Like the Upaniṣads in Gīta also the problem of the ultimate reality is explained in two ways— the objective and the subjective. The objective analysis proceed on the distinction between real and unreal, the Akṣara and the Kṣara. The Kṣara represent the ‘unconscious product’. It is variously explained in the Gīta as ‘Aparā prakṛti’, ‘Adhibhuta’, ‘Kṣetra’, ‘Asvatha’ etc. It is also called the cause of the ‘bhutas’, the ‘vikāra’, the ‘karanas’ etc. This Kṣara or ‘Apara prakṛti’ is the inferior type of prakṛti is beginningless and is associated with the Lord since time immemorial. All the bhutas merge into this prakṛti at the time of dissolution and stay there till the beginning of the next generation.

This prakṛti is different from the ‘māyā’. Thus the Lord says, “Although
I am unborn and imperishable and the Lord of all the bhutas, yet I take resort in My own Māyā (ātmamāyā) I appear (in a bodily form). Again this prakṛti is different from Sāṁkhya prakṛti as the guṇas, namely Sattava, Raja and Tamas are the product of prakṛti in the Gitā, while in Sāṁkhya, these are the very constituents of prakṛti. Moreover, the Sāṁkhya prakṛti is independent, while the prakṛti of the Gitā is not independent. Lastly, the Sāṁkhya prakṛti is capable of producing its products independently, while in the Gitā the products evolves only with the help of the Lord.

The 'Aksara' is known by various names, as 'jiva', 'parā prakṛti', 'Adhyatmā', 'Kṣetrajña' etc. It is different from the 'Aparā-prakṛti' and is superior to it. It is the subjective aspect of the Lord and is the cause of all the bhutas. "It appears different from the Lord due to Avidyā" it experiences the guṇas of the prakṛti only when it is in contact with any of the three kinds of organism namely, gross (sthula), subtle (sukṣama) and causal (karaṇa) and it is because of its contact with the guṇas of the prakṛti that puruṣa or jiva takes birth in higher and lower 'Yonis'. Though this puruṣa is confirmed within the organism yet it is the same as the Paramātman. This puruṣa is called Upadrasta (witness) Anumantā (adviser), Bhartrā (supporter), Bhoktā (experiencer), Maheśvara (the Great Lord), and Paramātma (the supreme Self). As the empirical self is thus essentially identical with the Lord it has possessed all the qualities of the Lord, though due to the influence of nescience, it can not manifest them. The Lord says, "As the sun alone illumines this entire cosmos, so also, O Bhārata, the Ātman illumines the entire Body."
aspect is called 'Purusottama'. He is variously expressed in the Gitā by various names as, Paramātmā, Tāvara, Bāsudeva, Krishna, Prabhu, Śaks Mahāyogesvara, Brahmā, Ādhiyajña, Paramapuruṣa, Viṣṇu, Yogesvara and others. Though the Lord is known by various names, yet he is the eternal source of creation and destruction of the universe. Thus the Lord says, “Know that all beings have their birth in this world I am the origin of all this world and its dissolution as well”. Thus the world with all its becomings is from the supreme Lord and at the time of dissolution all are merged in Him. “The existence of the world are held together by the Lord just like gems are held together by the string”.

Thus the Bhāgavadgītā advocates a monistic view of reality like the Upaniṣads. The Advaitavāda of Gītā is with the same spirit of Śruti as “Sarvam khalu Idam Brahma”. Thus the Lord says, “Matthaḥ parataram mayāt kiñcidasti Dhananjaya” i.e. “There is nothing other than me, O, Dhananjaya,”. Again the verse like, “Vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti” i.e. “Vasudeva is all in all”. Says the Lord is all in all.

This very Paramātman assumed the various forms in order to protect the good and punish the wicked, to establish Dharma and to guide the masses towards the right path. Thus the Lord is not only the creator but also the protector of the created being. Thus the Lord says—

“Yadā-yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
Abhyuthānaṁ adharmasya
tadāt’manāṁ srjamyahaṁ” - (IV-7)
Meaning — “Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O, Bhārata, then I send forth (create incarnate) Myself.”

Again —

“Paritṛaṇāya Sādhunāṁ
Vināśāya ca dusrṛtaṁ
Dharma samsthāpanārthāya
Sambhavāmi yuge-yuge”. -(IV-8).

Meaning — “For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age.”

Thus the conception of Vāsudeva or Purusottama of the Gītā is more akin to theistic interpretation of “Bhāgavata-Sāmpradaya (eg. Rāmānuja and other Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins) than the Advaita vedanta of Śaṅkara.

**Doctrine of Māyā:**

In the Bhāgavadgītā, the word ‘māyā’ is used in the sense of magical power of Lord, the great magician. The Lord says, “Veiled by My creative power (Yogamāyā) I am not revealed to all. This bewildered world knows Me not the unborn, the unchanging”⁹². Māyā in the divine embodiment is thus called as ‘Yogamāyā’, ‘Ātmamāyā’. It becomes ‘Avidyamāyā’ in human embodiment. An unenlightened or ignorant being unable to understand the ways of God calls Him as māyā. A deep observation of the entire text of Gītā will reveal that the Lord uses the word ‘māyā’ as His power and always in association with Him. Thus we may quote here six references to the use of the word māyā in the Gītā.⁹³
(i) 'Sambhyāvami ātmamāyayā' i.e. 'I manifest through My own Māyā'.

(ii) 'Daivi hyesa guṇamayī Māma Māyā duratāyāya' i.e. 'This Māyā of Mine is Divine. It constitutes three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas) and is difficult to be overcome. — B.G.-VII-14.

(iii) 'Māyāmetam taranti te' i.e. 'They cross the influence of this Māyā'. -VIII-14

(iv) 'Māyāyapahṛtaṇāna' — i.e. 'whose understanding has been snatched away by the Māyā' - VII - 15.

(v) 'Nahāṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamavṛtah i.e. I concealed with the Yogamāyā, am not manifest to all' - VIII-25.

(vi) 'Īśvarah ------------------------ bhramayan sarvabhutāṁ yantrarudhāṁ Māyāyā' i.e. 'The Lord through His Māyā makes all the bhutas rotate as if they are on some machine'. — XVIII-61.

From all these examples it is quite dear that māyā exclusively belong to the Lord Himself. It is this māyā that reveals to the world of man the unmanifest, eternal, Imperishable Brahman. It is thus the mysterious power of the Lord which acts in two ways. On one hand, it veils the vision of the masses, the real nature of God, His relation to man, on the otherhand, it helps to reveal God to the world of man.

From the various discussion one may think that Śaṅkara is taking the God of the Gitā as Sagunā Brahman. And from the Saguna Brahman everything is just like the explanation of the Bhāgavadgitā. But this point is not justified from the point of view of Gitā for there is no where in the Gitā the
explanation of Brahman as 'Saguna' and 'Nirguna' form. Both the aspects are seems to be merged in the same Lord, the only one Reality. So there is only one reality as Purusottama of which Kṣara and Akṣara are two aspects.

In conclusion, we may say that though the teaching of the Gita are directly or indirectly based on the teaching of the Upaniṣads, yet we can not bring it to any particular school of thought like Saṁkhya or vedānta. We may found some technical words like Brahman, Māyā Prakṛti, Ahaṅkāra, Buddhi etc in the Gita which are also found in the vedānta of Saṅkara, Rāmānuja and others. But the meaning and the use of these words are quite different. Thus the prakṛti of Saṁkhya is different from the prakṛti of the Gita, as the three gunas — sattva, rajas and tamas are the products of the prakṛti in the Gita while these are eternal constituents of the Saṁkhya prakṛti. Like the Saṁkhya system in the Gita, prakṛti and puruṣa are not two independent element but are the superior and inferior form of one and the same Lord. Prakṛti as forms of the supreme, act under His control. Again the world is not illusory appearance which is due to māyā. The author of Gita never think the māyā as avidyā or ignorance as does Saṅkara in his Advaita philosophy.

In spite of these differences there are similarity in thought between Gita and that of the vedānta., as both of these have Upaniṣads as their common source. As the Gita is one of the important prasthāna on which Saṅkara wrote his 'Bhāsyā', so the fundamental idea of Saṅkara's Advaitavāda is under the direct influence of the Bhāgavadgīta. And we will observe the influence of Gita in our further discussion of Advaita philosophy of Saṅkara.
(v) Gaudapāda :-

The teaching of the Upaniṣads as we have seen, have been systematized in the Brahmaśutra of Bādarāyana. The Sutras are interpreted by the different Ācāryas as a result of which we have two different schools - the Advaita Vedānta and the Theistic Vedānta. The name of Gaudapāda is associated with the Advaita Vedānta who is honoured by history as the first systematic exponent of Advaita Vedānta. He is known as the teacher of Saṅkara's teacher Govinda ('paramaguru') and is said to have lived towards the end of the seventh century or towards the beginning of the eighth century A.D. 

There are three works, worth mentioning, that are reported to be written by Gaudapāda. These are 'Gaudapāda-Bhāṣya' — a commentary on the Saṅkhya - karikā of Īśvarakriṣṇa. He is also believed to have written a commentary on the 'Uttarāgītā', that appears in the Mahābhārata. The third work is known as 'Māndukyakārikā' which is also known as the 'Gaudapāda-kārikā'.

Gaudapāda-kārikā, which is more than a verse — commentary on the Māndukya-upaniṣad, contains the quintessence of the teaching of Vedānta. It is also regarded as the 'Āgama-śāstra' and is regarded as the first available systematic work on Advaita Vedānta. As says S. Radhakrisnan, "the most important topic on which the Advaita philosophy is based, such as the order of reality, the identity of Brahman and Ātman, Māyā, the inapplicability of causation to ultimate reality, jñāna or wisdom as the direct means of mokṣa or freedom and the inconceivability of absolute nothing, are set forth in the kārikās."
The Gaudapadakarika is divided into four prakaraṇa. Following the Upanisad, the first chapter, Agama-prakaraṇa, analyses the three avasthas—waking, dream and deep sleep, and finds that the self which is referred to as the Turiya underlies and transcends these changing states. The second chapter, Vaitthya-prakaraṇa, seeks to establish the illusoriness of the world of plurality on the analogy of dreams, and through a criticism of creationistic hypotheses. The third chapter, Advaita-prakaraṇa, sets forth the arguments for the truth of non-dualism, gives citations from scripture in support and there of discusses the path to the realisation of non-duality, called Asparśa-Yoga. The last chapter, Alataśanti-prakaraṇa, repeats some of the arguments of the earlier chapters, shows the unintelligibility of the concept of causality through dialectic, explains the illusoriness of the phenomenal world, comparing it to the non-real designs produced by a fire-brand (ālata) and pressing into service modes of Buddhist reasoning, and establishes the supreme truth of non-duality which is unoriginated, eternal, self-luminous bliss.

The central teaching of Gauḍapāda is the Advaitavāda. It teaches that nothing is ever born (ajāti), not because 'nothing' is the ultimate truth as held by Sunyavādin, but because the 'self' is the only reality. From the standpoint of the Absolute, there is no duality, there is nothing finite or non-eternal. The Absolute alone is, all else is appearance, illusory and non-real. The empirical distinction between knower and object known, mind and matter, etc are the result of māyā. The self is unborn, there is nothing else to be born. Duality is mere illusion, non-duality is the supreme truth.
Ajāṭivāda :-

Gauḍapāda is better known for his Ajāṭivāda where he explained that all the worldly objects are unborn and therefore, unreal like hare’s horn or like the dream object, and the real is only Brahman. In establishing his Ajāṭivāda, Gauḍapāda examined critically the existing theories of causation specially the Satkāryavāda of Sāmkhya-Yoga and the Asatkāryavāda of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. The Sāmkhya-Yoga holds that jāti (origination) belongs to a thing which is already existent in its cause. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika holds that it belongs to a thing which is non-existent in its cause. In this way they maintain contradictory views and one criticises the other. And their mutual criticism itself prove the ajativāda.\textsuperscript{100}

Gauḍapāda thus hold that each of the two theories of causation put forward their arguments in support of their own views and for establishing their own theories, and in doing that they vehemently criticise the views of the opponent. The teacher therefore says “Some disputants (i.e. the Sāmkhyas) maintain that jāti or origination is of a thing which is already existent (the bhutas) while there are others (i.e. the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas), who think that it is a thing which is non-existent. These dispute with each other destroys each others position”.\textsuperscript{101} Thus Gauḍapāda is on the view that if the effect is already existent there is no need for any causal operation, for it is meaningless to say that what is existent is born. Again, if the effect is non-existent, it can never be made into existent. What is non-existent like the barren woman’s son is not at any time born. Thus on either alternatives i.e. between Satkāryavāda and Asatkāryavāda Gauḍapāda has established his Ajāṭivāda.
In the kārikā, Gauḍapāda has discussed the problem of causation in details, and has shown that there is actually nothing like origination (jāti). His view is Ajātvāda i.e. the theory of non-origination or non-birth. The self is the only reality. It is unborn and there is nothing else to be born. The central philosophy of Gauḍapāda is

"Na kaschijāyate jivo sambhabohayaṁ na vidyate
Atattad uttaraṁ satyaṁ yatra kīcitaṁ na jāyate".
-Māndukya kārikā III.48 IV.7

Meaning, "No one is born, and there is possibility either of anything being born. No one is really born- this is the Supreme Truth".102

Gauḍapāda propounded, thus, his Ajātvāda through several arguments. For him creation of the world is due to Māyā and not in reality.103 He rejects the Sāṁkhya view that there is a real transformation of the prakṛti into the world, which is a seer contradiction. What is real can not have a real transformation, its transformation is only an illusory character. Again the nihilists (i.e. Buddha), hold that a non-existent is born. But the birth of a non-existent entity is justified neither in reality nor in māyā. The son of a barren woman can be born neither in reality nor through māyā.104

Thus Gauḍapāda establishes that there is no origination and hence no causal relation. The self is the only reality which is unborn and immutable. All duality is only appearance which is due to māyā or illusion. And Gauḍapāda's philosophy is the establishment of Ajātvāda, but he is not interested to explain the theory of illusion in details. As says M. C. Bharatiya, "It was left for later vedāntins to make to more explicit".105 And we will find how Śaṅkara has taken the responsibility of his Guru in highlightening the doctrine of māyā in proper perspective.
Doctrine of Maya:

According to Gauḍapāda the ultimate reality is only Advaita, and the world is māyā-mātra, mere illusion. Besides the word māyā, he employs several words to indicate the illusory nature of the world, such as vaithya, mithyā, kalpita, viparyaya, abhāsa, sarvṛṭi etc. The second prakaraṇa of Āgama-sāstra is significantly termed Vaitathya, the sole object of this prakaraṇa is to establish the illusoriness of the world. It is because of Māyā, that we have this world of differentiation.

According to Gauḍapāda, māyā is responsible for the world appearance. The Self, which is the only reality, can not by itself be the cause of the world, as it is unchanging and eternal. It is only due to māyā, which is the ground of the apparent manifestation of the world, Gauḍapāda says, “The self, the shining one, imagines the self by the self through its own Māyā”. Thus the self as conditioned by māyā, is the cause of the world. Brahman or Self in itself is no cause at all. It is associated with māyā is called as Ṣiva or God by the Advaitins. God is both the efficient and material cause of the world. He is referred to as the lower Brahman or Saguna Brahman by the later Advaitins. Thus māyā is used as the principle of creation in Advaita philosophy of Gauḍapāda.

Māyā is characterised by Śaṅkara as beginningless, indeterminable and of the nature of the existent (anadī, anīrvaṇa, and bhava-rupa). According to T. M. P. Mahadevan though Gauḍapāda does not use these characteristics of māyā openly, yet he is not unaware of its implication. In one place, he says that the jiva sleeps on account of the beginningless māyā (G.K. I-16). For Gauḍapāda, māyā is a riddle, hence it is called indeterminable. Gauḍapāda
characterises the things of the world put up by māyā as unthinkable (acintva).

Again, māyā is considered to be of the nature of an existent (bhāvarūpa) because non-existent can not be the ground of even illusion or appearance.

Thus Gauḍapāda has depicted the fundamentals of Māyāvāda which are developed by later Advaitins. He never uses the term māyā in the strict sense as it is done by Śaṅkara. As pointed out by S. Radhakrishnan, māyā is used by Gaudapāda to indicate three senses as (I) the inexplicability of the relation between the self and the world. (II) the nature or power of Īśvara and (III) the apparent dreamlike character of the world. And Śaṅkara seems to accept the first two meaning in his doctrine of māyā.

According to Gauḍapāda, the individual self is non-different from the supreme Self. He holds that the self is known in the three states—waking, dream and sleep, the name of which are Viśva, Taijasa and Prajñā. Viśva is the experiencer of the waking world, enjoys what is gross. Taijasa is conscious of what is within, enjoys what is subtle and Prajñā is a consciousness mass without the distinctions of seer and seen, its enjoyment and satisfactions is bliss. The three Viśva, Taijasa and Prajñā are not distinct selves. It is one and the same self that appears as three. To show that all the three should also be thought of as identical with the three cosmic forms of the self Virāt Hiranyagarbha and Īśvara. It is to indicate this identity that the Māndukya Upaniṣad describes the Prajñā-Self as the Lord of all, the knower of all, the controller of all, the source of all, the origin and end of beings. The recognition of Viśva, Taijasa and Prajñā in the waking state, and the identification of the three individual forms of the self with the three cosmic forms are the
purpose of realising non-dual. The non-dual reality is the Turiya. This is the fourth state. It is the self-luminous self, changeless, non-dual, one without a second. According to Gauḍapāda, the empirical jīva is like the pot-ether and its distinction from the Absolute Self is only apparent. The pot-ether or ether enclosed in a pot is not different from the unlimited ether. When the encloser is destroyed, the limited ether merges into the unlimited ether. Similarly, the self being limited by the adjunct of mind-body, appears as the empirical Jīva, when the adjunct is destroyed, the self realises its identity with the Absolute. \[115\]

**World-appearance :-**

Gauḍapāda attempts to explain the world-appearance with the analogy of the dream experience and illusion. In dream experience, the things are imagined as if existing outside, but they are only illusory creation of the mind. Thus there is first the imagination of a perceiving mind or soul (jīva) and then along with it the imaginary creations of diverse inner states and the external world. Thus as opposed to the Anātmavāda absolutism of the Buddhists, Gauḍapāda established the absoluteness of the self and asserts that the apparent multiplicity is due to the non-dual Ātman. It is just like rope-snake illusion. Just as in darkness, the rope is imagined to be a snake, so the self is imagined in diverse form due to illusion. Thus, “there is neither any production nor any destruction (na nirodho, na cotpattih), there is no one who is enchained, no one who is striving, no one who wants to be released. Imagination finds itself realised in the non-existent existents and also in the sense of unity, all imagination either as the many, or the one (advaya) is false, it is only the oneness (advayata) that is good”. \[116\] It is only those rare few, who have
transcended the world of attachment and who know the true nature of the self can realise that the world appearance is only an imaginary appearance and all those apparent multiplicity is only due to avidyā.

Thus in Gauḍapāda, we can find a complete identity between Brahman and jiva, the difference between them is merely apparent and is due to avidyā and there is no creativity, all are due to māyā. Thus, “the unborn is born in manifold ways through Māyā. The Real can be born only through Māyā and not in reality, the unreal, however can be born neither really nor phenomenally”.

Influence of Buddhism on Gauḍapāda:-

Gauḍapāda has flourished after all the great Buddhists teacher, Asvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and others. Therefore there is automatically a direct influence of Buddhist ideology on Gauḍapāda's philosophy. S. N. Dasgupta even try to established Gauḍapāda as of Buddhist origin. He says, “there is sufficient evidence in his kārikās for thinking that he was possibly himself a Buddhist, and considered that the teachings of the Upaniṣads tallied with those of Buddha”. It is true that there are certain passages and phrases in Gauḍapāda-Kārikā, specially in the Ālatāśaṁā-prakaraṇa that resembles the Buddhists writers like Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga. It is also true that Gauḍapāda and his followers borrowed largely from the Buddhists writers belonging to the idealistic writers like Vijnānavāda or Yagācāra and Mādhyamika or Sunyavāda. S. Radhakrisnan rightly says that “Gauḍapāda's work bears traces of Buddhists influence specially of the Vijnānavāda and the Mādhyamika School”. Thus, there is much similarity in both Gauḍapāda and Vijnānavāda to prove the unreality of the world.
Now, without going into the details, we may close our discussion by saying that Gauḍapāda’s philosophy is not a borrowal from Buddhism nor identical with Buddhists arguments; because though there are much similarity and though the same instructions are used by both for establishing the unreality of the world, yet there is a difference in the use of the illustrations. The arguments that are used by Gauḍapāda and Vijnānavāda of Buddhism may be identical because both of them aims at the establishment of the unreality of the world. But there is a difference in the use of illustration. “Gauḍapāda’s purpose in employing the analogy of the dream-world is not the same as that of the Vijnānavādin.”¹²⁰ According to T. M. P. Mahadevan, the illustrations themselves are not the original contribution of Vijnānavādins. “The example of the magic-elephant (māyā-hasti) is derived from the well known episode in the life of king Udayana, which has been dramatized by Bhāsa. The simile of the fire-brand circle occurs in the Maitrayi Upaniṣad,-IV.24.”¹²¹

Thus the similarities that are noticed between Gauḍapāda and the Buddhists are mainly due to the fact that both draws upon a common source viz, the Upaniṣads. All the illustrations used by them has pre-Buddhistic origin i.e. the Upaniṣads. Gauḍapāda makes a revolutionary blow in the upaniṣadic tradition and gives a new Advaitic pattern of absolutistic idea of Buddhism, specially the Mādhyamikas Śrīnyavāda and Yogācāra idealism. So it is preferable to call Gauḍapāda as influenced by Buddhism. T. R. V. Murti also says, “There is ample evidence not only of precedence but of influence as well. Gauḍapāda appears to us as the Brahmanical thinker boldly reformulating the upaniṣadic idea in the light of the Mādhyamika and Vijnānavāda dialectic.”¹²²
The Vedanta philosophy never accept the momentariness (Kṣanikavāda), the Anātmaavāda of Buddhistic metaphysics, but they accept the Mādhyamika dialectic and the Vijñānavāda analysis of illusion. So according to Murti, "There was more borrowing of technique than of tenets". Infact, no absolutism could be established without the dialectic and a theory of illusion. And for this borrowal of technique in establishing the Advaitavāda in a new framework, the critics misunderstand Gauḍapāda and his great grand pupil Śaṅkara as a crypto-Buddhist.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Gauḍapāda’s philosophy is completely based on the Upaniṣads and he is quite faithful to the Upaniṣads. It is true that he uses the Buddhists terminology in his kārikā and there is, therefore, much similarity between Gauḍapāda and Buddhism. But similarity does not imply indebtedness or borrowal. According to S. L. Pandey, “Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara are not indebted to the Buddhists for their doctrines as well as dialectics. They are certainly not Buddhists or even Vedāntins with Buddhist predilections. They are on the contrary, staunch Advaitins and critics of Buddhism."
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   Agniṁ yamam mātarisvanāṁ ahuh-. Rg Veda. 1.164.46.
6) 'Pado'ya visva bhutāni'- ibid. 10.90.3.
7) Satapatha Brāhman. 11.2.3.
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9) 'anidavatam svādhāya tadekāṁ'- ibid.
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13) ibid. 10.1.25.
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22) ‘Tapasa brahmacaryena sraddhāya sarīvatsaraṁ samvatsyathā’
23) Ranade R. D. A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy P-205
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26) Ch. Upa. 7.23-25, S. Upa. 3.3.11-16, Kau. Upa. 3.2.15, Brh. Upa 3.88, Man. Upa.7, Ch. Upa. 4.15.1 etc.
27) Katha Upa. 1.2.7.
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29) ibid. II-1.1.
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31) ‘Hiranmayena pātreṇa satyasya pihitaṁ mukhaṁ
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34) Brḥ. Upa. 1.3.28.
36) Pr. Upa. 1-16.
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70) ibid. P.P-13-14.

71) ‘Sarvopanîgadâ gâvo dogdhâ Gopâlana-nandanaḥ Pârtho vatsâḥ suthir bhokta doghaṁ Gitâmrtanâm mahaṁ’


73) ‘Na jâyate mriyate va vipashvi mâyâṁ

kutaschinna babhuba kaschit 1

Ajo nityaḥ sâschatohayam purâna

na hanyate hanyamâne saîre’ 11- Katha Upa.1.2.28.


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    Mudho ‘yam na’ bhijānati
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