INTRODUCTION

Sankaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.), a creative genius of the fifteenth century, introduced the Neo-Vaiśnavite movement in the North-East India. Sankaradeva’s concepts of Purusa, Prakṛti and Līlā are largely indebted to the cultural heritage of India. A brief survey of the triadic concepts of Purusa, Prakṛti and Līlā in traditional thought has been made in order to have a proper assessment of Sankaradeva’s contributions to such triadic concepts in his Neo-Vaiśnavite thoughts.

The impermanent existence, the finiteness of worldly things, the limitations of our capacities the momentoriness of physical as well as mental states refer to the consciousness of an infinite, unlimited, permanent principle which is real in the midst of all unrealities. This reality is known to us in different names and also in different concepts. The term Purusa is one of the names of ultimate reality. The concept of Purusa denotes the man – the male principle. The Purusa is self. The Purusa is spirit. The first form of Viṣṇu, Mahat is also called Purusa from its abiding within the body.

According to Sanskrit English Dictionary, the Purusa means a male, male being,

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* Sankaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. at Alipukhuri, in the present district of Nagaon, Assam. His father was Kasumvara Bhuyan, the chief of the Siromoni Bora Bhuyan. His mother was Satyasandhya, who died three days after his birth. Kheruti, the grand mother of Sankaradeva brought him up. Many are the miracles associated with the birth of Sankaradeva. Sankaradeva enjoyed a life of ease and luxury in his early life up to the age of twelve. His boyhood was evidently that of a normal boy with all sorts of boyish pranks and merry making. He was very fond of sports, (e.g. ghilā, kotorā, bhotā, dugugali etc.) and cared very little for his food and sleep. Even during heavy downpour, he used to swim across the river Brahmaputra and back again, which was really a commendable task. His main passion was the rearing of cows and roaming in the fields after them. Sankaradeva’s grand mother, Kheruti, naturally grew alarmed by Sankaradeva’s activities. She reminded him that his forefathers were all renowned scholars and that it was now up to him to carry forward this glorious tradition of his family. So, on a very auspicious day, Sankaradeva went to school/ol, run by a Brahmana teacher, named Mohendra Kandali. Being endowed with natural gifts, Sankaradeva began to prove his merit and his teacher was struck with wonder to see the sagacity and intelligence of this gifted boy. Within a very short time he committed to memory the varied scriptures and mastered them all. An officer functionary, agent, attendant, servant. The height or measure of a man, the soul etc.
man. It also means Man-Mankind; a member or representative of a generation.

The question naturally comes to our mind as to the origin of the idea of the Purusa. Where has this word come from? In this regard we see that during the very infancy of the human race, when there existed much disparity in the cultural life of human society, it was believed by the Hindus that there existed perfect seers of a very high order. They were the persons of advanced thinking and high spiritual power through whom spiritual truths and rules of right conduct were revealed to man from time to time. At that very beginning of human society, though there were various gods or goddesses, some seers or thinkers conceived the entire universe as an organic whole and the different aspects of creation as parts of the macro cosmic unity. Some of them tried to synthesize human existence into one being, called Purusa.

The Prakrti is considered as nature. It is the primordial matter— the material basis of the world. Prakrti contains everything that exists. It is, therefore, called the divine womb of all manifestations. It is only in Prakrti, that we can observe the

During the course of his student career, Sankaradeva, made himself thoroughly efficient in Sanskrit scriptures, songs, dance, music, dramatic performances and paintings that were current in the country. After this, he took the yogic exercises and soon learnt all the mysteries of the practices, of the yoga. All the age of twenty three he was married to Suryavati. After four or five years of his marriage he lost his wife who died immediately after giving birth to a girl. Sankaradeva went on pilgrimage twice in his life time and had intellectual discourses with his counterparts in Northern India. After twelve years of travel in various sacred places of Vaishnavite learning, Sankaradeva returned home carrying a deep impression of the nascent Neo-Vaishnava movement i.e. the knowledge of Vaishnava theology, texts, mode of worship and management of institutions. After his return from the pilgrimage and at the earnest request of his grandmother and his kinsmen, Sankaradeva was married for the second time. Sankaradeva did not contemplate on renunciation of family life. Weading a householders life dedicated himself to the all round development of Assamese society. At this time he began his literary and religious activities. He constructed Kirtana Ghar and Satra to hold prayers and religious discourses. From this time, onward Sankaradeva accelerated his study and spread his Bhagavata cult through the media of music, drama, songs painting and other modes of literature. He composed the most popular Kirtana Ghosā during that time. Madhavadeva was the most favourite disciple of Sankaradeva. He was a veteran scholar with in born artistic talent, who composed Nāme-Ghosā, the most notable book and rare example of both scholarship and craftsmanship.
states of our beings, soul, mind, intelligence, ego and the matter of our body.

The concept of Līlā means play-sports. The activity of God i.e. Līlā always presupposes the Reality. In the Hindu religious tradition, the importance of play i.e. Līlā as divine activity indicates that play is a positive activity, an activity that partakes of the other realm of the gods. Līlā is game or acting (abhinaya). It is also used in the sense of sensual pleasure. It is pastime, but mythologically used of certain libidinous amusements of gods among mortals of earth. The activity of the Lord is supposed to be mere sport (Līlā) which proceeds from his own nature, without reference to any purpose. Shiva’s pastimes and Kṛṣṇa’s adventures with the Gopīes and others are termed Līlā in Sanskrit books.

A. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE PURUṢA

From the very down of human civilization, man sought to interpret religious mysteries in terms of his own experiences as he could not rest content until he got some definite and determinate meaning. Human mind uses every ounce of its resources for bringing down the supreme to the region of the determined. There is Puruṣa and God as the supreme personality. The infiniteness of the Infinite is expressed metaphorically by calling Him the Virāṭa Puruṣa – the Puruṣa.

1. INCIPIENT CONCEPT OF PURUṢA FOR ṚG VEDA:

The Ṛg Veda, perhaps the first written document of human civilization called this incipient concept Puruṣa. In the Ṛg Veda, Puruṣa is nothing but the male principle. The term Puruṣa is traced first in the Puruṣa sukta of the Ṛg Veda, the earliest literary existence of human life. The first principle in this hymn is called Puruṣa that is ‘Man’ or ‘person’.
According to the Puruṣa-sūkta, Puruṣa is embodied spirit, or ‘Man’ personified and regarded as the soul and original source of the universe, the personal and life giving principle in all animated beings, is said to have thousand, that is innumerable heads, eyes and feet, as being one with all created life. A space of ten fingers wide, was thought to be the region of the heart of man, where in the soul was supposed to reside. Although as the Universal soul he pervades the universe, as the Individual soul he is enclosed in a space of narrow dimensions.  

In the Puruṣa-sūkta, the world is made up of the Rik, the sāman and the Yajush—the three Vedic aggregates. The Brāhmaṇ, Rājanya, Vaisya and śūdra, the four orders of people in the Hindu pole, are products of the Puruṣa, the highest deity, the personality, that permeates all living things, offered by the gods, the Sādhyas and the Rishis, as a sacrificial victim.

In the Rg Veda, Puruṣa is the cosmic Man. ‘Man’ is a cosmic entity; a sort of world-giant. His supreme greatness is more than the universe, a quarter of him is all beings, three-quarters are ‘the immortal in heaven.’ The ‘shining One’ (Virāj = the cosmic waters) was born from him and he from her. Puruṣa becomes the oblation, the animal victim at the cosmic sacrifice (= creation), performed by ‘the gods’. Out of this sacrifice, and from the members of the Puruṣa, came all things — Vedic hymns, all animals, men of the four castes, cosmic powers (moon = his mind; sun =his eye, wind = his breath, etc.)

Thus the Puruṣa sūkta declares that all beings are only a forth of the supreme spirit, while the three others forths remain immortal in heaven, that the Puruṣa has a
thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet and that pervading the entire universe, he extends ten digits beyond.

The *Puruṣa* is characterized in the *Ṛg Veda* in different ways. *Puruṣa* hymn says that the ‘One’ – here the *Puruṣa*, the cosmic ‘person’ or ‘man’ – may be regarded as the material cause (causa materials) as well as the creator (causa efficiens) of the world. All evolves out of it, or is a part of it, but frequently, as in the *Puruṣa* hymn, it is ‘more’ than all empiric existence, it transcends all things, which form, or derive from, but a part of it.5

The whole world is said to be the heart of the *Puruṣa*, because it is all an effluence of the mind (*Antahkaraṇa* – the aggregate of *buddhi*, *manas*, *ahāmkāra* and *citta*). The universe is derived from the sacrifice of the cosmic person, – the *Puruṣa*; the figure is of the dismemberment of a sacrificial animal; from each of the members of the cosmic *Puruṣa* evolved a part of the existing world.

In the *Atharva Veda*, the *Puruṣa* is identified with Brahman. This concept of the *Puruṣa* is also used as the ruler, controller, or Lord of all. Or, it is the foundation upon which all are based, which supports all. Still more significant are the passages which speak of the One as subtly pervading all, as air or wind pervades the physical universe, and animating all, as the breath of life (*Prāṇa*) is regarded as both pervading and animating the human body.6

This *Puruṣa* is the first principle – the only One Reality – the cosmic ‘Person’ or ‘Man’. The universe is treated as parallel in nature to the human personality. From the several parts of this cosmic person are derived, by a still rather crude process of evolution, all existing things.
II. THE CONCEPT OF PURUṢA IN THE UPANIŚADS:

The Upaniṣads are the earliest Hindu treatises which mainly deal with philosophic subjects. The philosophical tendencies implicit in the Vedic hymns are developed in their full glory in the Upaniṣads. The Putruṣa sūkta (X, 90) and the Nāsadiyasūkta (X, 129) of the Rg Veda contained seeds of the highest philosophy – the ultimate Reality was termed Brahman or Ātman by the Upaniṣads. Both the terms Brahman and Ātman denote etymologically, the most comprehensive Reality, they wanted to get at the truth of truth. The Brahman or the Absolute is the sole reality of the world for them. The Upaniṣadic Truth is the great achievement of human thought.

The different concepts of the Puruṣa in the following Upaniṣads have been surveyed.

1. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad

In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the Puruṣa or Brahman is pure light. In it, knowledge of the fundamental principle of the universe, of the ‘One’ which is ‘All’ is most commonly called Brahman and is identified with the ‘Self or Soul’ of man. The soul is most commonly called Ātman or ‘self’ in the Upaniṣads; the other names are Puruṣa – man, person, spirit and dehin Saritrī or kṣetrin – the possessor of the body or field, the embodied.

In this Upaniṣad, we find that “the senses are higher than the objects; the mind is higher than the senses, the intellect is higher than the mind; the Mahat is higher than the intellect, the A vyakta is higher than the Mahat; and the Puruṣa is higher than the A vyakta; and there is nothing higher than the Puruṣa which is the limit, the ultimate End.”

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Regarding the *atman*, this Upaniṣad says — "The *atman* is something which can never die, nor is it born. He springs from nothing and nothing springs from him. He is unborn, eternal, abiding and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain."  

2. The Taittiriya Upaniṣad

In the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, Brahman is the *Purusa*, which is identified with One. Brahman — the Greatest is defined by it as — the ultimate cause of the universe, "from which beings are born, through whom they live, and unto whom they return and merge in."  

In it, we are told that from the *Ātman* (the Supreme Self) arose in succession ether, air, fire, water, earth, herbs, food and man. It also says that Brahman thus desired — "Let me became many! Let me procreate myself."

From this, it is clear that Brahman is the sole cause of the world, that is the ultimate, intelligent cause, and that all things, conscious and unconscious are grounded in it. This Brahman is vastness, unlimited in space, in time and in content for there is nothing known as a limit to it and the term applies to a thing of transcendent greatness.

3. The *Kena Upaniṣad*

In this Upaniṣad, the Supreme Reality is something which cannot be described by speech. The *Kena Upaniṣad* says that the *Puruṣa* or Brahman is the eternal witness. "The ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the vocal organ of the vocal organ, the vital force of the vital force, the eye of the eye."  

This Upaniṣad gives the story of the discomfiture of the gods who found out the truth that "it is the power of Brahman which sustains the gods of the fire, air, etc. The
defeat of the gods symbolized the defeat of the sacerdotal spirit which was the dominant cry of that age."$^{13}$

Thus, the *Purusa* is inaccessible to mere sense, knowledge and discursive intellect.

4. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

It is a long treatise on the philosophy of *Brahman*. According to this Upaniṣad, the *Purusa* is *Ātman* – the Self. Here, self is pure thought – eternal and objectless.

Regarding self, this Upaniṣad says – "He who dwells in all things and is other than those things, whom the things do not know and whose body the things are and who controls them from within, he is yourself, the inner controller, the immortal."$^{14}$

*Yājñavalkya* said the *Maitreyī*, that – Things that are dear are dear for the sake of the self "...... The world is loved, not for love of the world, but the world is loved for love of the self that is one in all things. Ah! *Maitreyī*, it is the self that one must see and hear about, and think about, and meditate upon. All this world is known by seeing the self by hearing about it, thinking about it, meditating upon it."$^{13}$

5. The *Mundaka Upaniṣad*

The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* says that – *Brahman* is the first of the gods that emanated, the maker of the world, the upholder of the spheres. He proclaimed the science of the self, the basis of all sciences.

This Upaniṣad poses the question – "What is that which being known everything else is known?"$^{16}$ In it we get the concept of the *Purusa*.

Secondly, the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* says that the Imperishable is the Truth called *Purusa* (the all pervasive Reality) and That is the essence of this phenomenal existence.
the source from which it springs and the place where it gets dissolved. According to it, “The Puruṣa is transcendental, since He is formless. And since He is co-extensive with all that is external and internal and since He is birthless, therefore, He is without vital force and without mind. He is pure and superior to the (other) superior imperishable (Māyā)........He who knows the supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman.”

6. ĪŚA Upaniṣad

In the Īśa Upaniṣad, the word Puruṣa signifies the God. It says — “O thou who art the nourisher, the solitary traveler, the controller, the acquirer, the son of Prajāpati, do remove thy rays, do gather up thy dazzle. It shall behold by thy grace that form of thine which is most benign. I am that very person that is yonder” (in the Sun).

This Upaniṣad proclaims the divinity of man and nature. It asserts that God is enveloping everything, nay more, God is in everything.

7. The Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad

The Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad asserts unequivocally that the Ultimate Reality is non-dual (advaita) by adopting a unique method of investigating the three states of human consciousness and proclaims the sentence: ayamātmā brahma (this self is Brahman). This Upaniṣad says that the self in Brahman. Thus we get the concept of the Puruṣa in this upaniṣad in the following words — “He is the lord of all, Omniscient the internal Ruler. He is the cause of all, from Him indeed all beings proceed and in Him they merge.”

8. The Praśna Upaniṣad

The Praśna Upaniṣad, as the very name implies, discusses philosophical problems through the technique of questions and answers between six students and a
sage Pippalada. The students are genuine seekers after Truth. According to this Upaniṣad, the highest cosmes is Brahman (ego) and there is none beyond. Etat Param Brahma Veda, nātah param asiti. To them he said “I know this Supreme Brahman thus for only. Beyond this there is nothing.”

9. The Āitareya Upaniṣad

According to this Upaniṣad, Nirguna Brahman is Pure consciousness. It proclaimed Brahman as consciousness to be the basis of everything.

Puruṣa is the conscious, all pervasive Reality that dwells everywhere. Puruṣa is associated with karma and identified with the Sun, is the self of all beings, mobile and immobile and the conclusion is that — “All the creatures that there are, which move or do not move, are impelled by consciousness.”

Thus we know that according to this Upaniṣad, Prajñā is consciousness or Brahman, consciousness is Pratisthā, the support of the whole universe. Consciousness is self-revealing and is not dependent on any other factors for the revelation of Itself or of others. Consciousness is the one reality in which all phenomenal things end. Therefore, consciousness is Brahman: Prajñānam Brahma.

10. The Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad

This Upaniṣad teaches the unity of souls in the one and only self. In it Puruṣa is Ātman. Ātman is Brahman. He is devoid of all attributes. He is Existence – Consciousness – Bliss. These are not His attributes, but are His very essence. Like the other Upaniṣads, this Upaniṣad also makes us realize our unity with Brahman. It says “Knowing Him alone one transcends death. There is no other way to go by.”
II. The Chandogya Upanishad

In this oldest Upanishad, the Purusa is called Brahman. It proclaims Tattvamasi (Thou art That).\(^\text{23}\) Again it says – Sarvam khalvidam Brahman — “All this is verily Brahman.”\(^\text{24}\)

This Upanishad seems to teach mainly the saprapaṇca view of Reality. Brahman is declared to be “all this” and cryptically defined as tajjalān — as that (tat) which generates (ja) the world, reabsorbs (li) it, and supports (an) it. Describing the Real as “Comprehending all activities, all odours, all tastes, reaching all, and so self complete as ever to be speechless and calm,” the Upanishad proceeds to identify it with the individual soul thus: “This is my self within the heart, smaller than a rice grain, or a barley corn, or a mustard seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet, this is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the mid-region, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. This is Brahman.”\(^\text{25}\)

Thus we can get the Upanishadic views regarding the concept of the Purusha. Mention is made here only of few Upanishadic concepts and from the differences in their teachings, it can easily be inferred that their origins did not occur simultaneously, but the Upanishads do not differ among themselves by presenting divergent ideas of the Purusha or self or reality.

III. THE CONCEPT OF PURUṢA IN THE EPICS – THE RĀMĀYĀṆA AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA:

The Rāmāyāṇa is admittedly the earliest epic poem in Sanskrit. Valmiki, the great poet, wrote the Rāmāyāṇa to show to the people of India as well as the world at large that there are the great men whose foot steps should be followed for a good and
spiritual life. So, he tells the world through the Rāmāyana that one should live the life of Rāma – the ideal Puruṣa and how this Rāma, a great personality creates a moral standard by what he does and suffers and how he illustrates it in highly critical moral situations. Valmiki did realize that abstract moral principles detached from the real life of human beings can only be logical abstractions failing to influence the course of human conduct being devoid of practical utility. Regarding the author of Rāmāyana, it is remarked that – Valmiki was a cultured as he was inspired and as inspired as he was cultured. His intellect was as remarkable as his imagination and both were matched by his sympathy with all the living creatures and his devotion to God.”

Valmiki believes on the supreme Brahman the ultimate principle, which is not the Puruṣa – but the ‘Truth’ – Satya. Valmiki regards Dharma as the object or goal of human life and Satya, the being of things, i.e. the world is sustained and controlled by Dharma only. Dharma is the order and the ideal. Valmiki uses Truth (satya) and Dharma interchangeably (Ayodhya kanda, 18-24), he does not distinguish between them, as we have seen in the case of Rta and satya.

The Mahābhārata being developed from the Bhārata samhitā, is a description of the great battle between the Kuru i.e. kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. According to the Mahābhārata, truth comes through the path of moral purity and moral discipline. In the Māhābhara, Bhīṣma (one of the principal characters) tells Yudhiṣṭhira that the Great Lord Kṛṣṇa is the sole creator of the entire universe. In it we see that Puruṣa is Brahma or the universal self. It says that the entire universe has evolved out of Brahma or the universal self. Brahma is immanent in all the mobile and immobile objects of the universe. The ultimate essence of the world is identical with and
immanent in man. Human destiny is therefore, realized only by means of a true awareness of the essential unity of the human self and the cosmic self.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus in tune with the general Indian tradition, the Madhabhara\textit{ta} believes that there is the one, all pervading self which manifests itself in and through the various mobile and immobile objects of this universe.\textsuperscript{30} All objects of this universe are rooted in the supreme spiritual substance – \textit{Brahman}. Therefore, \textit{Brahman} is held to be the only reality, the origin, the ground and the essence of all. This ultimate essence of the universe is identical with and immanent in man. Man is the greatest and the best creation or manifestation of the Universal Self.

\textbf{IV. PURUSA IN THE BHAGAVADGITA:}

As one of the most important Holy scriptures of Hinduism, the \textit{Bhagavadgita}, is primarily an attempt to propound a view of the way that can lead to the supreme goal of human life. The \textit{Bhagavadgita} is not merely an ethico-religious discourse as it is popularly believed, but it provides a more or less complete system of philosophy comprising metaphysics, ethics and religion etc.

Regarding the concept of \textit{Purusa}, in the \textit{Gita}, \textit{Kr\text{\textviscera}\text{\textviscera}na} himself says —

"Thereafter, that state has to be sought for, going where they do not return again. I take refuge in that Primeval Person Himself, from whom has ensued the eternal manifestation. That means The Supreme Person, who has been mentioned by the word ‘state’ \textit{eva}, Himself, from whom, from which person, \textit{prasrita} has ensued, like jugglery from a magician; \textit{pur\text{\textviscera}\text{\textviscera}ni}, the eternal, \textit{prav\text{\textviscera}\text{\textviscera}tih}, manifestation, the magic Tree of the World."

\textsuperscript{31}
The Gītā mentions the term Puruṣa in regard to the finite selves, it says Puruṣas are eternal parts of God, these are also called the ‘soul’ in the unified sense which is associated with the body. It is neither born nor suffer death. That means, it is imperishable, eternal and constant. When its body is worn out, it abandons the old body and assumes a new one.32 Thus Puruṣa in the Gītā means the Jīva who is regarded as a part of God.33 God is immanent in all and He is the Puruṣottama, the supreme soul.

The Supreme Person – the Puruṣa is spoken of as the transcendental self, who, permeating the three worlds, upholds (than) and is the imperishable God. The persons are so-called only, figuratively, since they are the limiting adjuncts of this supreme person. In the Gītā, Krṣṇa says — “Since I am transcendental to the mutable and above even the immutable, hence I am well known in the world and in the Vedas as the Supreme Person.”34

Like the Koṭha Upaniṣad, we find that in the Gītā – the senses are higher than the objects; the mind is higher than the senses, the intellect is higher than the mind; and He that is higher than the intellect is the ultimate End.35 Thus God – the Supreme soul Krṣṇa – the Supreme Person is immanent in all and He is the Puruṣottama, - the Highest Puruṣa.

V. THE CONCEPT OF PURUṢA IN THE MANU SAMHITĀ:

The smṛti or the Dharmasāstra has greatly influenced Hindu life during the last two thousand years. Although the Vedas are regarded as the ultimate sources of Dharma in practice, it is the smṛti to which the Hindus all over India turn for the real exposition of religious and moral duties. The name of Manu, after which the smṛti is known, is quite old in Hindu scriptures. Like all ancient Indian thinkers, Manu also
recognized that the self is the very core of all things, the inner thread by being strung on which the world, with all its variety, exists. It is the underlying reality of all things in the world, subjective as well as objective. Thus the entire universe is animated by only one reality— which is 'Self', 'Spirit' Puruṣa or 'Man'. Indeed all materiality or externality is just grounded on an essential spirituality.

According to Manu samhitā, the universe is grounded on the cosmic person or God who is the essence or the spirit of all life and existence. He, with a view to create brings of many kinds, created at first, water and then many other things. The entire universe has been created out of seven very powerful Puruṣas. Therefore, the sages regard this world to be a manifestation of the Great Personal Reality. The male and the female and the four classes of human society have been created out of the Great Self. Thus, existence, revealing itself in this universe, is held to be spiritual in nature, human in essence. Spiritual knowledge is the ground of all other forms of knowledge. As Manu believes in the philosophy of spiritualistic monism, the entire creation including the evolution of human society is conceived to be teleological in nature. Man, the most sublime among all created beings, is conceived essentially as identical with Highest Reality, the Great Person.

VI. THE PURĀNIC VIEWS ON PURUṢA:

The Purāṇas are the basic works next to the Veda, Upaniṣad of Hindu religion and culture. Etymologically, the term 'Purāṇa' means tradition or that which exists from the ancient times. The Purāṇa generally appears to mean purāṇam ākhyānam or an ancient narrative. The Purāṇas are based on the Vedas and the upaniṣads. According to the Purāṇas, the Ultimate Reality is the one, non-dual consciousness (jñānam advāyam)
and it is the same One Supreme Spirit that has been variously called the Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavata. When that Reality is conceived in His all transcending, attributeless aspect, He is called Brahman, as the all-originating all sustaining, all regulating dynamic self of the universe. He is called Paramātmā; but when He is conceived with all His infinite glorious powers and attributes, manifested in relation to the cosmic order, He is called bhāgavat or bhagavan. In fact there are many names of that Supreme Being, the wise knows this fact while others are ignorant of it.

At present we have got eighteen works known as Mahāpurans and all of them have been printed more than once. Most of these works are of comparatively late origin and not a single Purāṇa claims to have come down in its original form. Besides these eighteen mahat, or principal purāṇas, there are a number of works which style themselves as Purāṇa or Upapurāṇa (secondary purāṇa).

Here, I mention only the Bhāgavata purāṇa in which the Ultimate Reality is expressed as Purusa-Kṛṣṇa. According to the Bhāgavata, from the point of view of Reality, the supreme soul and the individual soul are one and the same. The former is Vijnanaghana or mass of knowledge, while the latter is Vijnanakana or only a particle of that knowledge. As Bhāgavata says that God is one, yet appears many in many beings. In fact, one of the names given to God is Puruṣa. Explaining this name, the Bhāgavata states that God is called Puruṣa as He creates the Puras (cities) in the form of bodies of men, animals, birds, sages and celestial beings and then resides in those puras in the form of jivas. Thus the term Puruṣa has been interpreted by the Bhāgavata itself as the Being who fills the city (universe). Sometimes it has been interpreted as the Being who resides in the city of the body of a Being.
Again, according to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Supreme Puruṣa is named Bhāgavata who is, thus the object of supreme reverence, admiration and devotion. All the Vedas and sacrifices have Vāsudeva as another name for the Bhāgavata, Vāsudeva is none other than Brahman who is self luminous and attributeless.

In another place, the Bhāgavata enjoins upon us to consider ourselves as the Brahman Himself. It also reminds us the upanisadic gospel “You are Thou, O, svataketu.” Thus Bhāgavata Purāṇa holds the essential identity of the Brahman and Jīva, Paramātmā and Jīvātmā.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, as may be inferred from its appellation, is eminently Vaiṣṇava and considers Viṣṇu one with Supreme Being, Param Brahma, and Paramātmā. Here Puruṣa is Spirit, male principle and active energy; Viṣṇu the ultimate principle. Viṣṇu is associated with the Puruṣa and Prakṛti to create the universe.

VII. THE CONCEPT OF PURUṢA IN THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:

It has been pointed out that the words Puruṣa, Brahma and Atman denote the Reality, that lies behind the universe as well as finite beings. Thus the Reality is described as the cause, substratum, essence and spirit of the universe and also as the pure, eternal and characterless consciousness that lies behind all activities and experiences of every finite being.

(1) The Cārvāka view

Materialism rejected the idea that nature reveals any divine or transcendental power working behind it. Cārvākas believe that thought is a function of matter as they say – ‘Consciousness arises from matter like the intoxicating quality of wine arising
from fermented yeast. "The soul is nothing but the conscious body." So, according to Carvāka, consciousness is regarded as a mere product of matter, it is an epiphenomenon, a by-product of matter. Soul means the conscious living body. There is no concept of Purusa – the Ultimate Reality. The soul, i.e. the individual (jīva) is identified with the gross body.

(2) The Jaina view

The Jaina philosophy denies the existence of God. It does not believe in any universal spirit or God. There is no concept of Purusa in it. Jaina conception of Reality resembles the Upanişadic conception of Reality. Jainism regards reality as multiple in character. It is divided into the living (jīva) and the non-living (ajīva). The principle of life is soul. Though soul is not Purusa in the upanişadic sense, it signifies an individual i.e. a person. The soul is perceived directly. According to Jaina, the essential nature of a thing is unchanging and permanent, but its accidental qualities originate and perish. Thus the soul is permanent in itself, but its relationship with the body begins and ends.

(3) The Buddhist’s view on Purusa

The Buddha’s philosophy is very simple just as his teaching (Dharma) is very simple and ethical. There is no concept of Purusa as a Supreme Being – the Ultimate Reality, because there is no such thing as a person, or a living being, an ego, or a living entity, which may be called a permanent soul. The notion of Atman is a mere convention. All things, according to Buddhism, are evanescent (anītya) and so are painful (duhkha) and devoid of any everlasting substance. What we conventionally call a person or an individual consists of nothing else but nāma (non-material part) and rūpa (material form) both of which are changing at every moment. So, there is no concept of
Purusa as a Supreme Being. The four prominent schools of Buddhist philosophy viz., Sautrantika, Vaibhasika, Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra and Śūnyavāda or Madhyamika are unanimous in rejecting the Upanisadic concept of Ātman.

The Sautrantika and Vaibhasika schools believe in the existence of external objects and are known as bāhyarthavādins. They maintain that the function of illuminating the object belongs to the intellect (dhi or citta). It illumines the objects and itself too, for it is of the nature of consciousness.48

The Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra school believes that the reality is mental. Mind or intellect is a continuous stream of ideas. There are no external objects, they are only the projections of these ideas. Consciousness is self-luminous. It is self-known.

Śūnyavāda or the Madhyamika school of Nāgārjuna holds that Prajñā knows reality as it is. Prajñā means transcendental insight. The Madhyamaka is spiritual to the core. Its absolute is devoid (śunya) of finitude. It is a positive principle. It is nothing but spirit.

(4) The Sāṅkhya view

The Sāṅkhya philosophy is considered to be the most ancient school of thought in all the philosophical systems. It is basically dualistic as it recognises two fundamental and ultimate entities, matter and spirit, — Prakṛti and Puruṣa. It is also realistic as much as it holds Prakṛti to be an Ultimate Reality along with Puruṣa. Pure consciousness is inherently inactive. The term Puruṣa though in original meaning ‘man’ or ‘person’ and used synonymously in pre-philosophical contexts with the Old Upanisadic notion of Ātman or self, come to have a peculiar technical meaning in philosophical Sāṅkhya. Its Puruṣa is neither the productive nor the produced and also it is without any attributes.
Both these eternal and absolute – Puruṣa and Prakṛti in their own sphere operate in the universe. Puruṣa is not 'Self' in the sense of intelligence, ego or mind. It is simply Pure-consciousness which exists apart from Prakṛti. According to Sāṁkhya kārika, there is only one Prakṛti but a plurality of Puruṣas — "The Puruṣa is still and silent witness of whatever Prakṛti chooses to create, not interfering with her works. Prakṛti restlessly creating, acting, forming and effecting things for the delight of the Puruṣa." 

Puruṣa is described in the Sāṁkhya kārika as a pure witness, a kind of translucent bliss. The term chosen by the Sāṁkhya to denote the self (Puruṣa) is regarded as the subjective counterpart of Prakṛti (Primordial matter) which is the material basis of the world. Puruṣa plays the role of an efficient cause in the reproduction of the world.

(5) Yoga System on Puruṣa

The word Yoga is used in a variety of senses. It may simply mean 'method'. It is often used in the sense of yoking. In Patanjali, Yoga does not mean union, but only effort, or as Bhoja says, separation (Viyoga) between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Yoga believes in God as the highest self distinct from other selves. It speaks of Isvara (God) as an eternally emancipated Puruṣa, Omniscient and the teacher of all past teachers. Yoga's concept of Puruṣa is the eternally pure and transcendental consciousness and is free from the limitations of Prakṛti. It is the Citta with the reflection of the Puruṣa in it or the Puruṣa, as reflected in the Citta, which is the phenomenal ego or Jīva, which is subject to birth and death. Citta, is the physical medium for the manifestation of the spirit.

Patanjali defines God as a special kind of Puruṣa who is always free from pain, actions, effects and impressions. He is eternally free and was never bound nor has any
possibility of being bound and is above the law of karma. He is purest knowledge. But God of Yoga is not the creator, preserver or destroyer of this world. He is only a special Puruṣa. He does not reward or punish the souls. Innumerable Puruṣas and Prakṛti, all eternals and absolutes, are there to limit Him. He has nothing to do with the bondage and the liberation of the Puruṣa. Ignorance binds and discrimination between Puruṣa and Prakṛti liberates. The end of human life is not the union with God, but only the separation of Puruṣa from Prakṛti.

Thus based upon the metaphysics of Śāmkhya, Yoga gives a practical path of self-control and purification in order to realize the true nature of Puruṣas.

(6) Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view on Puruṣa

In the Nyāya sūtra, we do not find the mention of the word Puruṣa, only a casual mention of God for which it seems clear that Konada was not theistic as he himself has not mentioned God. Nyāya accepts the metaphysics of the Vaiśeṣika school as it accepts the accounts of matter, soul and God. Later Vaiśeṣikas as well as Naiyāyikas are theistic and gave a discussion on the nature of God in considering the theory of Ātman. Annam Bhatta classifies souls into two kinds, supreme and human. While the supreme is God, One omniscient, the human souls are infinite in number, different in each body. God is looked upon as a special soul, possessing the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience by which he guides and regulates the universe.51

Nyāya seeks to establish the existence of Iśvara on the basis of inference. According to Nyāya, the world has a creator, since the world as a whole is an effect like any other effect and has order and arrangement in its construction. The souls and atoms are co-eternal with God.
(7) Purva-Mīmāṃsā view on Puruṣa

The Mīmāṃsaka is a pluralistic realist. It does not mention the word ‘Puruṣa’ but it used the term ‘soul’. It believes in the existence of a plurality of souls, and a multiplicity of materials ultimately underlying the physical universe. There are innumerable individual souls, as many as there are living bodies, in addition to the bodiless liberated souls. There are also innumerable atoms and the other eternal and infinite substances. Both Prabhakara and Kumarila believe in the existence of a plurality of the individual souls and regard the self as an eternal, omnipresent, infinite, unquiquitous, substance, the substratum of consciousness, the real knower, the enjoyer and agent. Jaimini does not offer any detailed proof of the Reality of ātman he distinguishes the self (puruṣa) from the understanding (buddhi) and the senses (indriyas).

Mīmāṃsā does not admit the existence of any god- or the Puruṣa the supreme self as the creator and destroyer of the universe. Mīmāṃsā posits a number of deities in order that prescribed offerings may be made to them. It does not beyond these gods, since the observance of vedic dharma does not require the postulation of any supreme power.

(8) Vedānta Philosophy on Puruṣa

Vedānta philosophy is the exposition of the philosophy taught in the Upaniṣads and summarized in the Brahma sutras of Badarayana. It is also called ‘uttara-Mīmāṃsā’ as it deals with the final or philosophical portion (jñāna-kāṇḍa), consisting of the Upaniṣads. The Vedānta in its highest or monistic phase, is an inquiry into Brahman or the supreme Reality. The three chief schools or Vedānta taking an absolutistic or theistic stance are known as Advaita, Viśistādvaita and Dvaita,
predominantly associated respectively with the names of Samkara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

The main idea of the Advaita (non-dualistic) Vedānta philosophy as taught by the Samkara school is that the ultimate and absolute truth is the self, which is one, though appearing as many in different individuals. So, according to this school, there is only one real thing, which is 'Puruṣa'. but alternatively. It is called 'Brahman' or 'Ātman'.

Samkara's Brahman is the identity of pure-intelligence, pure being and pure blessedness, Brahman is the self of all. The individual self as it appears is but an appearance only, while the real truth is the true self which is one for all. Brahman, is the material cause (upādāna kāraṇa) as well as the efficient cause (nimiṭṭa-kāraṇa) of the world. There is no difference between the cause and the effect, the effect is an illusory imposition on the cause- a mere illusion of name and form.

Samkara clearly distinguishes a higher from a lower Brahman in the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya and elsewhere. The higher Brahman, Brahman viewed from the aspect of knowledge (vidyā), is free from all adjuncts, all name and form. It is Nirguṇa Brahmana. Saguṇa Brahman, or God, is the lower Brahman. It is the Brahman viewed from the aspect of ignorance (avidyā), Brahman, in Advaita, is the only Reality — non-dual the supreme self. It is beyond speech and mind so, It is indeterminate-indescribable.

The Purusa the Ātman the supreme self the Brahman is the only Reality of Advaitavāda. Ātman is the same as, Brahman. It is pure consciousness, It is the Self which is self-luminous and which transcends the subject object duality and the trinity of
know. known and knowledge, and all the categories of the intellect. It is the
Unqualified Absolute. It is the only Reality. Brahman is everything and everything is
Brahman.52

Ramanuja’s View on Purusa

Ramanuja preaches the Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda in which Ramanuja recognizes as
ultimate and real three kinds of substance, matter (acit), soul (cit) and God (Īśvara).
Though all the three are equally real, the first two—matter and soul are completely
dependent on God. Though they are substances in themselves, yet in relation to God,
they become his attributes. Ramanuja maintains that Brahman is one and undivided in
His supreme reality of infinite perfection. But He is not a distinctionless indeterminate
reality. According to Ramanuja, there is nothing equal or superior to Brahman.

Ramanuja maintains that the creation of the world is a real fact and the created
world is as real as Brahman Itself. The individual soul and the material world are the
attributes and the body of Brahman and Brahman is their inner controller. He
accomplishes everything creation, maintenance and destruction.

Regarding Sankaracharya’s attributeless Brahman (nirguna) which is higher
than Saṃgīna Brahman or personal God, Ramanuja asserts that there can be no such
thing as absolutely attributeless Brahman and man can only conceive of Brahman as
having all possible auspicious attributes. Whenever the term nirguna is used, it is
interpreted as without bad qualities and not as completely without qualities. Therefore,
God is full of auspicious qualities like-beauty, justice, mercy and only such a God is
worthy of devotion.
Madhva's View on Puruṣa

Madhava stands out for unqualified dualism and advocates the reality of five fold differences between soul and God, between soul and soul between soul and matter, between God and matter and between matter and matter.

The term Puruṣa is not used in Madhva's philosophy to signify the ultimate Reality. According to him, Reality (padartha) is of two kinds, independent (svatantra) and dependent (paratantra). The independent i.e. the svatantra reality is Brahman or God, the supreme person. The dependent beings i.e. the paratantra are of two kinds – positive (bhāva) and negative (abhāva). Of the positive, we have two varieties, conscious (cetanā), souls and unconscious (acetana) entities, like matter and time. Unconscious existence is either eternal like the Vedas, eternal and non-eternal like Prakṛti, time and space, or non-eternal like the product of Prakṛti.

In Madhva's philosophy, Brahman is that independent (svatantra) reality, the absolute creator of the universe. The supreme is indefinable, it transcends all perceptions. He is identified with Viṣṇu. He is endowed with a supernatural body and is regarded as transcendent to the world as well as immanent, since He is the inner ruler (antaryāmin) of all souls. He manifests Himself in various forms in various incarnations (avatāras) etc. He creates, maintains and destroys the universe.

(9) The Śaiva, Śākta and the Vaiṣṇava concepts of Puruṣa

Śaivism:

Śaivism, is a very popular creed in South India. It has elaborated a distinctive philosophy called the Śaiva Siddhānta in the eleventh century A.D. According to Śaivism, the supreme reality is not called Puruṣa, but Śiva and is regarded as
beginningless, uncaused, free from defects, the all-doer and the all-knower, who frees the individual soul from the physical bonds. Śiva is omnipresent and everlasting since He is not limited by time. He works through His Sakti, which is not unconscious, but conscious energy – the very body of God. The Absolute in itself is Śiva and the Absolute in relation to objects is called Sakti. In the Siddhānta Siva is not only the Absolute of Metaphysics, but the God of religion. He is the saviour of mankind.

Saktism:

In the Rg Veda, we find the beginnings of the cult of Sakti, where Sakti is represented as the embodiment of power. Sakti is the supreme power by which the universe is upheld. Śiva, in this system is of the nature of omnipresent (akhitamugato), pure consciousness (prakāśā), impersonal and inactive. It is pure being devoid of any relativity. The active personal being, Sakti includes all individual souls. “Śiva, when he is united with Sakti, is able to create, otherwise He is unable even to move.“ Śiva and Sakti are related as Prakāśa and Vimarṣa. Vimarṣa is the spontaneous vibration of the ultimate reality. Vimarṣa or Sakti is the power latent in the absolute or the Prakāśa – the pure consciousness.

Vaiṣṇavism:

Nimbarka’s View:

Nimbarka was a Telegu Brahmin of the Vaiṣṇavite movement who lived after Ramanuja and prior to Madhva, about the eleventh century A.D. His theory is called dvaśtipadvaśa or dualistic non-dualism. A distinction is made between the independent reality of Īśvara and the dependent realities of Jīva and Prakṛti. God or Īśvara is the
supreme controller (*niyantr*) while the *Jīva* is the enjoyer (*bhoktr*) and the world is the enjoyed (*bhugya*).

*Nimarka* identified the supreme spirit i.e. the Puruṣa with *Kṛṣṇa* and is regarded as possessing all auspicious qualities but devoiding the faults of egoism, ignorance, passion and attachment. He has the four forms (*Vyuhas*) and also manifests himself in the *avatāras* or incarnations. He is the material cause as well as the efficient cause of the universe. He is the material cause since creation means the manifestation of his powers (*sakti*) of cit and *acit* in their subtle forms. He is the efficient cause as the Lord of *karma* and the inner ruler of the souls, He does the creation in order to enable the souls to reap the fruits of their deeds.

Vallabha’s view:

In the thirteenth century, another Telegu Brāhmiṇ of South India, named Vallabha, who migrated to the North and developed the views of Viṣṇusvāmī. His view is called *suddhadvaita* or Pure Non-dualism and declares that the whole world is real and is subtly *Brahman*. Vallabha’s *Brahman* is the independent reality and is identified with *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*. His essence is existence (*sat*), knowledge (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*). Souls and matters are His real manifestations as well as His real parts. He is one as well as many. He manifests Himself as many through His power *Māyā* or *Avidyā*. It is by His Will that He manifests Himself as matter and as souls revealing His tripartite nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss in different proportions.

B. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF *PRAKR̥TI*

The concept of *Prakṛti*, which is discovered only recently by the scientific counterparts of the sages of India and established in the world of matter has imparted to
them a new significance and universality. God is generally regarded by the believers as a unity – the creator and the Ruler of the universe, who controls everything in the world. But the Indian seers with close observation and deep reflection found that there are many phenomena of nature, such as sunrise, sunset, seasons, tides and phases of the moon etc. all of which occur with predictable regularity. There has been no evidence of interference by supernatural beings. Accordingly, we find two distinct but related and complementary aspects of God, namely Purusa (person) and Prakriti (Nature or Matter). Purusa is person or spirit-self and possesses intelligence and feelings. Prakriti as the complement of Purusa, is impersonal and its distinguishing characteristic is that it is jada, inert, devoid of both feelings and intelligence.

The dictionary meaning of Prakriti is the natural condition or state of anything, nature, natural form, it also means that it is the material of which anything is made. Another meaning is the personified will of the Supreme spirit in the creation identified with Maya or illusion.

The very word Prakriti (pra means before and krii means creation) derivatively denotes the reality existing before this creation. Prakriti is sometimes explained as the Divine Mother of the Universe (with Purusa as Father) and sometimes as Maya, the illusive or delusive power of God which hides Him from us, makes the one appear as many and shrouds the workings of Nature in deep mystery.

The most remarkable feature of Prakriti is that it is characterized by three gunas or qualities namely, sattva, rajas and tamas. Sattva is light harmony or purity; Rajas is motion, passion or activity and tamas is characterized as darkness inertia or delusion or heaviness and obstructiveness. At a given time any one of these qualities may be pre-
-dominant while the other two are more or less dormant. But no creature, not even gods can be altogether free from these qualities. Just as the wick, flame and oil combine to produce illumination, so these also always co-operate throughout the course of evolution. Before creation all these guṇas rest in equilibrium. When this equilibrium is disturbed, the process of creation starts.

I. INCIPIENT CONCEPT OF PRAKRITI IN Rg Veda:

In the Rg Veda, the word Prakṛti is known as Nature. The boneless or unsubstantial is Prakṛti, Nature, the Original source of the substantial, that is the material and visible world. In the Hymn – CL XIV, 4, Rg Veda, it is asked “How the unsubstantial one (feminine) supports that (masculine) which is endowed with substance? The doctrine of Prakṛti is present in the celebrated Nāsadiya sūkta. It is in this hymn that is first suggested the primitive type of Indian thought, the thesis of all the Upanisads viz., the emanation of the world and of all the forms of life that successively people it. Out of the sole reality, the self permeates and vitalizes all things, through the agency of the unreality that overspreads it, the self-feigned fiction, the cosmical illusion, Maya. “It was not entity, nor was it non-entity”— says the Rishi. The cosmical illusion neither is nor is not; it is a self-feigned fiction, a spurious semblance of being, for it is self alone that is. And yet it is not merely nothing, for then the world of experience would not be here and everywhere, for living souls to pass through.

Saṅyāsa, in his interpretation of this hymn of Nāsadiya sūkta, says that in the state of dissolution, the world fiction, the principium of the versatile world is not a non-entity, it is not a piece of nonsense, a purely chimerical thing, like the horns of a hare, for the world cannot emanate out of any such sheer absurdity. On the other hand, it is
not an entity, it is not a reality like the one and only self. Thus the Nasadiyasūkta seems then to be the earliest announcement of the eternal co-existence of a spiritual principle of reality and an unspiritual principle of unreality – the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. The word Prakṛti is also called Māyā, which can be found in its primitive meanings in the Rg Veda. In the Rg Veda, we find the term Māyā employed in the sense of illusion or appearance (VI.47.18). In it, a passage offers the idea of Māyā as an explanation of apparent multiformity which in reality is one. Puruṣa is this all, that which was and which shall be. It is here understood that the universe is alone Puruṣa (the cosmic or Universal Person or Self) and the implication is that all that is not Puruṣa is illusion (Māyā). The word Māyā actually occurs in the early Mantras and denotes a kind of magic. Indra assumes many forms (māyābhīhi) by magic wiles, or mysterious powers, through Māyā (supernatural power) Īndra triumphs over the māyīn demons, and he has much Māyā (pure Māyā).

II. PRAKRITI IN THE UPANIṢADS:

The concept of Prakṛti is often used in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads as a synonym for Avidyā or Māyā. The Upaniṣads say that the world is Māyā. Brahman is the Ultimate Reality. Brahman is also called the Paramātmā, the Cosmic Self, because it is the Self of all that exists. The individual selves (the Jīvātmās) appear separate from the Paramātmā and from each other due to their separate names and forms (nāma and rūpa). These names and forms, however, are attributes (upādhis) superimposed on the Paramātmā, and the individual selves are in reality one with that Paramātmā. The Upaniṣad says that it is because we do not know this Brahman, that we go through the cycle of birth and death and suffer – we experience the appearance of the Reality i.e.
the experimental world. The phenomenal world – nature is called Prakṛti in different Upaniṣads in different ways. Here, mention is made of some of the main Upaniṣads, which give the concept of Prakṛti.

1. Kaṭha Upaniṣad

According to the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the world is Māyā. Empirical knowledge does not give true knowledge as it belongs to the realm of ignorance or Avidyā. The self within us and the Brahmān are One. The perceived multiplicity of the world must partake of unreality. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad also says — “What is here, the same is there, and what is there, the same is here. He goes from death to death who sees any difference here (N) Brahmān or Pure Consciousness appears through Māyā to be conditioned by cosmic ignorance and then became known as the creator.”

2. Taittirīya Upaniṣad

This Upaniṣad belongs to the Yajur-Veda. According to this Upaniṣad, Brahmān is that which is of the nature of consciousness, from which the whole universe was born, into which it gets dissolved, and by which it is sustained. Here, Mahā is Brahmān and Prakṛti is Māyā.

It again says that Brahmān is placed, i.e. manifests as the witness, in the cavity of the intellect that is lodged in the space circumscribed by the heart, and it is directly perceived there as such. If, however, Brahmān is placed in the cosmic unmanifested i.e. the principle called Māyā, it will become an object of indirect perception. And an indirect realization cannot negate the direct superimposition that a man suffers from.”

Thus the idea of Māyā in this Upaniṣad, explains multiformity as one.
3. Kenā Upaniṣad

In the Kenā Upaniṣad, Prakṛti is said to be the perceived world (chapter I, verse 4), Prakṛti is Māyā Brahman’s own power.

4. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is one of the most significant Upaniṣads, reputed to have been written by Yājñavalkya. According to the teachings of this Upaniṣad, the individual ātman is in reality the supreme Ātman ‘this’ (self or ātman) was indeed Brahman in the beginning.

This Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says that there is in it no diversity. Therefore, the multiplicity perceptible in the universe independent of Ātman, is Māyā. The unreality, darkness or death is interpreted to signify duality, which is Māyā. “Lead me fear the unreal to the real. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality” (N) Death is duality, which is Māyā. The only reality is Ātman.

5. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, consisting of sixty four mantras, belongs to the Atharva-Veda. Here, the Brahman, the Imperishable is the source of all creation. The Prakṛti is known as the unmanifested (Māyā). According to the Upaniṣad – Brahman, or pure consciousness appears through Māyā to be conditioned by cosmic ignorance, and then became known as the creator.

The nature of this Māyā is inferred from the fact of its being the limiting adjunct of Brahman that appears to be the seed of name and form. In such manifestation of consciousness as memory, doubt etc., the power of Brahman remains ingrained, and thus Brahman appears to be the cause of name and form; but in reality the
transcendental Brahman cannot be so, and accordingly Māyā has to be assumed to be the limiting adjunct of Brahman, causing this appearance of causality in Brahman. It also again says — Māyā is śakti (power of manifestation, power of Lord)\(^6\)

6. Īśa Upaniṣad

The spiritual message of this small Upaniṣad, proclaims the divinity of man and nature — in fact, of everything in manifestation — and the spiritual oneness of all existence. It asserts that God is enveloping everything, nay more, God is in everything. In this Upaniṣad, Prakṛti is unmanifested, the asambhuti — Prakṛti, (the primal material) cause. avidyā (ignorance) called avyakta (the unmanifested). This Prakṛti — avidyā is the seed of desire and work. Brahman — the manifested Brahman — called Hiranyagarbha.

7. Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

The Upaniṣad asserts unequivocally that the Ultimate Reality is non-dual and the Prakṛti or nature is known as Māyā. It is without any beginning though it is directly perceived. It is also called an illusion. An unreal illusion cannot exist without a substratum. Since an illusion is perceived as soaked in the idea of existence, it cannot have non-existence as its basis.

According to this Upaniṣad, this duality is nothing but Māyā, and is called the phenomenal world, the Prakṛti and the non-duality is reality — the Supreme Reality.

8. Praśna Upaniṣad

This Upaniṣad discusses philosophical problems through questions and answers between six students and a sage, Pippalada with a desire to know the Ultimate Truth. Here the highest cosmos in Brahman (ego) and there is none beyond — Etat param
Brahma Veda, nātaḥparam asti. The explanation of multiformity as one is the Māyā. It says – “Duality is the result of ignorance.”

9. Aitareya Upaniṣad

The Aitareya Upaniṣad holds that the Absolute self i.e. Brahma is the only Reality. Brahma is consciousness. The phenomenal world is the Prakṛti. This Prakṛti is Māyā.

10. Chāndogya Upaniṣad

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad takes Prakṛti as duality. It says – “Just as, my dear, by one piece of clay everything made of clay may be known the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name, the reality is just clay (H). This Upaniṣad gives the concept of Prakṛti as the perceived world. It views Prakṛti as sakti i.e. the power of manifestation or power of the Lord.

11. Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad

The Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad is found in the Kṛṣṇa Yajur-Veda. Śvetāsvatara is the name of the sage who compiled this Upaniṣad. In this Upaniṣad, the concept of Prakṛti is used in the sense of Māyā. Māyā is the power of the luminous cosmic self – the cause of the universe. Māyā manifested itself as this universe. This Māyā is hidden by its own guṇas, by its own qualities – sattva, rajas and tamas. So, it is said that this universe is nothing but a play of the three guṇas – a permutation and combination of sattva, rajas and tamas. Nature, according to this Upaniṣad, produces objects for the enjoyment of the individual self. It says that Prakṛti – the phenomenal world is perishable, the supreme Being (the Cosmic Self, who dispels ignorance) is immortal and
undecaying. It says — “Know Māyā as Prakṛti (material cause) and the great Lord as the possessor of Māyā.”69

12. Maitrini Upaniṣad

According to this Upaniṣad, the concept of Prakṛti or Nature is an illusion. As it says — “There are assuredly two forms of Brahman: the formed and the formless. Now, that which is the formed is unreal; that which is the formless is real.”(H)70

The Principal Upaniṣads have offered different concepts of Prakṛti. Though their views are different, yet their central idea is the same namely, the affirmation of the identity between the Ātman and the Brahman — the self and the cosmos. In the Upaniṣads, Prakṛti is synonymous with Māyā, the mysterious veil that is responsible for the multiplicity in the world. The word Avidyā-Ajñāna and Māyā are found to be used interchangeably.

III. THE CONCEPT OF PRAKR̄TI IN THE EPICS – THE RĀMĀYANA AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA:

The Rāmāyana along with the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas constitutes the epic literature of India, comprising the itihāsa and the Purāṇa, the study of which has been rightly stressed as necessary for the correct interpretation of the Vedas. For over two thousand years, the Rāmāyana like the Mahābhārata, has been influencing deeply the religious and moral thought as well as the literary production in India.71

Valmiki has described immense variety of Nature realistically. However, no concept of Prakṛti has been mentioned in the Rāmāyana. Nature and the Divine unknown are here brought together, and in between them are encrusted gods, goddesses and many other principles.
The *Mahābhārata* treats both the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti* as aspects of the one *Brahman*. The world is regarded as a development from *Brahman*. The self is said to send out from itself the *guna*ṣ, the constituents of nature, as a spider emits a web.72 The *Mahābhārata* assumes the doctrine the *guna*ṣ. The constituents of *Prakṛti* are the three qualities of *sattva* (goodness) *rajas* (passions) and *tamas* (darkness). We also get the concept of *Prakṛti* in the *Mahābhārata* in another way – “In XII. 310.8ff. Yājñavalkya explains to *Janaka* the eight *Prakṛti*ṣ comprising the *avyakta* (unmanifest), mahat (cosmic intelligence), ahankāra (egoity), and the five gross elements, and the sixteen *Vikāras* (modifications) comprising the five finer elements, the five organs of perception and the five organs affection and the *manas*, thus constituting the twenty four principles. In another place, the epic enumerates the principles (as including *avyakta*, *asadhi*, *Hiranyagarbha*, the earth and the sky. *ahankāra*), the five gross elements, and the five subtle elements. The third account has *avyakta*, *jnāna*, *buddhi*, *manas* etc.73

IV. THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ:

The concept of *Prakṛti*, originally formulated by the *Sāṁkhya* philosophy, was modified to suit the theistic and devotional teachings of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* resolved the absolute difference and opposition between *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* declared in the *sāṁkhya* system by recognizing the two principles as the manifestations of the One Divine Nature (*daivi Prakṛti*) known also as *Māyā* and *svabhāva*. In it *Puruṣa* is known as the higher Nature (*parā prakṛti*) and *Prakṛti* is known as lower Nature (*aparā prakṛti*).

“………….. It is constituted of three inseparable *guna*ṣ or modes called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* which are to be treated both as substance and quality as it would appear from their physical and psychological effects. Of these, *sattva* expresses itself as the
force of equilibrium, rajas as that of activity and tamas as that of inertia, on the physical level, and on the mental, they express themselves as knowledge, passion and indolence, respectively.\textsuperscript{74}

V. THE CONCEPT OF \textit{PRAKR\textsc{t}I IN MANU SA\textsc{m}HIT\textsc{A}}:

According to \textit{Manu sa\textsc{m}hit\textsc{a}}, this universe is grounded on the cosmic person or God, who is the essence or the spirit of all life and existence. He, with a view to create beings of many kinds, created, at first, water and then many other things. The entire universe has been created out of seven very powerful \textit{Purus\textsc{as}}. Therefore, the sages regard this world to be a manifestation of the Great Personal Reality. The male and female and the four classes of human society have been created out of the Great self.

\textit{Manu}, does not directly refer to the concept of Prakrti as M\textsc{a}y\textsc{a} or illusion. In chapter twelve, actions and existence are classified under three heads, viz. s\textsc{a}\textsuperscript{\textit{tu}}vika, r\textsc{\textit{a}}\textsc{\textit{j}as}\textsc{\textit{i}ka} and t\textsc{\textit{a}}\textsc{\textit{m}as}\textsc{\textit{i}ka} in view of their predominant qualities of s\textsc{a}\textsc{t}\textsc{\textit{v}a} symbolizing knowledge, rajas symbolizing passions and tamas symbolizing ignorance. Thus \textit{Manu} refers to the s\textsc{\textit{a}nk\textsc{\textit{h}y}a} doctrine of philosophy according to which all the objects of the universe consist of these three fold qualities, one of which dominates the other.

VI. THE CONCEPT OF \textit{PRAKR\textsc{t}I IN PUR\textsc{\textit{A}N\textsc{A}S}}:

The Pur\textsc{\textit{\textsc{a}n\textsc{a}s}} are uniformly stated to be eighteen in number. Of the eighteen pur\textsc{\textit{\textsc{a}nas}} only the \textit{Bh\textsc{\textit{a}g\textsc{\textit{a}v}a\textsc{\textit{a}t}a pur\textsc{\textit{a}n\textsc{a}}} and the \textit{Brahma Vaivart\textsc{\textit{tta}} pur\textsc{\textit{a}n\textsc{a}}’s concept of Prakrti have been discussed here as they have abiding influence on Sankaradeva’s philosophy.

The \textit{Brahma Vaivart\textsc{\textit{tta}} Pur\textsc{\textit{a}n\textsc{a}}}, is so named because it records the manifestations of the supreme. Being in worldly forms, by the interposition of K\textsc{\textit{r}\textsc{\textit{\textsc{\textit{a}n\textsc{a}}}...
who is Himself the supreme spirit, from whom Prakṛti, the female personification of matter proceeded. Here Prakṛti is the root or plastic origin of all. Female pradhāna, the chief one, the universal materials cause. Here Prakṛti is held to be not only the productive agent in the creation of the world but she is regarded as Māyā. This purāṇa gives the meaning of the world Prakṛti and it also explains the origin of this agent in creation. The prefix – Pra means pre-eminent, Kṛti means creating, that goddess who was pre-eminent in creation is termed Prakṛti, again Pra means best or is equivalent to the term Sāttva, the quality of purity Kṛi implies middling, the quality of passion, and Tī means worse or that of ignorance. She who is invested with all power is identifiable with the three properties and is the principal in creation, and is therefore termed Prakṛti. Pra also signifies first or foremost, and Kṛti – creation; she who was the beginning of creation, is called Prakṛti.

The Bhāgavata purāṇa defined Prakṛti as the reality which is full of the three guṇas, viz., sattva, rajas and tamas – imperceptible, eternal, replete with being and non-being and though indeterminate, it is the source of all the specific objects.75

Prakṛti has been termed Māyā in the Bhāgavata purāṇa. The process of creation started by Prakṛti is known as Māyā. Māyā has been described as the power that creates, maintains and destroys the universe.76 Prakṛti is in one place, according to this purāṇa, includes eight constituents, viz., mula prakṛti, mahat-tattva, ahaṁkāra and the five tanmātras. Bhāgavata purāṇa gives the following salient features of Prakṛti, as –

(i) Prakṛti is subject to manifestation (ii) it is subject to transformation (iii) it consists of the transformations of the guṇas (iv) it is multiform – broadly speaking three fold – adhyātma, adhibhūta and adhidaiva, e.g. the sense of seeing is adhyātma, its function-
vision is *adhibhūta*, and the part of the sun god situated in the eye organ is *adhidaiva*; (v) it is not self-manifest; (vi) it is the equilibrium of the three *gūṇas.* When the *gūṇas* are in equilibrium (*sāmyavasthā*), *Prakṛti* is invisible, imperceptible and there is no vestige of the universe. It is like the sound sleep of a man. When he is in that state, he is unaware of the existence of his body and the world. But when this state of equilibrium is disturbed, there is preponderance of either *sattva* or *tamas* and the invisible *Prakṛti* becomes visible. We can understand this fact by the example of electricity very well. All material particles are electrically charged. This charge is of two kinds, negative and positive when these two are in equilibrium, electricity is not perceptible, when either is disturbed, electricity becomes immediately manifest.

VII. THE CONCEPT OF *PRAKRĪTI* IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS:

1. The *Cārvāka* view

*Cārvāka* claims that sense-experience is the only source of knowledge and matter is the only reality. Matter consists of four elements — earth, water, fire and air which are perceivable through sense experience. These are eternal and can explain the development of the world from the protozoon to the philosopher. *Cārvāka* does not mention the concept of *Prakṛti* — as an illusion or *Māyā* but as a matter, only the reality. Consciousness is regarded as a mere product of matter. Through the combination of the elements, the body is formed. Likewise soul is also formed as a by-product of matter. With the annihilation of the body, the soul also is annihilated. The soul, accordingly, is nothing but the body with attributes of intelligence, since soul is different from the body, it cannot be established by sense perception. So, it says that — "Consciousness is
the result of an emergent and dialectical evolution. It is an epi-phenomenon, a by-product of matter."\textsuperscript{79}

2. The \textit{Jaina} view

The concept of \textit{Prakṛti}, of which the world is created by God is criticized by \textit{Jaina} philosophy. In \textit{Jaina} philosophy, the whole universe is brought under the two categories of which, \textit{Jīva} is one and another is \textit{Ajīva}. Jīva is conscious spirit and Ajīva means the unconscious non-spirit. \textit{Prakṛti} is matter, which is known in \textit{Jaina}, as the \textit{Pudgala}. It is also \textit{Ajīva}, which is liable to integration and disintegration. The smallest part of matter is atom (\textit{anu}) which cannot be divided. All the compound objects of the material world, and the senses, mind and breath are also the combinations of atoms. Matter has the four qualities such as colour, taste, smell and touch. Matter or \textit{Pudgala} is that kind of \textit{Ajīva} which has both form (\textit{rūpa}) and no-form (\textit{arūpa}). \textit{Dharma}, \textit{adharma}, space, time are those kind of \textit{Ajīva}, which has no form, they are \textit{arūpa}.

3. \textit{Prakṛti} in Buddhism

\textit{Buddha} does not introduce the concept of \textit{Prakṛti} in his philosophy. But we get this concept in his doctrine of \textit{Pratītyasamutpāda} or “Dependent Origination”, which is the foundation of all the teachings of \textit{Buddha}. The word ‘suffering’ which means \textit{samsāra} is used in the sense of \textit{Prakṛti}. \textit{Pratītyasamutpāda} viewed from the point of view of relativity is \textit{samsāra}; while viewed from the point of view of reality, it is \textit{Nirvāna}.\textsuperscript{80}

\textit{Prakṛti} – \textit{Māyā} – as the concept of cosmic ignorance has gained its popular acceptance in the \textit{Mahāyāna} Buddhism of \textit{Nāgārjuna}, \textit{Nāgārjuna} regards the phenomenal world as \textit{Śūnya}, which means not a void or nothingness – it is what is
neither real nor unreal, nor both nor neither. It is, so to speak, Māyā. Regarding the concept of Prakṛti as Māyā, Nagarjuna says – “Those who see that things exist or that they donot exist, donot see the truth,” for all things are called Māyā because they are unreal like a lightning flash...... because they are not born, yet appear to be, (and) as the world is neither different from reality nor identical with it, and though the world is treated as Māyā, Māyā is said to be not without reality. 81

4. Prakṛti in the Śaṅkhya’s System

Śaṅkhya recognizes two fundamental and ultimate entities – the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. Prakṛti is thought to be the primordial stuff of the entire world manifest and unmanifest.

Prakṛti i.e. the matter or the unconscious entity in Śaṅkhya, does not mean solid, inert and perceptable substance, rather it is a pure potentiality for physical and psychical happening. It is composed of three strands of energy (guna), called sattva, rajas and tamaś. In the primordial state of matter these three strands of energy are in equilibrium. So long as this is disturbed, no actual manifestation occurs. The presence of Puruṣa disturbs this equilibrium and leads Prakṛti to a process of evolution into twenty four categories of being.

According to the Śaṅkhya kārīka of Isvarakrsna, there is only one Prakṛti but plurality of Puruṣas. Prakṛti is unconscious entity which implicitly contains the possibilities of all thought and substance. According to the Śaṅkhya, all the functions which ordinarily we denote as psychic, i.e. perception, sensation, thinking, willing etc. are mechanical processes of matter i.e. of Prakṛti. These would remain unconscious, if it were not for the soul which ‘illuminates’ them, i.e. makes them apparently conscious.
The proximity of unconscious entity and pure consciousness leads to the emergence of self awareness.

Regarding Prakṛti, it says-'As the uncaused root cause, it is called Prakṛti, as the first principle of the universe, it is called Pradhāna, as the unmanifested state of all effects, it is known as Avyakta, as the extremely subtle and imperceptible thing which is only inferred from its products, it is called Anumāna; as the unintelligent and unconscious principle, it is called Jāda, and as the ever active unlimited power, it is called sākī.82

5. Prakṛti in Yoga's Philosophy

Yoga is intimately allied to Sāṅkhya. Sāṅkhya means knowledge and Yoga means spiritual action. Yoga is the practical side of the Sāṅkhya system. As Yoga accepts the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya, so it accepts the Sāṅkhya concepts of Prakṛti. However, it introduces God as a Purusa vīsesa to solve the unsolvable conflict of Prakṛti and Purusa.

6. Prakṛti in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika System

Nyāya is a system of atomistic pluralism and logical realism and allied to the Vaiśeṣika system. Nyāya accepts the Vaiśeṣika’s metaphysics – which deals mainly with the categories. According to Vaiśeṣika, all objects of knowledge or all facts come under Padārtha i.e. the entire universe is reduced to six or seven padārthas. There is no mention of Prakṛti in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, but it believes in the doctrine of Ārambhavāda which means that the matter or the material objects of the world are composed of parts and are subject to production and destruction. They are divisible into smaller parts and the latter are further divisible into smaller parts. And the last indivisible partless and
eternal part of matter is known as an ‘atom’. All physical things are produced by the combination of atoms. The atoms are of four kinds- earth, water, fire and air. The atoms are the material cause of the world of which God, assisted by the unseen power, is the efficient cause. Thus through the doctrine of ‘Asatkāryavāda’ the Nyāya-Vaisēśika establishes that matter is not produced nor destroyed.

7. Prakṛti in Pūrva Mīmāṁsā

The Mīmāṁsaka believes in the reality of the external world as well as the individual selves. The concept of Prakṛti is not found in Mīmāṁsaka, but we find a different conception of matter i.e. Prakṛti in it. It believes that there are innumerable individual souls as many as there are living bodies and also that there are innumerable atoms and other eternal and infinite substances. The Mīmāṁsaka believes in the Law of kamma, in the Unseen Power which is called Apūrva, in heaven and hell, in the ultimate authority of Vedas but does not believe in God. According to it, the world is never created and never will it be destroyed.

8. Vedānta philosophy on Prakṛti

Samkara View

The concept of Prakṛti is known as the doctrine of Māyā in Samkara’s philosophy. According to Samkara the Ultimate Reality is Ātman or Brahman, which is pure consciousness (jñāna-svarūpa) or consciousness of the Pure Self which is devoid of all attributes. Brahman or Ātman or the Supreme Self is the only Reality – others are unreal. Therefore, Brahman – the Intelligent – Puruṣa only is the cause of the universe. Sankara criticizes Śāṅkhya’s concept of Prakṛti as an eternal, unlimited single cause of the universe; because the unintelligent Prakṛti cannot be the cause of the world.
Brahman associated with Its Māyā sakti is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. Therefore, the world is a creation of Māyā. Samkara's Prakṛti is something material and unconscious (Jāda) but neither real nor independent. It is inherent ‘power or potency’ of Brahman. It acts as a medium of the projection of this world of plurality from the non-dual source of Brahman. Prakṛti is beginningless (anādi). Māyā has two aspects. In its negative aspect it conceals (āvaran) and acts as a screen to reality. In its positive aspect it projects the world of plurality. It is not real for it has no existence apart from Brahman, it is not unreal for it projects the world of appearance.

Prakṛti in Ramanuja

Ramanuja, the Vaiṣṇava thinker holds the concept of Prakṛti as Acit or unconscious substance. According to him, Prakṛti is ordinary matter which makes samsāra. It is an object of enjoyment (bhogya) and suffers change (Vikārāspada). Like Sāṁkhya, Ramanuja believes in Prakṛti but unlike it, he says that Prakṛti is absolutely dependent on God and is controlled by God from within, just as the body is controlled by the soul from within it. Prakṛti has three qualities — sattva, rajas and tamas, but unlike Sāṁkhya they are not the constitutive elements of Prakṛti. Prakṛti forms the body of God and is more completely dependent on God than souls who have freedom of will. Prakṛti is not infinite and independent. Because Prakṛti is limited by Nityavibhūti and is inseparable from God. Prakṛti is God’s mode or body. It is also called His Lilāvibhūti because creation is His sport. Thus Ramanuja contends that the Jīva and the physical world form the sakti (energy, power) of Brahman, that the world and Brahman stand to each other in the relation of part and whole.
Madhva’s View

In Madhva’s unqualified dualism (dvaita), God alone is independent and is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. But the other two entities, the soul and matter are absolutely dependent on God. The concept of Prakṛti is the primal matter in Madhva’s philosophy. When God wants to create the world, under His influence, it evolves itself into various material things or objects which return to it again at the time of dissolution. In Madhva’s philosophy, creation means manifestation of subtle matter as gross and the embodiment of the souls in order to reap the fruits of their past actions. Thus God is only the efficient cause of the world but the material cause is Prakṛti, out of the stuff of which, God creates the world.

9. The Śaiva, Sākta and the Vaiṣṇava concepts of Prakṛti

Śaivism

According to Śaiva Siddhānta, Śiva is the first cause, His sakti is the instrumental cause and Māyā is the material cause of this world. It believes in Pure matter (sūdha or sāttvika jagat) and defiled matter (asūdha or prakṛta jagat). The material cause of pure creation is called Mahāmāyā or Bindu or Vidya, while that of defiled creation is called Māyā or Asūdda Bindu. Svarūpa sakti is conscious, unchanging and eternal energy which forms the essence of the Lord. The Mahāmāyā and Māyā both are the material (Jāda) powers of the Lord and are known as Parigraha sakti.

Saktism

Sakti is the power of existence, knowledge and bliss of Brahma and inseparable from Him. Sakti may be taken to be male, female or neutral. Śiva is the
pure-indeterminate Brahman, while sakti. the power of Māyā makes Him determinate 
edowed with the attributes of knowledge, will and action. The whole world of matter 
and souls exists potentially in sakti who is the inseparable power of siva. According to 
Saktism, Māyā or Prakṛti the matrix of the world, lies within sakti.

Vaiṣṇavism: Nimarka and Vallabha

Nimbarka's View

The philosophy of Dvaitādvaita or Bhedā-bhedā of Nimarka, is very much 
close to Ramanuja and he also admits three realities- God, soul and Matter. Prakṛti is 
the matter, but Prakṛti is not the matériel cause of the universe in Nimarka's 
philosophy. God is both efficient as well as material cause, because creation means 
manifestation of His powers of cit and acit and it is a real transformation (parināma) of 
His powers. It has no independent existence and therefore is not different from God. 
Matter is neither an attribute of God nor does it constitute His essence. Matter is 
imperfection and subject to change and therefore, it does not form the body of God. 
Thus Nimarka's concept of Prakṛti is that it is the 'part' or 'power' of God.

Vallabha's View

Acharya Vallabha's philosophy is known as Suddhādvaita or Pure Non dualism 
undefiled by Māyā. The Prakṛti is matter which is real manifestation of Brahman, 
which is only an independent reality. The Prakṛti is His part and power through which 
God manifests Himself as many. The universe i.e. the creation is not a vivarta for it is 
the real manifestation and not an unreal appearance. It is also not a parināma for this 
manifestation does not involve any change or transformation. The Prakṛti is a natural
emanation from God as it does not bring any change and is, therefore called *avikṛta parināma*.

**C. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF LĪLĀ**

*Līlā* is the play-sport, it is the activity of God. According to Sanskrit dictionary, its meaning is play, sport, pleasure, diversion, pastime, amusement etc. A.K. Coomaraswamy has suggested that the meaning of the word ‘*Līlā*’ probably has derived from the root ‘*lelāy*’, ‘to flare’, ‘flicker’, or ‘flame’. And even if *Līlā* is not derived from this root, the association of ideas is clear, he adds, as both fire and play suggest spontaneous, erratic movement. ⁸⁵

*Līlā* is known as play-sport, which is an integral part of the religion of Hinduism, it is an appropriate religious expression. It is like a symbol of divine activity and as cultic activity bears a positive relationship to religion. In almost every religious tradition the gods are gods because they are characterized by an almost universal characteristic of otherness which is its transcendence and unconditioned nature. The gods are supernatural, they are not limited by human frailty or hindrances and it is also apparent that the Hindu gods are further characterized by their playful nature. As play is the great variety of activities and phenomena for which it is difficult to give a simple, all encompassing definition of the word, there are obvious characteristics of play that make it especially suitable to the divine sphere. Play, just as much as power, knowledge and eternity expresses the truth that the gods are unlimited. For play expresses freedom, it is carefree and relatively unmotivated. Play is done for the fun of it, for no ulterior reason. As opposed to most other types of activity, it is intrinsically satisfying rather than instrumental. It is an end in itself. The gods act, but their acts cannot be understood
simply within the structure of theological or ethical systems. In their complete otherness, their actions can only be called *Līlā* which may be translated as ‘sport’ ‘play’ or ‘dolliance’. To say that the gods act to satisfy any desire, to save man from injustice, even to free man from bondage, is to pretend to comprehend something that simply cannot be understood by man. As gods are entirely complete, they need and desire nothing. Therefore, their activities, are appropriately called ‘*Līlā*’. And ‘*Līlā*’ is different from, or ‘other’ than, the world of here and now that is dominated by cause and effect, where man is forced to act out of necessity.⁸⁶

Thus regarding ‘*Līlā*’ we can say that ‘*Līlā*’ is divine will. The *Purusa* plays or takes the cosmic game with His will. The act of creation is not motivated by any selfish interest or purpose. It is the spontaneous over flow of God’s nature (*svabhāva*).

I. THE CONCEPT OF *Līlā* IN THE *RG VEDA*:

. The word ‘*Līlā*’ is not found in the *Rgveda*, but we may get the idea of ‘*Līlā*’ in the name of ‘*Māyā*’ in the *Rgveda*. The idea of the world enticing and enchanting man suggests the idea of *Māyā*, which is the central theme in Hindu religion and this theme further illustrates the ‘*Līlā*’ of the gods.⁸⁷ In the *Rgveda*, *Māyā* means power, or the ability of the gods to change form and to create. *Māyā* is the supernatural ability on the part of the gods to extend themselves. There are some hymns⁸⁸ which express the god’s ability the concept of *Māyā* as well as concept of ‘*Līlā*’ which is clearly linked to creation. Thus the typical use of the term ‘*Māyā*’ in the Vedic literature as the wonderful skill of the gods may signify the idea of ‘*Līlā*’ in it.
II. LĪLĀ IN THE UPANIṢADŚ:

In the Upaniṣads creation has been described as the ‘Līlā’ of the Absolute. Līlā is described as a joyful and sporting game in which certain limitations are imposed upon one self just for the sake of joy. Creation is conceived in some such manner in the analogy of a sporting game. Some prominent commentators of the Upaniṣads have inferred from this that creation is just an illusory game being played for the sake of joy, and that in reality there has never been a creation.

Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad

The term Līlā is not found in the earlier Upaniṣads, but we find it in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad. This Upaniṣad says that the world is nothing but Līlā the play or sport of the Supreme Being. According to this Upaniṣad, Brahman – the cause of the universe, is the Ultimate Reality. Thus according to this Upaniṣad, Brahman is the Cosmic Self the creator of the universe. He is the magician. He is playing tricks, confusing us. We can call it sport or ‘Līlā’ or fun.

Thus the Upaniṣads say that ‘the world is God’s revelation of Himself. His joy assumes all these forms.’ The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad also gives a few words regarding the concept of Līlā. It states that the creation of Brahman is His sport or Līlā. It thus states ‘Everything sees His sport (this creation), but Himself no one sees.’

III. THE CONCEPT OF LĪLĀ IN EPIC PHILOSOPHY:

In the philosophy of the epics such as the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, we find the concept of Līlā as a divine activity. The act of creation of God is termed as play- Divine play. The creation of the world is spontaneous without any motive.
The "Rāmāyaṇa"

In the "Rāmāyaṇa", Līlā as an activity of a Divine Being plays an important role. The popular human avatar Viṣṇu, Rām reflects the playful theme. The implication is that Rām’s whole adventure of the "Rāmāyaṇa" was a play for him. The activities of Rāma are not the activities of common people—these are divine playfulness termed Līlā.

The "Mahābhārata"

The concept of ‘Līlā’ is profoundly used in the "Mahābhārata" as the Divine play or sport of God. In the "Mahābhārata", we come across the words—‘Thou art he who sports with the universe as his marble boll’.

Among the Indian gods Kṛṣṇa is certainly the most playful and is found to be the central personality in the "Mahābhārata". In this epic Kṛṣṇa is a counselor, a politician and a hero. He is thoroughly bound up in worldly affairs but there are also some rather straightforward indications that he is a great god there too. Kṛṣṇa is obviously more than a hero because in the "Mahābhārata", Bhīṣma Pitāmah says about Kṛṣṇa in the sobha parva—“He is the origin of the universe and that in which the universe is to dissolve. Indeed, this universe is mobile and immobile creatures both sprung into existence from Kṛṣṇa only.”

In the "Mahābhārata", the activities of Śiva are ‘Līlā’. The creation of the world in the Śaivite tradition is spontaneous and playful like Kṛṣṇa’s playful activities. As mentioned in the "Mahābhārata", Śiva, the king of dancers, bring about the creation of world by means of dancing.
IV. LĪLĀ IN BHAGAVADGĪTA:

In the Bhagavadgītā, the concept of 'Līlā' is found extensively as the divine play of Kṛṣṇa. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa addresses Arjuna and suggests a perspective from which the activity of gods can be understood as play-sport or the 'Līlā'.

“For Me, son of Pārth, there is nothing to be done
In the three worlds whatsoever,
Nothing unattained to be attained
And yet I still continue in action.”

In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa’s revelation to Arjuna and his presentation of the Bhagavadgītā to Arjuna are the playful activities of God which are termed as Līlā of Kṛṣṇa.

V. LĪLĀ IN MANUSĀMHIṬṬĀ:

In accordance with the Vedānta Sūtra, Manu says in the Manu Smṛiti that all the creative activities of the Lord are His ‘sport’ Līlā. Brahman is creating the world in sport. “The māṇtvāsitaras, the creations and destructions of the world are numberless, sporting, as it were, Brahman repeats this again and again.”

VI. LĪLĀ IN THE BRAHMA SŪTRA:

The Līlā i.e. play as divine activity in India is commonly seen in creation. In the Brahma Sūtra of Badarayana, we read ‘creation is not possible for Brahman on account of having a motive. But, as in ordinary life, creation is mere sport (to Brahman). In the Brahma Sūtra, we find that Brahman’s creation has no motive behind it except a sportive impulse. No body engages himself in anything without a motive or purpose as everything is undertaken by people to satisfy desire. But Brahman cannot be the cause
of the world as Brahman is self sufficient. He creates without implementation. By His
great powers, He is able to transform Himself into manifold effects. No outside co-
operation is necessary for God who possesses all the necessary powers perfect within
Himself. It may be determined by motives intrinsic to the activity itself. So, it is said
that — “the activity of the Lord may be supposed to be mere sport (Līlā) proceeding
from his own nature, without reference to any purpose.” The Brahma Sūtra supports
this view as — “Lokowāt Tu Līlā Kaiwalyam.”96

VII. THE CONCEPT OF LĪLĀ IN THE PURĀNAS:

The concept of Līlā is fully formed in the different Purāṇas through the various
descriptions. The different purāṇas give the different descriptions which refer to Līlā as
an activity of God – the spontaneous activity of God without any purpose. Here I make
mention of some of the purāṇas where Līlā is given much prominence.

1. The Matsya Purāṇa

In the Matsya Purāṇa, the view of creation as the play of God is beautifully
portrayed in the Vaisnava version of the creation of the world. Viṣṇu creates the world
while lying asleep on the cosmic serpent Ananta (or sēṣa) in the middle of the
primordial ocean. During the sleep, a lotus grows from his navel and the demiurge
Brahmā is created, who in turn creates the world. Creation, here is seen as a pointless,
effortless reflex of God. He creates the entire universe while asleep, he dreams the
universe into existence, as it were.97
2. The Visṇu Purāṇa

The Visṇu Purāṇa pictures Visṇu as a sporting boy. “The image of the sleeping Visṇu spinning the world into being from his dreams and the image of the solitary boy creating the world amid his play suggests a spontaneous, unpremeditated creation. The world does not appear to be purposely fashioned but is brought into being as a result of reflex or over abundance.”

In Vaiṣṇava tradition, the avatāras of Visṇu are central. From time to time Visṇu incarnates himself to maintain the balance of good and evil in the world, to uphold the ‘dharma’ of the age. In his various avatāras, Visṇu may be said to act as a savior in the Hindu tradition- and Visṇu avatāras are simply his way of amusing himself. Thus from the various Vaiṣṇava scriptures, it is clear that Visṇu’s avatāras serve to relieve the world of its burden, to restore the balance of dharma and adharma. But these passages make it clear that Visṇu does not act from necessity or from any clear motive. Restoration of the moral order often seems a mere by product of Visṇu’s play.

3. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, we see once again the full form of the concept of Līlā – “Whenever there is waning of Dharma and waxing of sin, the supreme Lord Śrī Hari incarnates Himself. There is no reason for the birth and act of the Lord of the universe, except for enjoying his own illusive power.”

In this purāṇa, “the world process appears to the devoteesas only a Līlā of God, where He is the only actor in the Drama, playing all the roles. Līlā is not be taken in the sense of a pastime or play or sport as there cannot possibly be any motive or necessity for Him to resort to them. It only suggests that He has no special purpose, and that He is
not constrained by any external agency or desire. His activities are only spontaneous overflow of the fullness of His own bliss like the activities of man of realization."\textsuperscript{100} It says — "The Great Being has no reason to produce this universe. The entire creation is but His \textit{Līlā}."\textsuperscript{101}

The \textit{Harivāṁśa}, also refers to this image of \textit{Viśnū} playing in the primordial \textit{avatāras}.

\textbf{VIII. THE CONCEPT OF LĪLĀ IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS :}

The concept of \textit{Līlā} is not found in the \textit{Cārvāka Buddha, Jaina, Yoga, Mimāmsaka} systems of Indian philosophy. Only few schools give the concept of \textit{Līlā} in their philosophy.

\textbf{1. Sāṁkhya View}

In the \textit{Sāṁkhya system}, the concept of creation of \textit{Prakṛti} is known as the play of the \textit{Prakṛti} but not in the term of \textit{Līlā}. In this system, \textit{Viśnū}'s creativity is spoken of as his play with \textit{Prakṛti}. The process of evolution and reabsorption of the \textit{Prakṛti} is known as the play of \textit{Prakṛti}. The cycle of evolution and reabsorption has never had a beginning and will never have an end. The play of \textit{Prakṛti} does not cease when this or that individual attains release though the emancipated are unaffected by the action of \textit{Prakṛti}. Though \textit{Prakṛti} is one only, and common to all \textit{Puruṣa}, it manifests itself in many ways, to the souls in bondage it evolves into many a form from the subtlest to the grossest; and to the freed it retraces its steps and becomes resolved into its own primeval form. So long as there are spectators, the play of the \textit{Prakṛti} goes on. When all souls are set free, the play is over and the actors retire."\textsuperscript{102}
2. **Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika View**

In the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* philosophy, the will of creation of God is termed as sport. It says that—“A God with an unsatisfied want would be a contradiction in terms. It has been maintained that God engages in creative activity in a sportive mood. Creation is but a game and pastime with Him, and no question of motive therefore can be urged as necessary. But *Uddyotakara* refuses to be convinced by this argument, as even play is not a motiveless activity. It is resorted to only with a view to enjoyment of the pleasure which is derived from it, and also because abstention from play causes uneasiness to those who are lovers of it. But such a contingency cannot be conceived to be possible with reference of God, because He is absolutely free from all shades of uneasiness and worry. The theory of playful activity therefore cannot be regarded as a satisfactory explanation of God’s creative impulse.”

3. **Līlā in Advaitavāda of Samkara Charya**

The *Advaita* philosophy also approves the concept of the Divine creation of the world as *Līlā* in a metaphysical sense. In the *Advaita Vedānta*, it is said that in reality there was never a creation, and that this cosmic delusion is nothing but a sporting and joyous act – a *Līlā*. According to *Sankara Charya*, God created the world – which is merely an illusion or *Māyā*, as a mere sport or *Līlā*. *Samkara* says that as God has no unsatisfied desires, no selfish interests providing Him with motivation to act, so God creates out of ‘play’ (*Līlā*). The meaning is that God responds in an appropriate manner to the karmic polemies without any personal interest of His own in the outcome: He cannot help expressing Himself in creative activity. The *Brahma-sūtra vāya* interpreting the *Brahma-sūtra* vāya maintains that, the objection against the creation of God is
that – an intelligent creator always acts for some purposes, but *Brahman* has nothing left to achieve, hence no purposes. *Samkara* replied that some acts are the manifestations of mere sport (*Līlā*). By looking upon creation as the cosmic game in which the Supreme indulges, *Samkara* brings out the purposiveness, rationality case and effortlessness with which the creation is sustained.\(^{103}\)

9. The concept of *Līlā* in Vaisnavism

(i) Ramanuja view

In Ramanuja's *visistadaitva* philosophy, *Līlā* is used as the creation of the universe. In his philosophy, *Brahman* is the *sarīrin* or soul of the universe, because it is the source and sustenance of all beings in the world, and because the functioning of the cosmos is an expression of its satisfaction or *Līlā*. Ramanuja also holds that – "for God, the creation of the world is said to be mere *Līlā* or sport: The metaphor of *Līlā* brings out the disinterestedness, freedom and joy underlying the act of creation. It enables Ramanuja to insist on the absolute freedom and independence of God. Nature and souls are instruments of God's play and cannot at any time offer any resistance to his will. The whole drama is undertaken by the Lord at his own sweet will."\(^{104}\)

(ii) Madhva view

Madhva, the *vaishnava* thinker of medieval India does not use the term *Līlā* but *Jijnāsā* which is called *Brahman*’s creative will. It is therefore, the process of all aspects of *ānanda*. With *jijnāsā*, *cetanā* becomes one, i.e. it is in complete harmony with the creative will.
(iii) Nimbaraka view

As a Vaisnavite thinker, Nimbaraka also holds that Brahman is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Nimbaraka succinctly refutes several objections against the doctrine of the causality of Brahman, and in this connection propounds the famous Vedānta doctrine of Līlā or creation in sport, which, if rightly understood, is one of the best solutions ever offered by that very difficult philosophical problem of the why or the motive of creation.

(iv) Vallabha view

Vallabha, another advaita thinker, uses the concept of Līlā in the creation of the world of Brahman. He says that — the Lord has created the universe out of His own self for the sake of sport (Līlā) without suffering any change whatsoever, and is related to it as the spider is to its web. Vallabha also elaborates the concept of nitya Līlā.

10. Līlā in Chaitanya and Kabira views

Chaitanya’s view (1486 — 1533)

Sri Chaitanya mentions the word Līlā as a divine sport of Lord — Brahman. It is svarūpa sākti of Brahman. Brahman or SriKṛṣṇa performs His Līlās (blissfull sports or pastimes) with His eternal parikaras (playmates or associates) in His own dhāman (abode) known as Gokula, Vṛndābana or Vraja, which is a particular expression of His ādhāra sākti. He is self complacement and self-sufficient but His self complacency or self-sufficiency does not suffer on account of His pastimes with His associates as they, being His own manifestations or manifestation of His sāktis, are not different from Him.
Kabira's view

*Kabira*, the great saint of North India and a contemporary of *Sankaradeva* gives an importance of the concept of *Līlā*. Gods rhythmical dance of creation and His ongoing pulse in the preservations of the world were favourite themes of the poet *Kabira* of the fifteenth century (1440-1518).

**D. NEO-VAISNAVISM OF SANKARADEVA**

*Vaisnavism* is one of the oldest religions of India. In this religion, *Viśnu* is worshipped as supreme God. *Viśnu* must have been an important Deity in ancient times. This is the name given to the *Bhakti-cult* which recognizes *Viśnu* – also called *Bhāgavat* (the glorious one), *Puruṣottama* (the supreme person) *Nārāyaṇa, Hari*, as the sole God. There is yet another element which goes to form *Vaisnavism* as prevalent before the fifth century B.C. This is the rise of *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*, the preacher of the theistic faith. The Supreme God of this faith is termed *Bhāgavān* (the worshipful). In course of time it assumed a sectarian complexion in the form of the *Bhāgavata* religion, which was a natural outcome of a reaction against the sacrifice – ridden religion of the *Brāhmaṇic* period.

It is not easy to determine the origin of *Vaisnavism* in *Assam*. It must have been prevalent here at a time when the Brāhmaṇical culture made considerable progress. It is argued that *Sankaradeva* was not the first to introduce *Vaisnavism* in *Assam* because it is natural to infer that the *Vāsudeva* cult was prevalent in *Assam* long before *Sankaradeva* and it received royal recognition at the time of *Dharmapala*. *Sankaradeva* devoted himself to put *Vaisnavism* on a permanent footing in *Assam*. He gives a new shape to *Vaisnavism* in *Assam*, which subsequently came to be referred to as -- *Neo-
vaishnavism. In the 15th century, Assam presented a heterogeneous shades and grades of culture, religion, race and political status. This age was an eye of disintegration in politics. The rulers were responsible for generating political instability in the region, resulting untold miseries and hardships to the people at large.

History furnishes us with the fact that Assam, the home land of Sankaradeva was reeling under turmoil during the advent of the saint. In the sphere of religion, the period distinguished itself from the esoteric practices of Tantricism, which combined many elements of primitive superstitions, as well as ingenious but fanciful speculations. Moreover, there was no social solidarity because of the baneful effects of the caste system. The society was covered with the darkness of unsocial activities and practices. It was amidst such conditions that Sankaradeva was born to lead a crusade against such practices and to establish the kingdom of God on earth i.e. the movement of Neo-vaishnavism.

E. SOURCES OF SANKARADEVA’S NEO-VAISNAVISM

Sankaradeva drew much of his inspiration from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa which has been described as the sun among the purāṇas, comprising the quintessence of Vedānta philosophy. To put it differently the Bhāgavata Purāṇa was the inexhaustible source from which Sankaradeva drew very often.

It is held by some scholars that Sankaradeva was not fully acquainted with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa before it was read to him by Jagadish Misra, a Brāhmaṇa Pandit of Tirthapur. The story goes that the said Brāhmaṇa went to Puri to readout the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in the temple. In a dream the Brāhmaṇa received a mandate from Lord Jagannātha to the effect that he should proceed immediately to Kāmarūpa and read out
the Bhāgavata to Sankaradeva. We are further told that the Brāhmaṇa searched out Sankaradeva at Bordowā and read out the Purāṇa before him. When his mission of reading all the twelve parts of the Bhāgavata ended after a year the Brāhmaṇa died.105

In addition to Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Sankaradeva is also indebted to the other Purāṇas, namely the Vāmaṇa Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa, Garuḍa Purāṇa and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. He has also drawn inspiration from the Bhagavadgītā, Haribamsā, Sāṅkhya Yoga, Vedānta and other Vaiṣṇavīte schools. In his two pilgrimages of very long period he had dialogues with many of the renowned scholars of the country and that indirectly suggests the mutual borrowings of Sankaradeva and other scholars.

F. SANKARADEVA'S PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS

At the very outset, it may be said that Sankaradeva was not a professional or an academic philosopher nor did he endeavour to evolve a new philosophy. Nevertheless, his notable literary works like Bhaktiratnakar, Bhaktipradīp, Anādipātan, Kīrtiṇī Ghosā, Daśām Skandha etc. are pointers to the fact that he was steeped in the lore of Hindu philosophy. He deeply studied the text of Bhāgavata Purāṇa as well as the commentary of Śrīdhara Swāmy. We can observe the bare bones of thought which are admirably expressed in terms of art.

Vaiṣṇavism, as a philosophy represents generally the synthetic character of thought and reality and it is also called mysticism which points to the dynamic forces that are operating in the all round amelioration of society. 'In Vaiṣṇavism the spiritual understanding follows the metaphysical. It draws out the attractiveness and the sweetness of spiritual life. It adds flesh to the bones and beauty to the figure. The Vaiṣṇava philosophy represents the ultimate reality in itself and in its relation to the
order of space, time and nature and the realm of finite spirits. Assam Vaisnavism formulates the conception of a being which would comprehend the spiritual experience arrived at through the different channels of Jñāna (knowledge) Yoga (contemplation) and Bhakti (devotion).

Sankaradeva’s Vaiśṇava dharma is not a religion solely confined to the worship of Viṣṇu, the popular god of the Vedas. The supreme being of Sankaradeva’s Vaiṣṇavism is called Viṣṇu very frequently no doubt; but Viṣṇu is placed among two other gods as Brahmā and Mahēśwara. Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, or Hari is the oft quoted word to mean the supreme and also the God in human form in Sankaradeva’s religion. Religion having Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa or Hari as the supreme Lord called Bhāgavatism. Sankaradeva’s Bhāgavatism is called Eka śāraṇa nām dharma and Neo Vaiṣṇavism which admits only one Absolute Reality.

The concepts of Puruṣa, Prakṛti and Līlā play an important role in Sankaradeva’s philosophy. Sankaradeva being greatly influenced by the teachings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, places Lord Kṛṣṇa in the highest position. Sankaradeva uses the term Puruṣa to mean Kṛṣṇa i.e. the Vāsudeva the son of Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa the cosmic God of Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu the vedic sun God and even Brahma the Absolute of the Vedānta philosophy. One of the basic concepts of this thesis namely Puruṣa of Sankaradeva was borrowed from the Rgvedic concept of Puruṣa. God as the Absolute is beyond words; for words are related to the objects or qualities of the phenomenal world. The Absolute as infinite cannot be expressed in words. Sankaradeva is also indebted to Bhādarānyaka Upaniṣad and Śvetāśvātara Upaniṣad for his concept of the Puruṣa.
Sankaradeva’s concept of Purusa as Absolute is different from that of Ramanuja, but similar with samkaracharya’s Brahman.

The concept of the Prakriti plays an important role in Sankaradeva’s philosophy which is known as Maya in his philosophy. Maya, is the eternal power of the God or Purusa. The Prakriti is the eternal power and energy of God. The Prakriti is matter and the Purusa is consciousness. This Purusa is God – Prakriti is Maya. Prakriti has no independent existence of its own but an inseparable energy of the Sakti of Purusa and Purusa takes the place of the Absolute. The Prakriti produces an unreal world which appears as real. As the power or will force Prakriti resides in Purusa. For Sankaradeva, Brahman is the only reality, the manifold universe which is the product of Maya, is not real but appears to be real like the snake falsely appearing in the rope. As the adjunct or upadhi of God, Prakriti is responsible for the manifold universe of world appearances.

In the same way Sankaradeva gives an important exposition of the Lila in his philosophy. He believes that the creation of the world is a cosmic game of the Purusa, according to His will or sport. So, to get pleasure but not for any purpose, the Lord takes play or Lila for which he himself become efficient as well as the materials cause of existence. According to him Lila not only functions in the creation of the world but also in destruction and sustenance. He is anxious to explain that Lord Krsna’s humanity is not real but merely a conscious exhibition of His Divine sport, or Lila. He discusses much about Lila in the Anandipatan. Thus Sankaradeva maintains that God manifests Himself as many by His will or sport. God is external omnipotent, Omnipresent and omniscient. He is immanent in all beings or things of the universe. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe.
Regarding the evolution and the creation of the world Sankaradeva gives his own interpretation of the creation of the world, centering round the Puruṣa, Prakṛti and Līlā. He discusses the theory of evolution in his Anādipātan which gives an account of the Mahāpuruṣiyā cosmogony. It tells us how in the arc of descent life has come down from the Puruṣa through the Prakṛti with the enveloping medium of this body and the physical world and how does Mind come to exist out of Māyā – the matter which alone is reasonable for this conception of the universe.

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate the three fundamental concepts of Sankaradeva under different headings in order to make a neat and organized presentation of the subject. Thus we see that there is the historical development of these fundamental concepts of the Puruṣa, Prakṛti and Līlā. The present thesis attempt to highlight and to provide a detailed interpretation of these fundamental concepts as well as the theory of creation and evolution in Sankaradeva’s philosophy. It is an honest endeavour to establish Sankaradeva’s philosophy and principles in terms of which various philosophical problems of mind and matter, the relationship between individual and society, the problem of ‘One’ becoming ‘mony’ and the relationship between the finite and the infinite may be understood.

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   “Imperial Kings, Strong, Heroes, Lords of earth and heaven, Mitra and Varuṇa, Ye ever active Ones
   Ye wait on thunder with the many tinted clouds and by the Asura’s magic power cause Heaven to (Māyā) rain”
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