CHAPTER– III

THE CONCEPT OF \textit{PRAKR}\textit{T}I IN SANKARADEVA’S PHILOSOPHY
THE CONCEPT OF PRAKRTI IN SANKARADEVA’S PHILOSOPHY

The Primordial matter i.e. the material substratum of the universe is called the Prakṛti. In the Advaita Theism or Monistic thinking, Sankaradeva gives an important emphasis on the concept of Prakṛti. He observes that Brahman as the Supreme Puruṣa, is the controller of both the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. He preaches the doctrine of Māyā i.e. the Prakṛti as the eternal power of God. The Concept of Māyā, as the eternal power or energy of God or the Puruṣa pervades all. The eternal power or śakti in Sankaradeva’s philosophy also is called the Prakṛti. The Prakṛti or Māyā produces an unreal world which appears as real. Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti resides in the Puruṣa or God or Brahman as His Will Force or the eternal Power of Him.

The Prakṛti has no independent existence. It is not separable from God and is eternally with Him. The Prakṛti is subordinate to the Puruṣa, only in one sense that it has no independent existence and at the time of dissolution the Prakṛti gets merged in the Puruṣa.

The Prakṛti is the adjunct or upādhi of God and is responsible for the manifold universe of world appearance i.e. the Prakṛti is the producer of the world. Sankaradeva says that due to adjunct of Māyā, the one Puruṣa appears as many. Māyā is not as real as Brahman. According to Sankaradeva, the Puruṣa or Brahman is the only and one reality. The Prakṛti or Māyā is not real and therefore it falls short of reality or Brahman, but appears as real. Influenced by the concept of Prakṛti as enunciated in the Bhāgavata, we find in Sankaradeva’s philosophy that the Prakṛti has been conceived in the form of a force of God. The God head is beyond the Prakṛti. Though He is beyond the Prakṛti and its guṇas, He pervades everything. He created this saṁsāra or
universe by His gunamayi Māyā, which exists from the point of view of this universe but is non-existent from the point of view of reality.\(^6\)

The Bhāgavata makes no difference between Māyā and the Prakṛti. The Bhāgavata says that God was alone before creation with His force of Māyā. He creates all. Lakṣmī is His Māyā sakti as well as the imperceptible Prakṛti.\(^7\) Sankaradeva also makes no difference between the Māyā and Prakṛti. This Māyā which creates the universe with its guṇas is concealing His supremacy. “In this regard Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti has a striking similarity with Sankaracharya’s Advaitavāda. Sankaracharya admits āvaraṇa and vikṣepa sakti, which are unique functions of Māyā.”\(^8\)

Sankaradeva’s Māyā i.e. the Prakṛti has two fold functions i.e. to cover the real and to project the unreal upon the real, as he says —

\[\text{“avastaka dekhāvaya vastuka āvari ehise mohora māyā jānā nista kari”}\(^9\)

(Unreality is being projected and reality being covered. Knowing this surely to be My Māyā).

Sankaradeva teaches that “it is only the action of Māyā i.e. the Prakṛti that prevents us from the realization that the whole universe, comprising the moving and the non-moving, the static and dynamic is pervaded by one God, in the form of Īśvara…….”\(^10\)

In Sankaradeva’s philosophy, the Prakṛti is a part or aṅśā of God and all the living – beings are parts of God. This concept of the Prakṛti is the key to the problem of ‘One’ becoming ‘many’. With this concept the relation between the finite and the infinite is better explained. Sankaradeva employs similes or metaphors to explain the relation between the finite and the infinite — One and the Many. The similes of the
part and the whole, clay and pot, gold and gold ornaments simply mean that the ultimate reality is ‘One’ and the ‘many’ like pots and ornaments are but illusory forms and names as he says — “The crown and the ear-ring are not different from gold. The names and forms are unreal. From the metaphysical point of view, the ego and the five gross elements are not distinct from Thee, O’ Lord!”

For Sankaradeva, Māyā is the magical power of God. Māyā appears from God and again disappears in it. It is the principle of finitude as he says that due to Māyā the multiplicity is perceived but in reality there is no difference in the Puruṣa.

Regarding the creation of the world, Sankaradeva gives his own interpretation of the creation of the world, centering round the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. He discusses the same in the Anādipātan. This gives an account of Mahāpuruṣiyā cosmogony. It tells us how in the arc of descent, life has come down from Brahman through the Prakṛti with the enveloping medium of this body and the physical world and how Mind came to be born out of Māyā which alone is reasonable for this conception of the so-called universe.

In this concept of Prakṛti, Sankaradeva tries to establish Prakṛti as dependent entity of God and God’s superiority is claimed for the Supreme Puruṣa or Brahman Itself. The Prakṛti is Nature — matter (jāda). The Prakṛti as many is an illusion. It is Māyā — Avidyā etc. Sankaradeva interprets the concept of Prakṛti in different ways.

I. ON METAPHYSICAL PLANE:

The eternal power or sākṣti is the Prakṛti in Sankaradeva’s metaphysics. This eternal power of God which is eternally with Him is known as Māyā.
In classical Indian thought the phenomenal and multiple appearances of the world, its questionable reality and its impermanence are denoted respectively by the word *Māyā*. In *Rg Veda*, one 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.\textsuperscript{12} 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 the *Puruṣa* is illusion (*Māyā*). Sankaradeva also says —

> "tumise kevala sacha save māyāmoy
tomātese honte hove sriṣṭi sthiti loy"\textsuperscript{13}

(Alone Thou art real and all except Thee are illusory. Thou art the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe).

Sankaracharya in his commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras* explains the use of *Māyā*, as meaning both illusion and the ‘power of the Lord’. For him anything beside the Supreme Self is illusory. The world is created by *Māyā* — the inscrutable power of the Lord and is therefore unreal and again he says that duality is an illusion and Non-duality is the Ultimate Reality.

Like Sankaracharya, Sankaradeva defines *Māyā* as a condition (*upādhi*) by which the phenomenal world of appearance is explained. *Māyā* is the adjunct of God and is responsible for this manifold universe of world appearance. For Sankaradeva, *Puruṣa* is the only reality, the manifold universe which is the product of *Māyā* i.e. the *Prakṛti* is not real but appears to be real. He says —

> "nitya niranjana svaprakāśā ātmā eka /
māyā upādhira pade dekhiu aneka //
yoteka ākriti māne māyāmoy sriṣṭi /"
(Basically the all pervading self-illuminating self is One but due to adjunct or upādhi i.e. Māyā, it appears as many. The appearances and forms of all are the creation of Māyā. Therefore we should only know the Brahman, only reality. Basically it is one and the same earth, owing to difference in size and form we see them as many. In the like manner, the one, non-dual self due to Māyā appears as many. Reject all these names and forms as illusory and see Me, alone, who is also omniscient).

Māyā is not separable from God and is eternally with Him. So, in this sense, it has no independent existence and it gets merged in God at the time of dissolution. Sankaradeva’s Māyā also has two fold functions, one is āvaraṇ (covering) and another is vikṣhepan – (projecting); which covering the Reality and projecting a false universe, as the clouds appear from the sun and it covers the sun. He says due to Māyā Reality is concealed and no reality is projected.¹⁵

Ramanuja holds that the world of appearance is actual and it constitutes the body of the Absolute or God. The Universe is as real as the Absolute or God Itself. Here Sankaradeva disagree with Ramanuja. Because like Sankaracharya, he says, only Brahman is real, the jagat is, not real as Brahman, it is false – mithyā, but appears to be real.¹⁶ False is not totally blank or void. It is like appearance of a snake in the rope. Sankaradeva says — “All appearances are unreal except Brahman. Knowledge of snake comes out of rope due to lack of light.”¹⁷
Sankaradeva and his great disciple Madhavadeva also consider Brahman to be an active Purusa, controller of both the Purusa and the Prakrti. The Prakrti has no independent existence of its own, but an inseparable energy or sakti of God. Sankaradeva ascribes Mâyâ to Īśvara or God which again is conceived as the maker of the universe. As an inherent force or power of God, Mâyâ transforms into the universe. It is the creative power of the eternal God. Mâyâ has no separate dwelling place. It is in Īśvara even as heat is in light. Its presence is inferred from its effect. In this sense Mâyâ is the Prakrti in Sankaradeva’s philosophy. The Prakrti is considered as nature, it contains everything that exists. It is the divine womb of all manifestations.

Mâyâ is not separable from God. Through this concept of Mâyâ, Sankaradeva explained the phenomenality or the world of appearance and he also explained how ‘One’ the eternal self appears as many or the one Absolute has appeared into this world of plurality. He says in the Anādipātan——

"mor niz sakti sāksyāte dekhu prāṇ /
swatare kariyo mâyā jagata nirmāṇ /"19

(It is My own power as My life by which Mâyâ creates the universe at once).

The concept of Mâyâ is the key to the problem of Absolute self and the individual self. The Absolute is the controller of Mâyâ through His power of consciousness while the individual soul is destined to be mortified under the presence of Mâyâ. Sankaradeva employs the similes and metaphors to explain the relation between the finite and the infinite, which is inexplicable and indescribable in positive terms.20

Sankaradeva describes Mâyâ as a portion aṁśā of God. He says ——
"Anadi rūpini īśvara ardhakāya / 
Byakta bhailā mahāmāyā śriśṭika ichāī //
(Mahāmāyā – the endless form is the part of God, manifested herself for the desire of creation).

"tomāre āmāre kichu nāhi bhinna bhinna / 
mote yātu līṅ yāhā ehi mātra hīn //
(No distinction between you and Me, only difference or subordinate is this that you merged with Me).

Sankaradeva describes that due to Māyā all the living beings are part parts of God. He says that the individual soul is part and parcel of God, as —

"tomārese āṁśa. āmi yata jīva yāk / 
tomāra māyāye prabhu bāndhile āṁāk //
(We all the living beings are parts of Thee. We are in thrall by Your Māyā, O' Lord).

According to him all the living beings including worms and insects, hills and vales all form God’s body.

The simile of part and whole, employed by Sankaradeva, has created confusion amongst scholars. Because if the whole is real so is the part i.e. if God is real, then Māyā as its part, is also real. In this regard, Sankaradeva gives the explanation that though in the apparent view there is a difference between the finite and the infinite God and Māyā – the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti, but in reality i.e. from the ontological point of view there is no difference (bheda) in God.

So, we may see that from the practical point of view, Sankaradeva is similar to Ramanuja, because both regarded that the whole, the all living beings are the parts of the whole – the Reality. The whole is real, so also the parts. But from the ontological
point of view Sankaradeva differs from Ramanuja and; maintains no difference (bheda) in God. To Ramanuja Māyā as well as its evolutes are as real as God — the Puruṣa is real; where as the unreality of the universe is the basic theme of Sankaradeva like the Advaitavāda of Samkaracharya.

Like Advaita philosophy, Sankaradeva also speaks of ignorance as the root cause of multiplicity. Owing to lack of knowledge men see one God differently and cannot realize the Supreme Reality. When avidyā or ignorance vanishes Māyā also vanishes, then the Ultimate Truth can be known. Through this concept of Māyā, Sankaradeva endorses the view of world illusoriness like world illusoriness of Sankaracharya. Regarding the base, wherefrom Māyā operates is the formidable objection against the doctrine of Māyā of Sankaracharya as well as of Sankaradeva. For Sankaradeva, it is the principle of finitude. To him, Māyā is the magical power of God. It appears from God and again disappears in it.

"māyātese dekhāyā vividha pariccheda
svarūpate tamāra nāhike kichu bheda ī"24

(Due to Māyā, the multiplicity is perceived but in reality there is no difference in Thee).

Māyā is under the control of God and the individual self is within the clutches of Māyā. From practical point of view, the individual self or jīva is different from God, even from one individual to another. God is eternally free (nitya mukta) and infinite and the self is limited and finite (boddha). But from transcendental stand point the infinite and the finite are the same.

The Mind or mana which is the product of avidyā or Māyā catches the reflection as pratibimba of God and the former i.e. mind falsely identifies itself with the latter i.e.
with God. The mind creates all the characteristics of the body and thus mind is the creation or product of Māyā.

Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti in the light of western metaphysics

Like Māyā of Sankaradeva Parmenides the Eleatic philosopher maintained that the world of senses is becoming—illusory and non-existent. Zeno also did not recognize the phenomena i.e. matter as the reality as he maintained that plurality is an illusion, false and non-existent.

According to Plato, the matter is nothing but an Idea. He acknowledged the existence of sense world; but he denied to it permanent reality. Like Sankaradeva Plato’s concept of matter or world is an idea. The world of ideas, according to Plato, is the real world, while the world of things is a mere copy or a shadow of the world of ideas. To Sankaradeva, the universe appears in Brahman, and as such it has no real status. The unreal universe come from Thee (Reality) and appears as real. The Matter is perishable, imperfect and unreal, it is non-being whatever reality, form or beauty, the perceived world has it owes to ideas. Matter is the secondary principle. The particular object in nature are copies of Ideas—which is the only true reality.

Aristotle’s concept of Form and Matter is comparable to a certain extent to the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti of Sankaradeva. According to Sankaradeva’s disciple Madhavadeva, Hari is above the Puruṣa (jīva) and the Prakṛti. In Aristotle’s philosophy the Form and Matter, are governed by cause—God, the Final cause. God is pure form unadulterated by matter; since the first cause is unmoved, it must be form without matter, pure form; for where there is matter, there is motion and change. But matter is more dynamic. Matter is the vehicle of motion—which includes all kinds of
changes. God, the Prime mover of the world, is like the *Puruṣa* of Sankaradeva, as a Pure Form, the Aristotelian God provided motion to matter.

Stoice admitted with Aristotle, that everything is a result of two elements – active and passive, which are not separated but found as one substance – they considered them inseparable like Sankaradeva’s concept of the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti* which are ultimately one and inseparable. Descartes’ concept of matter, as devoid of consciousness has an affinity with the concept of *Prakṛti* of Sankaradeva. But unlike Descartes, Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* is not an independent reality, it has existence only from practical standpoint, but transcendentally it is unreal. Like Sankaradeva, Spinoza also maintains that from the eternal standpoint the attributes and modes of God i.e. the Mind and Matter are mere intellectual super-imposition upon God and therefore unreal. The similes of part and whole, clay and pot, gold and gold ornaments of Sankaradeva’s philosophy to a certain extent bear resemblances to Spinoza’s views.

Sankaradeva has an affinity with Berkeley in so far as he refutes the concept of matter. Berkeley refutes the theory of matter of Locke and replaces the matter by God. Since both the primary and the secondary qualities are ideas they should both exist in the conscious soul or mind rather than in any inert matter. Similarly Sankaradeva’s concept of matter i.e. *Prakṛti* or the material existence is the creation or imagination of the mind – “*monar kalpanā itu samasta saṁsār*”\(^{27}\) it has no independent reality.

Like Sankaradeva, G.W. Hegel says — “all existence is the realization of Thought.” According to Sankaradeva, the entire concrete world which may be called the *Prakṛti* is the outcome of this Thought or Concept.
Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* in the light of Indian metaphysics

In the Upaniṣads, the concept of the *Hiranyagarbhā* is looked upon as related to the universe in the same way as the individual soul is related to its body. The world in which we live has its own soul and the soul is *Hiranyagarbhā*. *Virāt* is the all – the totality of things – the sum of all existence. The word *Prakṛti* in the *Gītā* means the unmanifest power of God. Sankaradeva’s philosophy is based on the *Gītā*, so there are similarities between them regarding the concept of *Prakṛti*.

In the Śāṅkhya system, the *Prakṛti* is the ultimate ground and prius of the whole flux of the physical and psychic order. The classical Śāṅkhya is a dualistic system because it explicitly recognizes the independent existence of the dual principles of the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti*. Śāṅkhya is similar with *Jaina* regarding the eternity of matter and perpetuity of the world which is not entertained by Sankaradeva. *Jaina* traces the development of the material world and living beings to primeval nature. It is true that the Buddha finds no centre of reality or principle of permanence in the flux of life and the whirl of the world, but it does not follow that there is nothing real in the world at all except the agitation of forces. Like the Buddha, Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* is not permanent – it is transitory. It has only practical reality not transcendental reality. *Nagasena*, the later Buddhist say that things are nothing but the complex of its character. Things are only mental symbols for complexes of sensations which has little similarity to Sankaradeva, as he also says that only mental world is real, the *Prakṛti* has no reality.

The Great Mahābhārata makes both the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti* – two aspects of the One *Brahman*, so the world is regarded as a development from *Brahman*. The constituents of the *Prakṛti* are the three qualities of *sattva* (goodness), rajas (passion)
and tamas (darkness) Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti also has these three guṇas. According to the Gītā the Supreme is said to be possessed of two natures higher, parā and lower aparā, answering to the conscious and the unconscious aspects of the universe. The lower Prakṛti produces effects and modifications in the world of nature or of causes, the higher Prakṛti gives rise to the Puruṣa or the intelligent souls in the world of ends or values. The two belong to one spiritual whole. Thus in the Gītā, the Prakṛti is described as the lower Prakṛti (aparā) and the higher Prakṛti (parā).²⁹

Samkhya’s Prakṛti and Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti

In the Sāṁkhya system, the Puruṣa and Prakṛti are two independent realities. The Prakṛti is thought to be primordial stuff of the entire world manifest and unmanifest. According to Isvarakrsna’s Sāṁkhya kārika, there is only one Prakṛti but a plurality of Puruṣas. This unconscious entity (the Prakṛti) implicitly contains the possibilities of all thoughts and substances. In Sāṁkhya, the Prakṛti does not mean solid, inert and perceptable substance rather it is a pure potentiality for physical and psychical happenings, composed of three strands of energy (guṇa) called sattva, rajas and tamas – which again have physical and psychical connotations. In the primordial state of matter, these three strands of energy are in equilibrium. So long as this is disturbed, no actual manifestation occurs.

Though Sankaradeva’s philosophy is very much influenced by Sāṁkhya philosophy, there are some basic differences between them. Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti is not an independent entity. He describes Prakṛti as the energy or the free will of God. Sāṁkhya’s Prakṛti is an independent reality. Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti is an outcome of God Himself—
(The God desires to create the Mahāmāyā comes out from the Puruṣa).

The Prakṛti of Sāṅkhya is active but blind. So, Prakṛti by itself cannot produce the universe. Prakṛti is inferior to God as the Puruṣa in Sankaradeva’s philosophy, only in this sense that the former has no separate existence. After creation or at the time of dissolution, the Prakṛti gets merged in God. Unlike Sāṅkhya, this Prakṛti of Sankaradeva is called Māyā, which produces an unreal universe (māyā-jagat).

Unlike Sankaradeva, Sāṅkhya is not a religion in the traditional sense which defines religion in terms of belief in God. It does not have even a concept of God, it is rather devoted to the achieving of absolute independence of man as a spirit from the phenomenality of the Prakṛti and its limitations. The concept of Prakṛti in the Sāṅkhya, has resemblance with the idea of different Goddesses of religion. The concepts of the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya always appear as female and male deities. In the Sāṅkhya kārika, Isvarkrsna pictured Prakṛti as a female model which is directly related to the image of women in the contemporary society—

"Raṅgaśya darsayitvā
   Nivartate nortakī yāthā nṛlyāt
Puruṣaśya tathā-tmāṇana
   Prakāśya vinivartati Prakṛti."

This Prakṛti is represented by the word sakti. The worship of sakti by the school of Tantra amounts to a turning point. The idea of mother Goddess is taken to be the Supreme reality.
In the Vaiśnavite Tantra (of Bengal) a similar picture of the highest spiritual reality as sākṣī appears. Here, too, the traditional Prakṛti controls the consciousness (cit) of the male i.e. Kṛṣṇa, though of course, the supremacy of the Kṛṣṇa ideal is maintained by keeping Rādhā immersed in the love of Kṛṣṇa. Sankaradeva, rejected completely the cult of Rādhā – the unmarried consort of Kṛṣṇa and preferred, instead, the ideals of Śīlā and Lakṣmī symbolising ideal housewives. The dualistic view of the cosmic order – unconscious and kinetic, principle of action and passion, the concept of the Puruṣa-Prakṛti (Nature and consciousness) have been working in some of the schools of Indian thought.

The Goddess Durgā also represents as the Prakṛti. The creation of Goddess Durgā takes place in the context of a cosmic crisis. She is credited with the destruction of many asuras (demons) whom the God could not subdue. As Prakṛti she assumes the forms of three Goddesses and they are — as sāttvikaśhe is Mahā Lokaṃśi, as rājasika, she is Mahā Saraswatī, as Tomāsika she is Mohākāli.33

The Nyāya regards the world of nature as a composite of eternal, unalterable, causeless atoms existing independently of our thoughts. But Sankaradeva, an idealist thinker, rejects the realistic view of the Prakṛti of Nyāya and Vaiṣeṣikas. Unlike Sankaradeva, the Yoga says that through the force of avidyā (ignorance), the ever revolving energy of the Prakṛti (which is associated with the guṇas) transforms itself into modifications as the mental and the material world.

The Mīmāṃsaka is a pluralistic realist. Unlike Sankaradeva it believes in the reality of external world and of the individual souls. For Mīmāṃsaka, though the individuals come and go, though the finite material products arise and perish, yet the
world as such, the universe as a whole goes on for ever, uncreated and imperishable. But Sankaradeva never thinks of the eternity of the external world. The concept of Prākṛti in Advaita Vedānta, is known as Māyā, Avidyā, Ajñāna, Adhyāsa, Nāmarūpa, Mulā Prākṛti, Bhrama, Vivarta, Bhrānti etc. The word Māyā and Vivarta are the basic ideas which make Sankaradeva more advaitin and also akin to Sankaracharya. Both Sankaradeva and Sankaracharya says that the Prākṛti is something material and unconscious (Jāda) as opposed to Brahman—the pure consciousness, it is neither real, because it has no existence apart from Brahman—the Puruṣa, it is not unreal, for it projects the world of appearance. Both say that Māyā—the Prākṛti is the inherent ‘Power’ or ‘Potency’ (śakti) of Brahman.

Ramanuja says that the Prākṛti is ordinary matter which makes saṁsāra. It is an object of enjoyment (bhoga) and suffers change (Vikāraspaḍa). It has three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamaś. It forms the body of God and is more completely dependent on God. Sankaradeva’s Prākṛti is Māyā and unlike the Māyā or the Prākṛti of Viśiṣṭādaitavāda, it produces an unreal universe (Bhṛtya jagat). In Ramanuja’s philosophy, the Prākṛti means wonderful power of real creation and as such it is parināmāvāda from beginning to end. Sankaradeva’s Prākṛti and its creation, though appears as Parināmāvāda, in the ultimate analysis it is nothing but vivartiavāda. To Ramanuja, the Prākṛti has also reality as well as the Brahman, but to Sankaradeva the universe appears in Brahman and as such it has, no real status.

Nimbarka, being follower of Ramanuja, has little affinity with Sankaradeva, because both of them are identical in the sense that the material universe i.e. the Prākṛti and the individual selves have no independent existence apart from God. Vallabha, like
Sankaradeva also maintains that the 'many' which is not different from 'One' appears as many, due to ignorance or avidyā. Māyā or the Prakṛti is power of Brahmān which creates a real world in Vallabha's thinking but not in Sankaradeva.

Sankaradeva differs from Caitanya, the founder of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, who was a contemporary thinker of Sankaradeva. Caitanya conceives the Prakṛti to be real part of Brahmān. It is the power through which He manifests Himself as the material world, which is called Māyā śakti so, it is real. But to Sankaradeva, the whole universe i.e. the Prakṛti is mūḥyā or only appearance, not real.

According to Aurobindo, the Supreme Reality is Brahmān and the highest positive expression of Brahmān is the Saccidānanda or Existence Consciousness — Bliss — all is One,. The consciousness (cit) of Brahmān which is always a Force (śakti) manifests itself as Māyā śakti and Prakṛti. Puruṣa is Īśvara and Prakṛti is His śakti in Aurobindo's thinking. Their play with each other is both the motive and the executive force of all existence in the universe.37 The Puruṣa is still and silent witness of whatever the Prakṛti chooses to create, not interfering with her works. The Prakṛti restlessly creating, acting, forming and effecting things for the delight of the Puruṣa.38 But Sankaradeva's Prakṛti, though is an eternal power of God, it has no independent existence of its own, it produces an unreal world which appears as real.39

Sāktism and Sankaradeva

The fundamental belief in Hinduism about the all pervading and all transcending reality which is the source and support of everything has been visualised by the sāktas in the form of śakti. The Sāktas conceive the Great Goddess as the personification of primordial energy and the source of all divine and cosmic evolution. She is identified
with the Supreme Being as well as the controller of all the forces and potentialities of nature. Māyā or the Prakṛti, the matrix of the world, lies within Śakti.

The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, is the most dominating name in the early history of Assam. The followers of the Śakti school justify their appellation by the belief that god is a woman and it ought to be the aim of all to become a woman.40 The Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Assam which idolizes it, marks a complete breaking away from the influence of the Mother or other gods. Neither Rādhā, nor any female deity is acknowledged.

II. THE COSMOLOGICAL ASPECTS:

Cosmology, the most important branch of philosophy is to know the origin, nature, maintenance and destiny of the universe. According to Hinduism, the world is known as Brahmandas which literally means an egg of Brahman. The universe is evolved out of Brahman as Brahman is both the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. They say that the creation of the world is not out of nothing. The creation theory naturally leads to the popular Sāṁkhya theory of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti, the dual course of creation.

Sankaradeva’s theory of creation is based mostly on Sāṁkhya’s theory of evolution with a little modification. In the Anādipātan, Sankaradeva discusses in details about the theory of creation. His Prakṛti is not an independent entity of Sāṁkhya. The Prakṛti is Māyā — the wonderful power through which the world exists. Sankaradeva’s theory of creation is nothing but Vivartavāda of Advaitism though it appears as a parināmavāda of Sāṁkhya. To Sankaradeva, the universe appears in Brahman and as such it has no real status.
Sankaradeva's *Prakṛti* is the cause of this universe — i.e. the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. He says — "Yāḥār māyāta howe sṛṣṭi sthitī loy." (Due to Māyā of Him, the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe take place). "The Bhāgavata defined *Prakṛti* as the reality which is full of the three *guna*s, viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* — imperceptible, eternal, replete with being and non-being and though indeterminate, is the source of all the specific objects (11.1.26.10). It is Māyā too in the Bhāgavata at times (VII.9.21).

Sankaradeva's *Prakṛti* is created by God from Himself, when God or the *Puruṣa* longed for creation.

In the *Bhāgavata* — in skandha 11, chapter 22. slokas 29-32, the following salient features have been mentioned —

1. The *Prakṛti* is subject to manifestation.
2. It is subject to transformation.
3. It consists of the transformation of the *guna*s.
4. It is multiform — broadly speaking three fold — *adhyātma*, *ādhibhūta* and *ādhidvāiva* e.g. the sense of seeing is *adhyātma*, its function, vision is *ādhibhūta* and the part of the sun-god situated in the eye organ is *ādhidvāiva*.
5. It is not self manifest.
6. It is the equilibrium of the three *guna*s. (XI,22,12).

When the *guna*s are in equilibrium (sāmyavasthā) the *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 a preponderance of either *sattva* or *rajas* 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. 44

Following the Bhagavata, Sankaradeva also writes that the Prakṛti is the creation of God and out of the Prakṛti by His power of Māyā God has made the world evolve. Sankaradeva believes that Brahma is in the world but not the world. In the Bhakti Ratnākar, he says — "Thou art the cause of primal elements, life and limbs; Lord Nārāyaṇa, Thou created the world, hence Thou art separate from it, and that is only why we see not Thou differently Thou manifest Thyself visibly. There is no difference in this. Therefore, art thou, perfect bliss and fit Pre-eminently for devotion. Thou art attributesless, yet compact delight I see no other form besides Thee" 45

Sankaradeva again says —

"tumi satya brahma tomāta prakāśe
jagata išto ananta /
Jagatate sadā tumīye prakāśa
antaryāmi bhagavanta II" 46

(Thou art truth, Brahma, the illimitable world fructifies in Thee. On the other hand Thou manifest Thyself in the world as the inner God).

According to Bhagavata, before creation only the Brahma existed. He became bifurcated in the forms of Māyā and Jīvas reflected therein the sight and the seer. The first is known as the Prakṛti and the later is called the Puruṣa (XI.24.3-4). Sankaradeva also says — "In the midst of creation, there is only one the God i.e. Hari only resides there as the only one Truth." 47
Before creation, the *Brahman* was impregnated with *Prakṛti*. At that time the *Prakṛti* was *jāda* the unconscious—devoid of consciousness.

"Chaidhyaya bhuban hridayatedilo thāi /
prakṛti devīo āchā garbhate lukāi //
jaḍa huyā āche tār nāhikechetā /
āmi mohā chaitanya puruṣa niranjana //"  

(The fourteen universes are in the God's heart, the *Prakṛti* remains hidden in the womb of Him. The *Prakṛti* is matter devoid of consciousness. The *Puruṣa* is conscious and pure).

When the *Puruṣa* longed for creation, the *Prakṛti* or *Māyā* or *Mahāmāyā* came out of Him. The *Prakṛti* is beginningless—*anādi* and half portion of *Īśvara*. The *Prakṛti* is neither different from nor inferior to God. There is no difference between God and *Prakṛti*, only the *Prakṛti* is merged in God after dissolution.

"The *Prakṛti* being inseminated by the will of *Puruṣa* consequently gave birth to *Mahat*, the first evolute of the *Prakṛti*. *Mahat* out of its three *guna*s yielded three *ahaṁkāras*. From the *guna*s of *rajas* came *rājasikā* ahaṁkāra, from *sattva*, *sāttvika* ahaṁkāra and from *tāmasa* came *tāmasika* ahaṁkāra. *Tāmasika* ahaṁkāra gave rise to five subtle elements (*tanmātras*) i.e. *sābda* or sound, *sparsā* or touch, *rūpa* or colour, *rasa* or taste and *gandha* or smell. From *sābda* came ether or *ākāśa*, from *vāyu* *rūpa*, from *rūpa* *agni*, from *agni* *rasa*, from *rasa* *jala* (water), from *jala* *gandha* and lastly from *gandha* came *prithvi* or the earth.

Śāṅkhya divides existence into twenty five categories. Twenty four, of these are evolutes of the *Prakṛti* and are subject to modification and change. The *Puruṣa* is the twenty fifth principles who is indestructible and not subject to change.
Sankaradeva’s observation is different from that of Sāṅkhya. In Sāṅkhya, sound gives rise to ether, touch combined with sound give rise to air and so on. Thus earth possesses all the subtle qualities i.e. sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. In Sankaradeva’s system the four subtle elements except sound are described as the immediate results of the preceding gross elements. In Sāṅkhya, each successive gross element possesses all the preceding subtle elements or special qualities.

In the Anādipātan, Sankaradeva says that from rāsasika āhaṁkāra different sense are originated. The ten sense organs i.e. eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin, tongue, hands, feet, anus and sex organs etc are arisen from rājasika āhaṁkāra.

From the sāttvika āhaṁkāras, ten gods or the principles originated. These ten gods posses ten sattva guṇas as Āditya is the God of eyes, Disā of ears, Āśvinikumār of the nose, Vahni of the mouth or Vākya, Vāyu of the skin, Varuṇa of the tongue, Indra of the hands, Viṣṇu of the feet, Mitra of the anus and Prajāpati of the sex organs. 49

The Concept of Mind

Sankaradeva deals a small chapter on Mind. He gives the introduction of Mind in his writings.50 Mind has various forms just as the one actor is seen in various forms with various dresses mind is also seen in various forms. Sankaradeva says that this saṁsāra or the world is the creation or imagination (kalpanā) of mind. He says that mind has three states waking dream and sleep, as he states —

"manar kalpanā ītosamasta saṁsār /
Jāgan swapan, nidrā tini britti sār //"51

(The mind is imagination is the genesis of the whole world. The sleeping, dreaming and waking are the three different states of the mind).
All animals possess mind i.e. mind is there in the body of every living being. The mind catches a reflection of God. God is being reflected on the mind and consequently the individual soul thinks itself to be not different from the mind. The individual self wrongly takes all the activities of the mind as its own. Life is inseparable from the mind. It is like the reflection of the sun that moves or remains still as does the water.

Mind is the cause of bondage of the soul. Life is ensnared by the consequences of its own actions of this or previous birth only because the mind thinks them to be its own doing. Sankaradeva also says that mind is inanimate in reference to the soul. The fourteen universes are there only in the mind.

The five tannātras which are sound, colour, touch, taste and smell and the eleven sense organs are together called the sixteen vikāras. These sixteen vikāras along with five elements (pañcha bhūta) and Prakṛti, Mahat and Ahankāra are known as twenty four principles. As Sankaradeva maintains that the Truth is one, we should concentrate our mind on that Truth which will lead us to self realization.

The theory of Creation

Sankaradeva discusses about the creation of the universe- the chaidhyaya bhūbana of the Prakṛti. He ascribes the twenty four principles are the cause of the universe. He says —

"Jagatara kāraṇa chaubis’ mohā tattva /
Īśvarar pratibimba lāgiche monotā //"56

(The twenty four principles are the cause of the universe. God is reflected on every mind of the individual).
But all these twenty four principles could not produce the universe at large. All these principles are *devas* possessing elements of consciousness, action and transformation. They are incapable of combining as they are divergent in character. Therefore they pray to *Īśvara* for power to unite. Taking the *Praṅṭi* as a part of Him, the *Puruṣa*, then entered into the universe so as to give motion or to start creation. The twenty four principles or *tattvas* and the guidance of the *Puruṣa* form the cosmic Egg or the *brahmāṇḍa* is formed. The *Puruṣa* of the body *Virāṭa Puruṣa* or *Hiraṇya Puruṣa* with all beings and universes latent in Him, remains for one thousand years in the water just as the embryo lies in the fluids of the uterus. This Egg remains for a thousand years unconsciously submerged in the primal water. Then the universe is surrounded by earth, earth again by water, water by light, light by air, air by ether, ether by *ahāṁkāra* or ego, ego by mahat and mahat by the *Praṅṭi*.

Sankaradeva in his *Anādipātan* gives a description of *mahāpralaya*, which comes at the end of a century of *Brahmā*’s years. This great dissolution begins with *Rudra-Hara*’s destructive action, effecting the disappearance of all creatures from the universe. Creatures also die for want of food due to the rains of deluge, which pour on for twelve years. Twelve suns then shine at a time and suck up every drop of water that there be. Fire then comes out of *Ananta*’s mouth and burns down the different regions (*loka*) and as a result the red glowing cosmic egg is reduced to something like a lump of cowdung. The earth merges back into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into ether, ether into *ahāṁkāra*, *ahāṁkāra* into *mahat*, *mahat* into the *Praṅṭi* and the *Praṅṭi* into the *Puruṣa*. And nothing else but the *Puruṣa* remains when this process of dissolution is completed.
The Purusa — the Nārāyaṇa, then entered into this universe which is the cosmic egg, where there is no creature. With the active interference of the Purusa, the Prakṛti gives rise to this seven fold universe to seven heavens or svargas, seven pātālas and seven earths. The svargas are meant for the gods like Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu and the other gods and the liberated souls. Śiva and many other devotees like Bāli, Mahābala, Māyā, Daitya-Dānava and the Nāgas lived in pātālas. Men and the lower kingdom entered bhū-loka due to pre-dominance of rājas in them. Above all, there is Vaikunṭha purī where Kṛṣṇa resides i.e. Kṛṣṇa resides beyond Chadhyaya bhūvan, which transcends the space time, which is inaccessible to all men or devas except the devotees.59

Sankaradeva gives traditional, mythological description of seven earths.60 God created the world but saw that there was no manifestation of life in them. He assumed the three qualities tamas, sattva and rajas and became Rudra, Brahmā and Viṣṇu. These three gods quarreled among themselves and God Hari, the beginningless Purusa appeared before them in his non-material, essential four armed body (brahma kalevara niya rūpa) in resplendent robes. He assigned to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra the tasks of creation of beings, their preservation and dissolution respectfully.61

The concept of space and time

In the Anādipātan, Sankaradeva illustrates about the concept of Time and space in connection with the creation and destruction of Nature, the Prakṛti. The worlds continue for a day of Brahman i.e. four thousand yugas of human beings. Four yugas are the satya, tretā, dvāpara and kali are equal to forty three lakhs and twenty thousand years of man. It means the life of the universe (a day of Brahma) is four thousand three
hundred twenty million years. Sankaradeva gives a description of the concept of space. The *Sūrya maṇḍala* or the circle of the sun is at a distance of one lakh *praharas* from the earth. At the distance of one million *yojana* from the sun, moves Rāhu. The circle of the moon or *Chandra maṇḍala* is at a distance of two lakhs *yajonas*. The *Nakṣatra maṇḍala* or the group of stars move at a distance of five lakhs *yajonas*, the *śukra, budha, mṛgala, vṛihospati, sāni* are at seven, nine, eleven, thirteen and fifteen lakhs *yajonas* respectively. *Ravi Maṇḍala* is at a distance of thirty lakh *yajonas*. The polestar or the *Dhruva nakṣatra* is at forty three lakhs *yjanas* and all the stars and the planets move round it. All this shows the vastness of the universe and infinitude of space. These are the descriptions of one aspect of the change of *Prakṛti* — the nature — the matter which is actually not real as Kṛṣṇa. Above all the creation, of all the three universes, — *svarga, martya, pātal*, Kṛṣṇa is the head of all. He says — "Kṛṣṇa is the highest of all the fourteenth universes……...The creator of the world, Kṛṣṇa should be known as the master of three worlds and the sun — the moon all the planets move with His direction." 

Sankaradeva deals with another aspect of evolution which is the origin of the different species i.e. the biological evolution. According to the order of *Hari, Brahma* started to create the three worlds which are already in the four Vedas. Sankaradeva describes the origin of the different species of the world.

According to Sankaradeva, human being is the most favourite creature of God, so, he gives a description of human being as — "All the gods desire to be man. Because the four *purusārthas* — *dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*, all will be fulfilled only in man's life."
He again tries to explain the qualities of human body where all the qualities of cosmic germ (Brahmanda) are manifested. First, God created the four classes or varṇas of people, viz. brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras. Sankaradeva has endorsed the Hindu mythological interpretation of the four castes. The Brāhmaṇas appear from the mouth, kṣatriyas from the hands, the vaiśyas from the thighs and the śūdras from the feet of God. According to Sankaradeva, the human body is a microcosm, all the twenty four principles are used in the human body. Meru is at the back, the sun is in the upper portion and the moon is at the lower part of the human body. There are nine doors of excretion in the human body viz. — two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, mouth, genital and anus. A human body possesses two hundred fifty six bones and seventy thousand nerves of these nerves sūsūmna, pingala and ṛd are the main nerves. The nerves are extended upto nails and hair and supply food and energy to the different parts of the body. Sankaradeva says that there are six chakras in the body which are also called kamalas or lotuses. These chakras are placed in the anus, the genital, the naval, the chest, the upper portion of the mouth, and the forehead. Ten kinds of vāyu move upward and downward in the human body. God resides in the heart Chakrahridaya kamala of the human body from which he gives reward or punishment to the individual for his actions. The most important nerve of the seventy thousands nerves of the human body is the sūsūmna, which is in the merumajjā or within the back-bone and is extended upto sūrya-mandala or the upper most portion of the body. If air can be passed through this nerve man attains longivity. He again says that the mind is the controller of the fourteen sense organs.
The Circle of evolution and dissolution

It has been observed that Sankaradeva is not very specific regarding the usage of the terms creation and evolution. He is using both the terms in common parlance. Sankaradeva gives a description of evolution and dissolution (pralaya) in his writings. He says about the four kinds of dissolutions, viz. the nitya (daily) dissolution, which accounts for the constant changes in the body of all creatures including from Brahma to creepers (triṇa) like the rotation and revolution of the earth, the moon, all planets or the water of rivers etc. The Naimittika (occasional) dissolution, which occurs at the end of a day of Brahmā. One day of Brahmā is equal to 4320 million years of man. A night of Brahmā again is equal to another 4320 million years. Nārāyaṇa, with the universe resting within himself, goes to sleep on the serpent, Ananta in the waters of dissolution, and Brahmā also sleeps with him. After the day of Brahmā, the universe suffers from pralaya. This pralaya is temporary, for at the end of the night Brahmā again creates the universe. The third pralaya is prakṛta (material) dissolution, which happens at the end of a century of Brahmā’s years. Three hundred sixty such days comprise a year of Brahmā and at the end of the hundred years of Brahmā, when even Brahmā is destroyed by Īśvara, all of Prakṛti’s creations withdraw into the Prakṛti and the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti remain in undisturbed equilibrium (Vṛitti śūnya). But this dissolution, however, does not mean total annihilation.

The vṛitti śūnya pralaya does not mean the total annihilation. After some time evolution starts a new, and thus the circle of dissolution and evolution goes on infinitely. But this does not any way limit or condition God from His absoluteness.
The atyāntika pralaya (final dissolution) is the same as mokṣa, final release or salvation, when the individual soul, a part of Brahman cuts through ignorance (ajñāna) which creates the idea of many entities in one Brahman. The true knowledge or jñāna downs when the individual is released from ahaṁkāra i.e. pride and the bondage of karma, forgets ones own body and realized the undivided soul within its own heart and itself becomes Brahman. In another place he again says —

"tumi jagajīva tamāka pūjle
milai āponāta yāi —
yena mukha śīrka pratibimba mukha
dekhaya darpan chāhī"²

(Thou art the soul of the world, when one worship thee one uniteth with thee, even as one seeth the beauty of ones own face in its image reflected on a looking glass).

Regarding the atyāntika iaya, he says as — “When the individual knows Brahman, he does not see his own body, this state is atyāntika laya. There are our kinds of dissolution and the fear of death cannot be avoided with out devotion.”²

Sankaradeva’s Cosmogony and Indian’s Views

Sankaradeva explains the nature of the Prakṛti and the course of evolution almost in the light of the sāṁkhya, ultimately, he reject the manifested universe, the Prakṛti as unreal and this leads his theory to Vivartavāda. So, here we may see that in what respects Sankaradeva’s view of creation as well as the Prakṛti differs from the popular system of sāṁkhya and also how Sankaradev’s account of Matter (Prakṛti) is more satisfactoiy than some of the western account of matter.

As Sankaradeva postulates only one Puruṣa as the real all pervading soul, the real seer of all our experiences and the basic reality of all the things of the universe, the
classical Sāṅkhya of Isvarakrishna accepted the plurality of the Purusas. Classical Sāṅkhya is atheistic while Sankaradeva is distinctly theistic. The concept of the Prakṛti too has different connotations. According to Sankaradeva, the Prakṛti, is no doubt beginningless. The true knower is Brahman who alone exists, the Prakṛti loses its existence in Him. Classical Sāṅkhya holds the view that the Prakṛti is eternal and beginningless and thus is coeval with the Puruṣa. Both differ in their conception of emancipation. According to classical sāṅkhya, emancipation means the absolute cessation of all pains, spiritual (ādhyātmika), material (ādhibhautika), and destined (ādhidaivika) without a possibility of return. But Sankaradeva says that emancipation can be attained when the true nature of ātman is realized and penetrating the veil of Māyā one identifies oneself with Brahman the true self. Sankaradeva believes in only one category-only one truth which is Puruṣa or the Brahman or the Supreme Being or Kṛṣṇa, while the classical sāṅkhya has the twenty five categories that constitute the world – the Prakṛti and the Puruṣa. To Sāṅkhya the evolutes or the things and beings of the manifold universe are real transformation of primordial Prakṛti. Sankaradeva’s evolution doesnot mean real change. The change is apparent Vivarta. He holds that just like to see a snake in place of a string due to lack of light and after getting light we perceive the real string, in the same way due to lack of knowledge we see the world as real- the Prakṛti is real. But after getting the true knowledge we cannot see the reality in the Prakṛti but only the Brahman.

In Sāṅkhya, the Puruṣa is not one but many and they do not differ in their essence. They are not the manifestation of one and the same Puruṣa while in
Sankaradeva, Puruṣa is one all pervading Absolute entity, like the sum reflecting in all
the jars containing water, the Absolute Puruṣa is being reflected on the citta or mind.74

In the Nyāya Vaisēśika theory of creation, the process starts from the stage of
Manas and the five dense tonmātras of ākāśa, vāyu, tejas apa and prithivi, which are
treated by them as nīyā or eternal and known as paramāṇa and derive the sense organs
and the gross material bodies from these five paramāṇus. The Nyāya Vaisēśika theory of
creation marks the gross stage in the process of creation unlike Sankaradeva’s view.

Like Sankaradeva, in the philosophy of Vīgna Bhikṣhu also Brahman is the
ultimate and independent principle, it associates the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti as a result
of which the three guṇas of the Prakṛti are disturbed and the evolution of the world
follows. In dissolution, the Prakṛti and the Puruṣa remain merged in Brahman as
indistinguishable from it. Sankaradeva says —

“mohō prakṛtir puruṣate gailā līn /
prakṛtiī śvara puruṣa swatantar /
nāhi brahmāndar āra bāhir bhūtar ||”75

(The great Prakṛti merged in the Puruṣa. The Puruṣa is independent of the Prakṛti.
Nothing exists in and out of Brahmāṇḍa).

Both Sankaradeva and Sankaracharya explain the theory of creation in the light
of Śāṅkhya, which is true only in the phenomenal world. Sankaracharya believed
that the phenomenal world is a creation of Māyā and Sagunā Brahman and used the
famous simile of sarpa rajju brahma. In the same way Sankaradeva also employs this
simile to explain the world appearance in Brahman and ultimately analyses the theory
of Vivartavāda to explain the world illusion. He says. — “Except Brahman, all this
perceivable universe is false like the snake appearing in the rope.”76
Ramanuja has little affinity with Sankaradeva regarding the evolution of the world. The world is derived from the non sentient Prakṛti which being apart of Brahman, is inseparably associated with him and under his full control. According to Ramanuja the world is real manifestation or change of the Prakṛti i.e. parināmavāda. On the other hand, Sankaradeva's evolution is Vivartavāda because his universe is mithyā or false. But Sankaradeva nowhere speaks of the saṁsāra or the world the Prakṛti as real.

Nimbarka, the another Vedāntin, like Ramanuja rejects the theory of Māyā and to him the universe is not an illusion but a real manifestation or parināma. On the other hand, Sankaradeva's Prakṛti has no independent existence. According to Nimbarka, Māyā or Avidyā is the ultimate material cause of the material world. Though it is not an independent reality, but a sakti, i.e. power or quality of Brahman. Nimbarka criticizes the Vivartavāda of the Prakṛti while Sankaradeva supports it.

As regards the process of the creation, Vallabha holds that Akṣhara, in which a limited portion of the bliss aspect of Brahman is manifested creates the Puruṣa out its cit aspect, while from its sat aspect comes forth Prakṛti. According to him, the Prakṛti is a principle distinct from the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas. Māyā according to him is a power of Brahman, which creates a real world while Sankaradeva's Māyā or the Prakṛti creates an unreal world.

According to Madhva the Paramātmān for Īśvara is the ultimate reality which is identical with Śrī Kṛṣṇa of Sankaradeva. As regards the process of evolution, like Sankaradeva, Madhva also holds that when the equilibrium of the guṇas or the Prakṛti is disturbed by the will of the Lord, the Prakṛti evolves into grosser and grosser.
categories which are twenty four in number and form the entire brahmāṇḍa or the universe. Madhva holds that there is a presiding deity behind each of these principles and that all the material modifications and psychical acts are carried on under the guidance of these presiding deities. Thus from philosophical point of view, Madhava differs from Sankaradeva as he defends dualism and pluralism and maintains the real creation of Prakṛti.

Caitanya, though a vaiṣṇavite philosophers differs from Sankaradeva as Caitanya criticizes the Vivartavadā of Sankaradeva and favours the doctrine of parināmavāda. The Prakṛti is unreal in Sankaradeva while in Caitanya’s philosophy, the Prakṛti is real manifestation.

After Sankaracharya, four teachers of Advaita school, like Suresvara, sarvajnatma Muni, Padmapada and Vasachpati Misra gave different monistic interpretations of Vedānta which have also some similarities with Sankaradeva. Suresvara and his pupil sarvajnatma Muni maintain that Māyā is an instrument by which Brahman appears as many and it is Māyā which covers the real nature of Brahman which we find in Sankaradeva’s philosophy, as he says- “The eternal, pure, self luminous self appears as many because of the adjunct of Māyā. All the forms are only appearance and so, attend to that Reality, Brahman.” Like Suresvara and Sarvajnatma Munis, Sankaradeva also agrees in maintaining that the phenomenal appearance is only the product of the individual mind or avidyā and hence emphasis the reality of Brahman as the only truth.

To Padmapada and Vasachpati Misra the world appearance is not mere subjective ideas, it has an objective existence and at the time of dissolution or pralaya
of the world, its subtle forms will remain hidden in avidyā till the time of next creation. Sankaradeva says the same view in the Anādipātana.79

Thus Sankaradeva admits that the individual selves and the subtle elements along with Māyā remain hidden at the time of dissolution which are to be viewed again at the time of new creation.

Mandana (in 880 A.D.) another teacher of Sankaracharya's school of Vedānta differs from Sankaradeva in holding that Māyā the Prakṛti is the magical power of Brahmaṇ which creates appearance or illusion in individuals and this, however, does not affect Brahmaṇ any more than the magician's power of creating an illusion affects his own knowledge.

Anandabodha Yati (A.D.1100), another great thinker of Advaita Vedānta tradition has similarity with that of Sankaradeva. Like Sankaradeva, he also admits that the variety and multiplicity of the world appearances can be explained with the concept of Prakṛti or Māyā which has for its support Brahmaṇ or with the assumption of a cause which is Brahmaṇ. Sankaradeva mentions that avidyā – the Prakṛti is the power or energy of Brahmaṇ rests on it like the burning power of fire.80

Sankaradeva maintains a similar view with Madhusudana Saraswati (A.D. 1500) (the Advaita thinker) who says that the world appears to be real only because it is superimposed on the real Brahmaṇ as its ground.

Sankaradeva and Aurobindo's view

Sri Aurobindo conceives creation as a double process, it is firstly a descent of the spirit into the worldly forms and then it also implies an account of the worldly forms
to its original higher status. The creation of Nature or Prakṛti, according to Aurobindo, is a process of descent and ascent of involution and evolution.

The description of the involutionary aspect of creation of Aurobindo, follows more or less the same pattern that we come across in the Vedāntic tradition as well as Sankaradeva’s description of creation. In Sankaradeva’s thinking creation is described as a result of Avidyā. Because of our ignorance we came to regard the world and our apparent self as the only reality. In Sankaradeva’s theory of creation it is said that in reality there was never a creation, creation is apparent, so, it is unreal. Owing to ignorance we see the universe in reality. In the same way Sri Aurobindo also describes creation as the ‘plunge of the spirit into Ignorance.’

Regarding the case of Evolution, Aurobindo’s view has no affinity with Sankaradeva. Sri Aurobindo feels that the lower cannot evolve into the higher unless the higher is already in it. Because evolution cannot proceed out of nothing, as it cannot violate the principles of ‘nothing out of nothing’. Therefore, he conceives evolution as the reverse process of involution. But according to Sankaradeva, evolution is the process of the Prakṛti. Through Prakṛti, Brahman does action only in the phenomenal world. Because this world has no reality — this evolution is vivartan like the ‘perception of a snake in the rope’ not the parināma or the real manifestation or transformation of Absolution into the universe.

Sankaradeva’s Cosmogony and Western views

Cosmogony occupies an important position in Western philosophy also in which we may get the similarities and dissimilarities with Sankaradeva’s cosmogony.
Thales, the Greek Philosopher, thought that water is the original substance out of which all others are formed. He also maintained that the earth rests on water as Sankaradeva also says—

"brahmāṇḍak berhiche prithibī āvaraṇe /
 tāk berhi āche jale jana bidyamāne //"\(^82\)

(The universe is conceals with the earth and the earth rests on water).

The doctrine that everything is in a state of change has been associated with Heraclitus. His doctrine of constant flow of things regarding the universe and its evolution and of the innumerable destructions and renewals of the world are some how similar to the tenets of Buddhism. Sankaradeva also finds impermanence in the phenomenal world (Prakṛti) except the Absolute, he says—"The wealth – the beings – the lives – all the worldly lives and objects are temporal."\(^83\)

Empedocles, like Sāṅkhya and Sankaradeva also asserts the doctrine of causality and believes in the purely temporary existence. Pythagoras said that ‘all things are number’ which bears same resemblance to Sankaradeva’s theory of creation which preaches twenty five principles in the origination of the world.

Thus we find that early western philosophy bears resemblances to a certain extent to the concepts of Puruṣa and Prakṛti of Sankaradeva.

In the Western Metaphysics, we observe the dualism of mind and matter, spirit and body to a great extent. For Plato, the material substance out of which this world is shaped by the creator, is eternal. Matter, in his thinking, is the condition of the creative activity of the idea and therefore co-eternal with God.\(^84\) This matter has its distinct and independent existence and as such cannot reach to the height of the Bhāgavata as well as Sankaradeva’s concept. In Russell’s words — “Plato’s God, unlike the Jewish and
Christian God, did not create the world out of nothing, but only rearranged pre-existing material. We find the same distinction of Matter and Form in Aristotle's philosophy also. His God is merely the First Cause and He originates motion in the inert matter like Samkhya's Puruṣa disturbs Prakṛti to evolute. But Sankaradeva's Prakṛti somehow differs from these notion of Matter or the Prakṛti as his Prakṛti is unreal.

St. Augustine, advocated that the world was created not from any already existing material it was produced out of nothing. Thus God or spirit is the sole Truth of the world. Sankaradeva also says the same view as—

"sṛṣṭir madhyat eka Puruṣa īśvara / kewale thākaya Hari eka brahma tattva li"

(In the midst of creations, there is only one, who is God. Only Hari resides there as the Ultimate Truth).

Here we see the resemblance of Sankaradeva with St. Augustine. While St. Augustine could think of God only, Sankaradeva pins faith on the Absolute, and the world is really speaking only an appearance for it. Like Sankaradeva, St. Thomas also says that God has created the world out of nothing. He created both form and matter. He also says that the world is not eternal; was created in time and that His creation is continuous. "This is patent from the fact that Prakṛti like potency in the traditional concept has no actual existence apart from Puruṣa while matter as conceived by the Cartesians and the modern can very well exist on its own, apart from spirit. This view no doubt comes quite close to the view advocated by the Bhāgavata. So, it definitely comes close to the concept of Sankaradeva's Prakṛti.

According to Spinza everything is God and God is everything and for him the different things and the living beings are only different modes of the same one ultimate
substance God. Sankaradeva also says in the same sense that the Prakṛti including all living beings are only names and forms which have no separate existence except Brahman. Thus all these are, in reality, not separate from Brahman.90

Sankaradeva says again —

"kankaṇ kundala ghat moṇī hemahār /
 eke sübarṇaka dekhi aneka ākār !"91

(The kankaṇ, the ear-ring, the bracelet, the moṇī etc. are the different forms of the only one – the gold).

George Berkeley’s refutation of matter has some similarity with Sankaradeva’s concept of Prakṛti. According to Berkeley, the entire objective world is nothing more than imagination. For his subjective Idealism, the mind is very basis of this universe. The same view is traced in Sankaradeva that the existence of all the universe is dependent upon the mind, it is the creation of the mind.92

Thus from this attempt of comparative study we may see that the pre-dominant tendency of the western philosophy appears to be materialistic, while Sankaradeva has thorough going spiritual outlook Sankaradeva makes a synthesis between the spiritualism and materialism by declaring that even matter is spirit, and then implies that the material truth is only an apparent truth, the great truth is non-dual and in the world we have merely a reflection of the same.93

II. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECT :

The relation in epistemology points to the relation between the mind and matter-the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. Each mind owns in a special sense one material thing, namely its body, and each mind knows by perception and in other ways a great many
material things. Knowledge is equivalent to cognition only when the word 'knowledge' is used in a very broad sense.

The distinction between the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti* has been emphasized in our epistemology in different ways. We know that *Vidyā* or *Brahman Vidyā* is a knowledge of the spirit, while *A-Vidyā* is knowledge other than spiritual, which is called the knowledge of the *Prakṛti* or secular knowledge. *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* are not contradictory but complementary. Both are necessary for the well being of man, the *Avidyā* is necessary for living happily in the world and the *Vidyā* is necessary for going beyond. For the ultimate happiness-realisation of self, *Vidyā* is necessary and *Avidyā* is necessary for living the worldly life.

In Sankaradeva’s epistemology, the *Puruṣa* is the knower and the twenty four elements i.e. the *Prakṛti* is the object of knowledge. The *Prakṛti* is also called *Avidyā* ignorance. The ultimate knowledge is obtained when the spirit (*Puruṣa*) isolates. Itself from the *Prakṛti* by a correct knowledge of its modifications.

According to Sankaradeva, knowledge is *Hari*. It is a strength – energy – power, which conceives the lives of all beings. He says —

"*Jñāna rūp śākati āponi huyā Hari*

*Jagatar Jīvar prāṇaka āchāhāhāri ॥"94

(O’ Hari, Thou art the energy in the form of knowledge. Thou hold the lives of all beings of the world.)

Knowledge is that — known about the ultimate reality, the Ultimate Reality becomes the object of knowledge. According to Sankaradeva *Brahman* the supreme *Puruṣa* is the knower, the subject, but not the object of knowledge. The *Prakṛti* which we call the nature the matter – the body are the object of knowledge so, we get the
dualism of the knower and the known – the subject and the object in Sankaradeva’s epistemology. This dualism exists only on the empirical level, but not in the transcendental level. The object of knowledge – the Prakṛti, the Māyā the matter i.e. the material objects of our experience are termed as the Prakṛti or the Māya, the illusion – the Avidyā - the ignorance.

Māyā and the Avidyā

According to the Upaniṣads, the world is Māyā and that empirical knowledge does not give true knowledge but belongs to the realm of ignorance or Avidyā. We see “Just as dream and magic are seen to be unreal or as is a city in the sky, so also is the whole universe known to be unreal from the Upaniṣads, by the wise.”

Māyā means in the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, the ‘cosmic illusion’. It says – Now one should know that Nature is illusion. Thus, this Upaniṣad speaks of the empirical world as being the effect of ‘Māyā’ (illusion) and the Kathā Upaniṣad speaks of the blindness into which man is plunged by nescience (Avidyā).

In Prakṛti- the primordial nature the material substratum of the universe is Māyā and that the great God is the Lord of Māyā, the Puruṣa. The whole universe is filled with objects that are parts of this Being. In reality ‘parts of his being’ is Brahman is without parts, but parts lower (material forms) and higher (life and consciousness) are superimposed upon it through Māyā.

Avidyā is synonymous with Māyā. Avidyā means nescience, spiritual blindness and Māyā is illusion, projection into the unreal, become interchangeable terms. ‘In Advaitic tradition the two are explained as generally the same, but Māyā has a cosmic significance whereas Avidyā refers to the individual’s ignorance. Other scholars
consider them to be two aspects of the same thing, *Avidyā* being the negative one of concealment, and *Māyā*, the positive one of projection. *Avidyā* is "synonymous with *Māyā*, the mysterious veil that is responsible for the perception of multiplicity in the relative world. Usually used in connection with the individual rather than cosmic, in as much as *Avidyā* is destroyed by knowledge. However, *Avidyā*, *Ajñāna* and *Māyā* are used interchangeably by Vedāntins.

Sankaradeva, also had to treat these two term *Māyā* and *Avidyā* as synonymous and to distinguish between the two aspects of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* which are called *āvaraṇa* and *vikshepaṇa*. The *āvaraṇa* is the negative aspect of concealment while the *vikshepaṇa* is the positive aspect of projection. Thus his concept of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* has two fold functions (i) to cover the real and (ii) project the unreal upon the real, as he says — "Unreality is being projected and reality being covered, know this surely to be My *Māyā.*"

*Avidyā* is the root cause of the manifold universe as well as the worldly lives. He says —

```
sīkālato thākaya avidyā bidyamān /
sṛhi hetat ghatē punu saṁsār āpad //
linga dehā bhāṅgilehe mile mokṣa pada //``

[Ignorance (*Avidyā*) is present in the life after death also for which man suffers from the worldly lives. Man gets salvation after becoming free from the linga body].

In the *Bhāgavata*, *Māyā* has been described as that which appears even when there is no object like silver in a shell and which does not appear in the *Ātmān*. *Vidyā* (knowledge) is described as that through which beings know their *Ātmān* and *Avidyā* that binds the beings, both are products of *Māyā*; it is *Māyā* due to which distinction is
felt. Sankaradeva also says that the manifold universe is the product of Māyā or which is due to ignorance i.e. Avidyā so, it is unreal.\footnote{102}

In Sankaradeva’s epistemology, Māyā is called cosmic and positive power of projection and Avidyā the individual and negative ignorance. So, Māyā and Avidyā are treated as synonymous and as having two aspects of concealment and projection. We see in his epistemology that the subject, which is Brahma and the object are opposed to each other. The subject is pure knowledge – the knower and the object is the jāta the matter– the Prakṛti is known of the knowledge. One is truth and the other is error. The super imposition of a snake or rope, of silver on shell or the illusion of the moons on a single moon is called ‘ignorance (Avidyā) or Māyā (illusion) or error (bhrānta).’ The realization of the true nature of reality by discarding error, is called knowledge. It is co-mingling of the subject and the object, knower and the known.

According to Sankaradeva, Brahma – the knower is only one truth.\footnote{103} The object of knowledge- the known is an error (bhrānta). It is a falsity owing to Māyā as he says —

\begin{quote}
"tumi satya Brahma michā jagat srajanā
tomāra māyāye koroī tomāita kalpanā\"\footnote{104}
\end{quote}

(Thou art the supreme truth, but the creation of the world is error. Due to Māyā – this creation is imagined to be you).

According to the Upaniṣads, forgetfulness of the true nature of the self is, the foundation of bondage. This ignorance is to be fully overcome through the knowledge of Brahman. But this knowledge, is not to be identified with discursive thought or theoretical appreciation of the non duality of the self. ‘Brahman is to be known by being it.’\footnote{105}
Due to lack of knowledge, individual experiences 'many' in 'one'. He says—

"In this way the one Brahman is the ultimate truth and the cause of all success. Due to ignorance man speaks of the different kinds of sentences."\(^{106}\)

The objects of knowledge as the Avidyā – ignorance or Bhrama is the work of the magician: it appears for a moment and soon after vanishes into air.\(^{107}\)

According to Sankaradeva, big clouds are produced by the rays of the sun. This cloud being the part of the sun covers the human eyes to see the sun.\(^{108}\) Likewise the ignorance- the Avidyā being the product of True knowledge, covers the real nature of the Truth from the individual eyes.

Like Sankaracharya, Sankaradeva's Avidyā or Māyā faces the most formidable objection relating to the base wherefrom Māyā operates. But for Sankaradeva is not forfetched.\(^{109}\) Because to him Māyā is the magical power of God, it appears from God and again disappears in it.

Thus in apparent view of epistemology of Sankaradeva, we see the duality of the Puruṣa. The knower and the Prakṛti- the object of knowledge. But from the ontological point of view, there is no relation between the knower and the known- the subject and object. The objectification of the knower cannot be transcendent, because the knower cannot be known. It is unknowable. Sankaradeva says —

"nāpāve indriya sabe yāhār uchar /
yiṭo nohe mon buddhi bachana gochar //"\(^{110}\)
(The sense organs cannot reach Thee. Even the mind, intellect and any verbal statement can apprehend Thee).

Again Sankaradeva says —
"yāt bīne kāhāronāhi keu siddhi / 
yiṭo brahma tattva huve sabāro abodhi //"\n
(Without whom, nothing else is apprehendable, He is the supreme knowledge, but He is unintelligible to all).

The ultimate knowledge is impossible in the empirical level. Empirically the difference is true but from the ontological point of view, there is no difference and identity alone is real.112

**Sankaradeva and Western Epistemology**

If we try to see this concept in the epistemological aspect of western thought, we see some similarities with Sankaradeva. Like Sankaradeva, Sophists believed that empirically the Absolute truth cannot be known. According to Gorgias, through the sense organs different in individuals achieve different experiences about a thing at the same time and a person achieves different experiences at different times. Therefore nobody can know the real nature of a thing. Sankaradeva also says that it is impossible for us to know the real nature of the Absolute, because we try to know the Reality through our different mental dispositions or the mental capacities.113

Therefore through our sense experiences we cannot know the ultimate Truth— the Reality.

Both Plato and Sankaradeva reject sense perception as a source of valid information and stress on the importance of thought (Plato) and the need for reflection and contemplation (Sankaradeva).

In Platonic dialogues, there are two kinds of knowledge the lower leading to ‘opinion’ and the higher leading to ‘knowledge’. He teaches that men who have neither wisdom nor virtue and are absorbed by the lust of the senses are pulled downwards and
never succeed in reaching the real higher world......they stuff themselves with whatever is not real, and the part of themselves which less is filled, does not afford them any kind of benefit.\textsuperscript{114}

Like Plato, Sankaradeva also says that the senses lead man to a world of appearance while thought leads to the way of ‘knowledge’. According to both empirical knowledge is unfit to reach the ‘real’ as it is compelled to search for it in the midst of constant change. So, we cannot reach the ultimate knowledge through sense organs. For Sankaradeva sense perception is not the only source of knowledge—

\begin{quote}
"\textit{Indriyase kore tānka bibidha bhābanā} / \\
\textit{Yena eka prāṇ īr bibidha kalpanā} //"\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

(The sense organs give His different ideas just like one life but his many imaginations).

Plato’s conjectural knowledge is not a knowledge it is a mere appearance of it, it deals with illusory experiences like the knowledge of a snake in a rope silver in necre/shell etc. It can be compared to \textit{pratibhāṣika} knowledge of Vedānta as well as of Sankaradeva. The practical or sensuous knowledge is the knowledge \textit{vyabhāṣīka}, mentioned by Sankaradeva.

Regarding the sensuous i.e the objects of knowledge or the empirical knowledge Sankaradeva says that the objects of knowledge i.e. the \textit{Prakṛti} is real only at the empirical level, as –

\begin{quote}
\textit{prakṛtita āche mātra byabahār dharma} / \\
\textit{tunise swarūp paripūraṇa parama brahma} //"\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

(The \textit{Prakṛti} exists only at the practical level. But thou art the complete, pure and the Supreme Reality).
In Plato’s epistemology, the empirical knowledge is thought of as a shadow of reality. As in the simile of the rope-snake, after getting the light we know the unreality of the snake, similarly after getting the knowledge of the world of ideas, we can feel that the empirical world of things is not as much real. Plato, does not absolutely deny the physical world. Like Sankaradeva, Plato’s physical world – the Prakriti is real in practice, it cannot be transcended. He uses the simile of the cave, he says that in this cave men are chained with their backs turned to light and know only the shadows which are projected on the wall in front of them. The one among them who will be freed and will be able to gaze at the real light, will be ‘daggled by its great splendour’.

In Plato’s theory, we find the existence of the world at two levels – the sensuous and rational or transcendent. So, the world has dual existence- real and unreal. But Sankaradeva’s world- the object of knowledge is not real, it is unreal, it cannot be transcended. Sankaradeva does not entertain dualism. He finds no gap between the knower and the known like Plato’s dichotomy of two worlds, real and unreal- the world of though and the world of things.

In Aristotle too, like Plato, we find a distinction between Matter and Form. But Aristotle does not believe in a world of ideas as distinct and separate from the world of things. According to him, the idea and the thing cannot be separated from each other, and knowledge is not only subjective but also objective. Sankaradeva also admits- knowledge is not only a matter of thinking, but it is a realization also.

Like Sankaradeva, St. Augustine also says that the source of all knowledge and existence is God, whose divine creative principle is manifested everywhere. We have knowledge of the external world through scientific intelligence. The Prakriti or the
world of knowledge is a mere appearance and the knowledge of God is the highest knowledge.

Spinoza uses thought in place of perception and by idea he implies the thought of mind. Like Sankaradeva, he believes that every thing in the universe is determined or dependent i.e. all things of the universe i.e. the empirical world and thoughts are determined by God – the universal substance. As Sankaradeva also holds only the reality of God, the knower but not object of knowledge- He says — Thou art the ultimate Truth. the all creations are false. Only Māyā of Thee creates different imaginations on Him.”

Sankaradeva says in another place — “It is known to us that Thou- the Nārāyaṇa is the cause of the world, from your beautiful Lotus like navel, the Brahma is created. The all five subtle elements – all sense organs- are originated from Thee.”

Spinoza believes that there is no element in the universe which cannot be grasped by mind. But unlike Spinoza Sankaradeva says that only at the practical level the universe exists i.e. knowable to us. Truth is beyond our sense perception. The Supreme knowledge is beyond the grasp of sense organs.

Sankaradeva says — that the Prakṛti the known object being devoid of consciousness does not know its own scope. So, it is impossible for it to know the knower- the subject.

“Jagata Śvara yītu ananta mohimā /
āpuni nājāne māyā baibhabar simā //”

(The infinite glory of the God of the world is not known by Māyā or Prakṛti).

Like Sankaradeva, Leibnitz also says that all ideas are innate i.e. knowledge which consists of ideas, is not acquired. According to Sankaradeva, knowledge is
already implicit in our minds, it cannot be acquired. The world or the object of knowledge is the idea of mind.120

Like Sankaradeva, Berkeley also believes that all the objects of knowledge are subjective, i.e. dependent on mind. According to Sankaradeva, the great spirit is the cause of the objects of knowledge—"Krṣṇa – the eternal beginningless Puruṣa is the cause of the world. With the company of Māyā. Thou create the world and all the subtle elements."121

Being an absolute idealist, Sankaradeva is in agreement with Hegel on certain points. They both claim that all substances and objects found in the world are merely manifestations of Pure-consciousness. Like Sankaradeva, Green the Neo-Hegelian Idealist maintains that man's knowledge finite as he is, cannot comprehend the way of the Infinite. Our relational knowledge cannot understand the secret of the non relational absolute.

Sankaradeva and Indian Epistemology

The epistemological aspect of Prakṛti in Indian philosophy presents different views. In the Upaniṣads, the Higher (para) – the supreme wisdom is knowledge of the self which is not be confused with ordinary knowledge. Sankaradeva's teaching is based on the Gītā, so, like the Gītā, Sankaradeva's Prakṛti is Avyakta. The Prakṛti and the Avyakta mean the unmanifested power of God – it is not an independent entity but only the power of God.

According to Jainism, the relation between knowledge and its object is an external one with regard to physical objects. though it is different in the case of self consciousness. Jñeya or object of knowledge includes self and not self as light reveals
itself and other objects, even so jñāna reveals itself and others. The Jaina concept of Kevala Jñāna is comparable to the highest knowledge of Sankaradeva. There seems to be some similarities between Buddha and Sankaradeva in their attitude to epistemological problems. Like Buddha, Sankaradeva also says that the sense organs are the instruments through which the mind perceives the external objects. Like Buddha, Sankaradeva also rightly emphasis that the object of knowledge is unreal. Both say that ignorance is the root cause of saṁsāra as well as of all sufferings; ignorance is bondage, knowledge is liberation. Both say that matter – the Prakṛti is unreal, being momentary and is relative and therefore ultimately unreal. It is only a knowable aspect of consciousness which on account of ignorance appears as if it is something external.

Being realistic, Nyāya believes that knowledge reveals both the subject (the knower) and the object which are quite distinct from itself. Knowledge is revelation or manifestation of objects. Unlike Sankaradeva, Nyāpa-Vaiśeṣikas regard four valid means of knowledge- perception, inference, comparison and verbal authority.

Sāṁkhya Puruṣa is pure consciousness and foundation of all knowledge. Prakṛti is object the enjoyed unconscious and unintelligent in Sāṁkhya system. Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti the known is different from Sāṁkhya as Sankaradeva Prakṛti has no separate existence apart from the Puruṣa the knower. In the Yoga, Puruṣa is eternally pure and transcendented consciousness. It is free and essentially pure consciousness and is free from the limitations of Prakṛti.

Like Sankaradeva, Prabhakara regards knowledge as self luminous. It manifests itself and needs nothing else for its manifestation. Knowledge reveals itself and as it does so, it also simultaneously reveals its subject and its object. The self is known as the
know and it can never be cognized as an object. An object is known as a known object. Here Prakṛti is known object. The self and the object both depend on knowledge for their manifestation. Every knowledge has a triple manifestation – the cognition of the self as the knower (ahāṁvīti), the cognition of the object as the known (Viṣayavīti) and the self conscious cognition (svāsmvīti).\textsuperscript{122}

Epistemologically there is an affinity between Sankaradeva and Vedānta. According to both of them subject is pure-consciousness and the object is unconsciousness. People wrongly super impose the object and its attributes upon the subject and on the otherhand the subject and its attributes upon the object. This is superimposition of one thing on another is called the ‘ignorance.’ Knowledge means the realization of the true nature of reality by discarding error. Human intellect, naturally, tries to know everything as an object. But whatever can be presented as an object is necessarily relative and for that very reason unreal. The knower – the subject can be never be known as an object. Ultimately there is no distinction between the true knower and pure knowledge. To Sankaradeva also, Brahman is the only Reality, except this, nothing can be said.\textsuperscript{123}

Though Sankaradeva is not a methodical philosopher, yet he mentioned, like Advaitavāda that there are sources of knowledge or pramāṇas – such as śruti, pratyakṣa, aitihya and anumāna. He speaks of the futility of the pramāṇas in giving us knowledge of the reality. These pramāṇas can help one in knowing the manifold universe which is not real ultimately, it is only real in appearance. So, taking these pramāṇas as misleading, one, the seeker after truth desists himself from them.\textsuperscript{124}
Ramanuja agrees with Sankaradevas, in maintaining that the self is an eternal self consciousness subject and that knowledge is its essence. But Ramanuja differs from Sankaradeva in refusing to identify the self with Pure consciousness.

After Sankaracharya, four teachers of Advaita school like Suresvara, sarvajnatma, Muni Padmapada and Vasachpati Misra represent three distinct tendencies in the monistic interpretations of the Vedānta epistemology which bear same similarities with Sankaradeva. Suresvara and sarvajnatma Muni hold that Māyā has both for its object and support, the Brahman. They also agree with Sankaradeva, in maintaining that the phenomenal appearance is only the product of the individual mind which is in the grip of Avidyā or ignorance, and hence emphasis the reality of Brahman is the only truth — the knowledge. Padmapada and Vasachpati Mishra give Māyā a little more substantiality to them, the world appearance is not mere subjective ideas, it has an objective existence also. Mandana introduces the problem of the subject and the object and the duality of them must be abolished and otherwise we can not explain the facts of experience. To him also Māyā is indescribable. According to Sankaradeva, Māyā, does not affect Brahman any more than the magician’s power of creating an illusion affects his own knowledge.

Though Sankaradeva mentions four sources or means of knowledge which have mainly relation to the phenomenal world, they cannot grasp the Reality. The truth the ultimate knowledge is not apprehendable to human empirical knowledge. It is the matter of realization, but not the object of any verification. Sankaradeva in his Bhakti Ratnākara discusses the devotional knowledge of God. Īśvarajñāna bhaktiyāktavairagyaṁ. The concept of devotional knowledge of Sankaradeva in not
opposed to Jñāna or knowledge. For him, knowledge is a necessary corollary of devotion and without devotional attitude true knowledge is impossible. He says —

"The Vedas provides us with dynamic knowledge, we should know that knowledge always is in devotion.

We know that in devotion, knowledge automatically arises. Therefore, we should concentrate on devotion."\(^{125}\)

In the epistemological understanding of Prakṛti, Sankaradeva mentions also the theory of error and admits three grades of reality — Pratibhāsika, Vyavahārika and Paramārthika. In the pratibhāsika level, one perceived a thing like a snake in the rope for a brief moment or one perceives things or objects in dream state which seem to be real for that moment.

In the Vyavahārika level, the lower order of reality is super imposed on a higher reality. In the rope snake illusion, snake is super imposed on the rope. After close observation the rope alone remains as real. But it is not the highest reality. The known world or the object of knowledge - the manifold universe is again a case of super imposition or adhyāsa or Brahman. The object of knowledge i.e. the temporal world is a real experience, but when observed from the point of view of the ultimate reality it becomes unreal. Sankaradeva speaks of this universe this object of knowledge — the unreal universe come from the Reality and appears as real.\(^{126}\) Thus the object of knowledge has no reality. In the paramārthika level, it has no existence, it is unreal, only the subject — the knower is real.
IV. THE CAUSAL ASPECT:

Scientific knowledge is based on two basic postulates, one of them is the law of causation according to which events do not take place without a preceding cause, that something cannot come out of nothing but must have a cause. It may be easy or difficult to correlate cause and effect, but neither can exist without the other. It will be seen that the Law of causation, which is applied in the world of matter, is the same as the Law of *Karma*, which is applied by Indian Philosophy to the world of both empirical and spiritual. This law of *Karma* i.e. the Law of causation, again is only a corollary to the doctrine of *Prakṛti*, which covers both the physical as well as moral sides of human life.

The Śāṅkhya system relies on the principle of causality. In this system, *Prakṛti* is the ultimate ground and prius of the whole flux of the physical and psychic order. According to causality nothing can come out of nothing. But while every event is determined by a preceding event, we cannot indulge in an infinite regress. Therefore, one primal cause of the empirical universe shall have to be postulated. According to the *Śāṅkhya-kārikās* (15.16) of *Isvarakṛṣṇa Prakṛti* or *avyakta* or *pradhāna* is that ultimate cause. The world is merely the *parināma* or transformation of *Prakṛti*.

*Bhāgavata* has built its theistic mansion on the foundation of Śāṅkhya. It defined *Prakṛti* as the reality which consists of the three *guṇas*, viz., *saunva*, *rajas* and *tamao* – imperceptible, eternal, replete with being and non being and though indeterminate, is the source of all the specific objects (III. 26.10). It has been termed *Māyā* too in the *Bhāgavata* at times (VII.9.21). *Māyā*, has been described as the power that creates maintains and destroys the universe. *Bhāgavata* states that the Supreme Being is the master of *Pradhāna (Prakṛti)* and *Puruṣa*. He is beyond *Prakṛti*; this
Prakṛti is evolved out of Brahman. Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world.

In the causal aspect of Sankaradeva’s concept of Prakṛti, we see that Prakṛti is not a cause but an effect. He says that Puruṣa is not the cause of Prakṛti. But the cause and upholder of the two Puruṣa and Prakṛti is Paramēśwar Nārāyaṇa. He says —

“O, Nārāyaṇa! being above both Puruṣa and Prakṛti, thou art still Thyself the cause of both. So hast Thou assumed the name of Paramēśvara.”¹²⁷

Sankaradeva writes — “Prakṛti is the creation of God and out of Prakṛti by His power of Māyā God has made the world evolve.”¹²⁸ As Sankaradeva believes that Brahman is in the world but not the world Bhakti Ramākara, he says —

“Thou art the cause of primal elements, life and limbs
   Lord Nārāyaṇa. Thou createst the world.
Hence Thou art separate from it, and that
Is only why we see not Thou differently.”¹²⁹

The Prakṛti is the eternal power or śakti of God. Prakṛti is the creation—i.e. Prakṛti is responsible for this manifold universe of world appearance. He says —

Creation is the effect, so Prakṛti is the effect. Sankaradeva says that the cause of the world is the twenty four principles which are created by God.¹³⁰

God is the creator of Prakṛti — He is the destiner. He is eternal cause of Prakṛti.

“prakṛṭiru tumī niyantā Ṛkvar
   tumī sanātana svāmī”¹³¹

(God, Thou art the destiner and eternal cause of the Prakṛti).
The manifold universe — the Prakṛti which is the effect of Brahman — the material and efficient cause, is not real, but appears to be real. Brahman is the only reality.\textsuperscript{132}

There is no difference between Brahman and Prakṛti — cause and effect. The unreal Prakṛti appears as real like the snake falsely appearing in the rope.

Sankaradeva says —

\begin{quote}
"tumi kārya kāraṇa samaste carāchar / 
sūharne kuṇḍale yena nāhike antar / 
tumi paśu pakṣī śūrāsūr taru triṇa / 
aṇāṇata mudha jane dekhe bhinna /" \textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

(Thou art the cause and effect of all the creatures just like there is no difference between the gold and the earring. Thou art the beasts, creepers and trees, but due to ignorance we see Thee as different).

Sankaradeva says that from the metaphysical point of view, the ego and the five gross elements are not distinct from God.\textsuperscript{134}

Sankaradeva’s concept of Prakṛti in the causal aspect is an effect appears as parināmavāda i.e. Prakṛti is like a real creation — a real transformation of Brahman. But Sankaradeva’s Prakṛti as an effect has no real status, it only appears as such.\textsuperscript{135}

Like Sankaracharya, Sankaradeva employs the famous simile of sarpa rajju bhram to explain the world appearance in Brahman. Their Vivartavāda is the only answer to the world illusion.

The cause is one, but its effects are many. This one becomes many as the one and the same sun is reflected on different receptacles of water or jar, Sankaradeva admits this theory of reflection or pratibimbavāda. “One Brahman is present in all the
bodies, like one sky in every pot. The sun viewed as many in different water, there is no
difference in Brahman."\textsuperscript{136}

On the other hand due to mental disposition and ignorance or lack of knowledge
of ‘one’ the individual sees the differences in one. He says — “The great wise people
know that the world is like the Great tree which originated from Thee. Due to Māyā i.e.
ignorance, all the unwise people see difference in Thee.\textsuperscript{137}

Sankaradeva also admits that ignorance (lack of knowledge of Brahman) is the
root cause of the world- the saṁsāra the nature the Prakṛti. Sankaradeva says — “The
sole soul is everlasting pure and self refulgent, but joined with illusion it appears
multifarious. All shapes are born of illusion. So fix your gaze on Brahman alone pots,
utensils, etc. though varying in shape are at bottom all earth. Thus self knowing unity
appears multifarious due to the accretion of illusion. Therefore, the visible and the
invisible worlds originate in, exist in and end in God Himself. He is without Vikāra or
modification, all else suffer modification."\textsuperscript{138}

Thus from the causal aspect, we experience the phenomenal world as an effect
of the cause. In our apparent view or in practical life we see that as all are connected by
cause and effect, our world — the universe — the saṁsāra is an effect of which Brahman
is the cause. Because Brahman is one only Reality. The phenomenal world has no
reality, it originates from Brahman and merged in to Brahman also.

In conclusion, we see that the causal relation of Brahman and Prakṛti is not in
ultimate analysis, a relation which limited the Absolute. Sankaradeva says —
"Jagatar pürbe moi mātra thāku jānā / 
kārya kāraṇar kichu nāhileka āna //"\n
(Know me to be only reality existent before the world without any distinction of cause and effect. Know me to be the only reality in the created world and I alone shall remain at the end). According to Sankaradevada God is the cause of Prakṛti. Prakṛti is Jāta. only Purusā is consciousness. God is unknowable through sense experience or intelligent. But It’s existence is inferred from the Prakṛti- the effect. Because effect always refers to its cause. Sankaradeva says —

"kāraṇa nobhaile nohe kāryar udava / 
sīto sab Brahma tāk śunā mohāsāy // 
sabāro kāraṇ honta prabhū bhagābān / 
kāraṇar parā sabe kāryar bidhān //"\n
(Without cause, no effect exists, you all should know this. The God is the cause of all. Therefore from this cause the effect i.e. the Prakṛti arises).

Thus Sankaradeva establishes the existence of Prakṛti in connection with the cause and effect relation.

Causal Aspect of Prakṛti in Western Thinkers

The early Western Philosophy bears resemblances to the concepts of Purusā and Prakṛti of Sankaradeva. In the Western Philosophy, the law of causation plays an important role. Empedocles, like Sankaradeva accepts the doctrine of causality and believes in the temporary existence of Nature.

According to Plato, the matter is the material substance out of which this world is shaped by the Creator who is eternal. Regarding the cause and effect of Plato, we may cite Russell’s view. According to Plato, the cause of the Universe is the idea of
Good- which is the ultimate Reality. It is the cause of the existence of all the things. In Aristotle's philosophy, we find a distinction between Matter and Form. Aristotle, also like Sankaradeva said that God is merely the First Cause and He originates motion in the inert matter. Matter, according to Aristotle, is not self-sufficient. Neither matter nor forms can disappear since both are eternal principles of things. In his theory of causation, we see that God is the efficient cause, the Formal Cause and the Final cause. The matter is the material cause out of which the universe is made up of.

St. Augustine of the Medieval period advocated that the world- was created by God as the cause, not from any already existing material, it was produced out of nothing. Thus God is the sole cause of the world and the world or the matter is the effect of that cause. St. Thomas Aquinas like Sankaradeva, says that God is the creator or the first cause of this world.

For Spinaza, there is only one substance. God or Nature, nothing finite is self-subsistent. The entire world of nature is believed to be tied together in a long chain of cause and effect. Just as every step in a logical order is connected with the preceding and following steps inevitably, just as one step proceeds inevitably from the preceding, in the same manner every event in nature is the inevitable result of some preceding event. Sankaradeva also maintains the same view regarding cause and effect.

On the basis of causal relation, Locke the empiricist, establishes the existence of God — the intelligent conscious being who is responsible for our existence. The everything that exists in the universe, i.e. the Prakrti of Sankaradeva is the effect which indicates that it has been created by God.
Sankaradeva's Prakṛti has an affinity with Berkeley's subjective idealism which holds that God is the fundamental cause of the reality and order in the universe. So, God is the cause and the universe is the effect as the regularity of natural laws and the accuracy of our knowledge is caused by Him. Sankaradeva says the same.¹⁴²

Hegel advocates the concept of the Absolute, like Sankaradeva's concept of Puruṣa, who is constantly realizing itself through the world process. There is a certain similarity between the thinking of Hegel and Sankaradeva in as much that both believe that it is the mind which creates nature. Besides, Hegel suggests that the mind contains within itself the substance with which it creates nature. Thus Mind is the cause and nature is its effect.

Whitehead's concept of Nature is called actual entity and this, emanates from God. His actual entities have no external adventure, they have only internal process of becoming. Like Sankaradeva, his universe — the nature is impermanent temporary. Everything in the universe is in perpetual flux which is the effect of the permanent, ultimate reality. Whitehead maintained that we had a feeling of causality and there is a continuity of subjective form of feeling. We can understand causation in terms of our observations of the occasions of experience.

Indian thinkers on causal aspect of Prakṛti

Indian philosophy also gives an important place to the law of causation. There are two stand points, like two modes of envisaging the nature of Brahman, from which the world may be viewed. The two views are — (1) that the world is an emanation from Brahman which is known as the theory of transformation (pariṇāmavāda) and (2) that it is an appearance of Brahman which is known as the theory of appearance (vivartavāda).
But, whether the world is a modification or an appearance, the ground, according to the Upaniṣad is the cause, i.e. the *Brahman*. The source of the universe is not a category of matter, but the Supreme Spirit. Most of the Upaniṣads agree that *Brahman* does not create the universe out of extraneous matter, but that the universe is a manifestation of an aspect of *Brahman*. Almost all agree that *Brahman* is the sole cause of the universe.

Buddha, in his teaching, establishes that everything i.e. the existence of every event depend upon its causes and conditions as nothing comes out of nothing. In his Dependent Origination we see that for him suffering is *sāṁsāra* and in this empirical world everything is relative, conditional, dependent and therefore impermanent. All phenomenal things, like Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal. Unlike Sankaradeva Buddha does not say that *Brahman* or God is the cause of *Prakṛti*; but he says about the twelve links of the causal wheel of Dependent Origination.

Sāṁkhya’s doctrine of *Prakṛti* is based upon the theory of causation. Sāṁkhya believes in *Satkāryavāda*. All material effects are the modification (*parināma*) of *Prakṛti*. The causation of Sāṁkhya means a real transformation of the material cause which leads to the concept of *Prakṛti* as the root cause of the world of objects. But Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* is not a cause rather it is an effect, it is not independent, eternal or unconditional Sankaradeva’s *Prakṛti* is different from Sāṁkhya as it regards *Prakṛti* as both the material and the efficient cause.

Unlike Sāṁkhya, Yoga Vaiśeṣikas believes in the law of causation which imply that the *Prakṛti* or nature is a new creation which does not pre-exist in its cause but it presupposes a cause. The atoms are the material causes of this world of which God,
assisted by the Unseen Power, is the efficient cause. But in Sankaradeva's philosophy, Brahman is both the efficient and material cause of Prakṛti. His Prakṛti is not a new creation — but a manifestation of Brahman and it is not real, it is only an appearance. Like Vaiśeṣika, the Nyāya holds that the world is an effect. But unlike Sankaradeva this effect (kārya) is non-existent (asat) before its creation and is a new beginning (ārambha), a fresh creation (an epigenesis). It is neither an appearance nor a transformation of the cause. The effect must have an efficient cause and Nyāya mentions that the intelligent agent is God.

The Mīmāṁsaka believes in the Law of karma. The Unseen Power (apūrva) is the cause of the external world. Mīmāṁsaka's Prakṛti has eternal reality, it was never created, never shall it be destroyed.

Sankaracharya also believes in the laws of karma i.e. the law of causation. He ascribes Māyā to Īśvara or God which again is conceived as the maker of the universe. Māyā — the inherent energy by which it transforms into the universe. It is in Īśvara even as heat is in life. Its presence is inferred from its effect. In this sense it may be compared to Prakṛti. Sankara agrees with Sāṅkhya in maintaining that the design, harmony or order in the universe must presuppose a single cause which is eternal and unlimited. But unlike Sāṅkhya he says that only intelligent Brahman can be such a cause but not unintelligent Prakṛti. Prakṛti is the effect, which no doubt, must pre-exist in the cause. But ultimately the effect is not something different from the cause. The cause is one, is real, the effect is only its appearance. Sankaradeva admits that the personal God is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world.
According to Ramanuja the world –Prakṛti is the effect of Brahman, abides in Brahman, and is established in Brahman. He says — “The world which is caused by the Brahman is different from its cause Brahman. Therefore, though in a sense, the world is different from the Brahman, will ultimately return to Him. Sankaradeva admits that both Puruṣa and Prakṛti are caused and upheld by Brahman. Madhavadeva writes in his Nāṁghoṣṭa rightly.

In Bhagavata Sankaradeva writes — “Prakṛti is the creation of God and out of Prakṛti by His power of Māyā God has made the world evolve.

According to Ramanuja, God’s soul is the efficient cause while His body is the material cause of the world. Ramanuja maintains a distinction between the body and the soul of God.

Though metaphysically Vallabha’s views are different from Sankaradeva, they are agree in saying that Brahman is the efficient and the material cause of the universe. Vallabha, developing the views of Viṣṇusvāmin, maintains that Brahman is not only the creator of the universe but is the universe itself. Sankaradeva says in Kirtanaghoṣṭa — “Thou art truth, Brahman the illimitable world fructifies in Thee”. On the other hand Thou manifest Thyself in the world as the inner God.

As the leading dualist Madhavacharya, has no affinity with Sankaradeva. But in the causal relation we see that according to Madhavacharya also. God is the independent Reality, while the individual soul and the universe are dependent on God. God is both material and efficient cause of the universe.

Unlike Sankaradeva, Chaitanya, the founder of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism favours the doctrine of parināmavāda and the universe (the Prakṛti) with all the jīvas or selves is
the product of sakti or energy of God. God with its parā sakti, is the cause of this material universe. He is the source, support and end of the world, the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He is the efficient cause through his higher energy (parā sakti) and material cause through his other energies, called aparā sakti and avidyā sakti.148

Lastly, the world — Prakṛti as an effect is an appearance in Sankaradeva’s philosophy, which is regarded as false and pratibhāśika Avidyā or Māyā, which is the cause of the world, has both for its support and its object the pure self. Brahma is said to be the cause of the world only because it is the locus of Avidyā but in reality, Brahma is beyond causation since it is beyond all relations. So, he says the Bhāgavata.149

V. SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS:

Indian sages declared that God created the world out of Himself, as a spider produces a web, as tree grow out of the earth and hair out of the body. In the Gītā, Śri Kṛṣṇa says — “I am the source of the entire creation and in Me it again dissolves.” It has the scientific basis because “if all things have had a common origin it should be possible to prove scientifically that star and mar, wood and iron, sand and sunlight, thought and electricity, food and feeling, movement and microbe are all, in essence, one and the same thing, derived from the same thing or reducible to the same thing.150 Cosmologists studying the origin of the universe have come to the conclusion that all the countless galaxies, suns and planets were originally an emanation from one single glowing ball of super dense matter, which scientists call the primordial atom and others call the primordial amoeba — i.e. the Prakṛti.
Regarding the creation of the universe i.e. Prakṛti we get in science that — one tremendous explosion sent fragments of the original glowing ball of fire flying apart in various directions at terrific speeds. This movements continue to this day with ever increasing velocities, giving rise to the phenomenon of the expanding universe. After millions of years galaxies, stars, planets and satellites were formed, and as they cooled down, their matter condensed into elements, compounds and other substances. In course of time, water appeared which is essential for the maintenance of life. Subsequently minute plants were formed and later on animalcules. The evolution from simple to complex continued and finally man appeared on the scene. His body and mind have developed but his moral and spiritual progress seem to be stalled as if on a hump.

From this theory of creation it follows that all kinds of matter, all forms of energy, all living creatures, all thought and emotion, have evolved out of one primordial glowing ball of highly concentrated Matter-Energy.\textsuperscript{151}

**Matter is Energy**

According to chemists all the objects known to man are composed of a few hundred thousand different kinds of substances. We have already mentioned about it in our earlier chapter.

Sankaradeva in a scientific manner mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*.\textsuperscript{152}

He again says in *Anādipātan* —

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“ekēśwāre āchu āmi ādi niranjan /
sṛṣṭi ye nāhike mok nakare sūbhāṅ //
chādhyāya bhūbana hridayate dilu thāī /
prakṛti deviūācha garbhate lukāī //
jāda huyā āche tār nāhike chetana ā /
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[I (god) alone was existing as first and pure. Nothing of creations were present for beautification. The fourteen universes ever in the heart and the Prakṛti was hidden in the womb. All were like material things without any consciousness. I (God) am the consciousness - pure self. I do my creation alone. All the individuals are originated from my Body].

Sankaradeva stated in the Anādipātana that Nārāyaṇa dissolves the universes in the retrogressive or involuting order of creation or evolution. He says — “In the process of dissolution, the air involuted in the space, the space in ego, the ego in Mahattva, the mahattva involuted again in Mahāmāyā and finally Mahāmāyā in God.”

In this way the dissolution of the universe endes in Nārāyaṇa, leaving no trace of the phenomenal universe, i.e. the product of kārya-kāraṇa. This state is truly identical with zero existence of space time continuum i.e. zero Dik-kaal. This is totally identical with the singularity at big-bang. The post big-bang events from time zero to 3rd minute is phenomenally brief. Sankaradeva also stated that Nārāyaṇa created the universe in the wink of eyes. Scientific investigation quantified the dimensions of the events which the metaphysical explanation lacks. But the stark truth discovered is identical. Nārāyaṇa decreed the creation and dissolution of the universe ad-infinitum. This course is quite in keeping with the oscillating theory of the universes proposed by science.

The base of the phenomenal universe in both the cases i.e. in science and Vedānta is identified unhesitating as energy. Einstein’s theory of relativity holds that
matter could be transformed into energy. He has shown the matter energy equivalence in his famous equation \( E = mc^2 \), where \( E \) = Energy, \( m \) = Mass and \( C \) = Velocity of light which is 1,86,000 miles per second. That matter is nothing but energy, has been postulated by Einstein in the early part of the twentieth century; however Vedanta recognized it centuries ago. Following Vedanta Sankaradeva also says that matter is energy. \( Māyā \) is the eternal power of God or \( Puruṣa \) i.e. Matter or \( Prakṛti \) is eternal power i.e. energy of God. This eternal power or \( sākṣī \) is called \( Prakṛti \). In \( Anādipātan \), Sankaradeva says that Matter and Energy are one i.e. \( Prakṛti \) is Energy. In fact energy or \( Mahāmāyā \) originated from the primordial consciousness \( Brahman \). Physical sciences assert it to have originated from zero, and that consciousness is a byproduct of the congenial association of matter in the evolution of life. An atom is not conscious. But the coalescence of a number of atoms in an ordered form e.g. protein, carbohydrate, liquid, etc. favour the advent of life and consciousness.

Energy, as shown by physical sciences, precipitated matter, i.e. quarks, electrons, which combined to form protons, neutrons, nuclei, atoms and subsequently compounds of matter primarily resulting from the interactions of positive and negative charges of protons and electrons respectively Metaphysics also projects the precipitation of energy to the 24 categories at the behest of three \( Guṇas \).

Here, we can mention a story of \( Bhāgavata Purāṇa \) which is similar to Einstein’s ‘twin paradox’ to illustrate relatively. “King Revata of Satya Yuga could not find a bride groom for his daughter Revati. Being disgusted Revata ran to \( Brahma \) to complain about, when the latter was found busy in hearing a musical recital. At the end of the recital, \( Brahma \) attended to Revata’s complaint and suggested that both of them
should hurry up to Dwārkā and Revatī be married to Balorama, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. He further cautioned that as father and daughter spend few moments in the Brahmaloka (Brahma’s abode) Satya and Tretā Yugas elapsed on the earth. But as the height of man in Dwārkā was dwarfer than that of Satya Yuga, Revatī would be taller than Balorama which, however, could be ameliorated if Balorama suppressed Revatī on the head by implementing his plough. Is the relativity of time stated is fluke? It is not. 156

The theory of “Quantum Mechanics” which was developed as a new theory in the earlier parts of the twentieth century by a number of renown scientist including Einstein. According to this theory, absorption or radiation of energy takes place in a single packet of energy called the quantum which also travels through media in a quantum and it holds good for all forms of energy. This theory is further interpreted by Copenhagen that unless there is mind there is no light and unless there is light, there is no mind to interact. This applies to all states of sub-atomic particles. It also says that what we perceive to be physical reality is actually our cognitive construction. This Copenhagen’s interpretation of Quantum Mechanics has the reverberation with Sankaradeva’s concept of mind as the source or creator of the universe. He says in Anādipātan. 157

Thus Sankaradeva says that the universe is as the mind depicts it. This has the reverberation of the Copenhagen’s interpretation of Quantum Mechanics. Thus a complete understanding of reality lies beyond the capability of rational thought. Scientists believe in sub atomic particles as “Tendencies to happen or to exist. Individual observations cannot be taken, but only statistical averages can be accepted. Nature could not be understood in elementary space-time reality. 158
As in the Gīṭā (7/14) Lord Krṣṇa narrated that the nature of Māya is difficult to understand but it can be overcome by devotion to Him only. Heisenberg’s uncertainty of quantum mechanics is the keynote in the conduct of worldly life of human beings.159

Mind and Matter or Mind body relation

Mind is soul and Matter or body is Prakṛti. This body and soul together make man. Though science does not believe in the existence of souls, there is some factual evidences to support it. Every thing in nature has an innate tendency to disorder and decay and life can evolve only by overcoming this natural tendency. Mind or soul is that, which is in every living creature but must be as a hidden force which opposes this natural tendency. This soul, which is the vital and most important element in man, yet for realizing its vast hidden potentialities it must have a strong and healthy body, equipped with a good intellect, well-trained mind and keen senses, which should all assist the soul and work under its direction. Without a proper matter i.e. the material base or Prakṛti, this spirituality — the mind or mental state is impossible.

The body — the individual’s body is subject to temptation, disease and death. And the cause of this hardship, pain and sufferings is mainly the needs and desires of body. The body and soul together constitute life. and since life is a gift of God, the body, no less than the soul, must be regarded as a blessing of God.

Body, the house of soul must not be regarded as the source of its bondage but the instrument of its fulfilment and freedom. It is also the means of reunion with God. So, not by starving the body, not by suppressing the mind, or the senses, but only by working through them and making the best use of them, perfection and bliss may be attained. The soul is essentially one, age less imperceptible, indescribable, but it is the
body that is different and gives rise to various relationship in the world. These relationships are temporary and unreal, but everyone has to do his duty as best he can. Sankaradeva also says about the body in this way — "The birth and death are ascribed only to body. The body is created as well as destructed. Thou art without body reside in the body. The birth and death are the actions of body. The quality of actions of the body are created by the mind of the individual. The mind is the subject of the worldly life. Know this that — the soul has no birth and death."^{160}

The neo-modern science emphasized in its repudiation of the classical view that matter is a ponderable, impenetrable and extended substance, whose existence is posited upon its occupancy in time and space. Particle physics has declared the substratum of phenomena to be an inexplicable energy or force that is neither substance nor not substance, that comprehends and engulfs time and space, so that no individual physical entity remains. From this viewpoint science has had to discard the notion of empirical validation as a requisite for a declaration of the real and looks to give an account of intuitive presentation. This is evidenced in atomic physics which has consistently dematerialized matter in its treatment of the atom as being both non-material and non-entical, which it holds as the basic structure of phenomenal event, and portraying this primal ‘force’ or ‘energy’ as an analytical apprehension — a construct for the picturization of our notions of phenomena. In positing a non-material and inexplicable force as the substratum of reality, a force that is neither mental nor material, science is demonstrating most lucidly the postulates of Māyāvāda.\(^{161}\)

Science is unable to hold the basis of the particles that compose all phenomena as existent or non-existent, for which we cannot say the universe in terms of real and
unreal; but posits an objective world that is only pragmatically and conventionally
existent and apart from the present physical system of the universe it admits its probable
non-existence from a cosmic point of view. Thus the vision of the world rests in science
as in Māyāvāda of Sankaracharya and Sankaradeva upon the position of the observer.

A modern physicist initially bases his science upon the same postulates as those
of Sankaracharya’s Māyāvāda or Sankaradeva’s concept of Māyā i.e. Prakṛti. It’s
positing of energy as the basic field of reality — neither mental nor physical,
admittedly inexplicable, yet real for all practical purposes — is not different from the
teaching of Māyā that holds the same conceptions of phenomena and inexplicability of
substratum of the universe i.e. the Brahman. The procedure of Māyāvāda, propounded
by Sankara’s Vedānta is plainly reflected in the axioms and protopostulates of modern
particle science, and serves well to explain metaphysically the nature of the world as
science has developed it in a physical understanding.

By science or devices of science we cannot know the real nature of the world.
According to Sankaradeva also, Brahman as existence. Knowledge — bliss
(saccidānanda) is present in every material object. This accounts for the indescribable
nature of matter. “Sri Aurobindo explains matter as the form which the inconscient
Cosmic Energy assumes in order to exhibit in isolated prominence, the substantiality of
the Supreme Spirit, and to furnish the spirit with a formal basis of objective
knowledge— “the energy of consciousness acting, as it were in a state of
somnambulism.”

As we consider that words are the symbolic portrayal of finite ideas, we admit
that their use is dependent upon the standpoint — the level and type of perception:
therefore, such empirical view of the world cannot be free from doubts until it is viewed from a purer knowledge. In the same way Sankaradeva says about the Brahman and Prakṛti. According to him, the highest Absolute is one and it cannot be described by any human language. The infinite Absolute is viewed differently by the different people according to this mental status.

In the Kirtanghoṣā Sankaradeva observes that — the different concepts of Brahman are dependent upon the different mental states of the observer or viewers. The manifold universe i.e. the Prakṛti, which is the product of Māyā is not real but appears to be real.

The modern science says about the immateriality of the atom, and by declaring the universe to be no more than an immeasurable and undifferentiated field of energy from which we make all our physical conceptions, and by thus exhibiting the external world as a conceptual arrival at variety and multiplicity by mental manipulation of the non-mental, non-material and ‘inexplicable force.’

Regarding the reality and unreality of Prakṛti i.e. the universe the scientific view comes very close to Sankaradeva’s view. Sankaradeva rejects the reality of the universe as he holds that Brahman is the only reality. The universe or Prakṛti is real from the practical point of view or it has only Vyavahārika reality like the work of the magician appears for a moment and soon after vanishes into air. This same universe is unreal from the ontological point of view i.e. it has no pāramārthika satyatā. To Sankaradeva the universe appears in Brahman and as such it has, no real status.163 Physical science has consistently negated the phenomenal world as material entity. Denuding its basic particle, the atom, of impenetrability, form extension, geometric
construction and lastly declaring the subatomic entity to be impossible of location in
time and space, modern physics has successfully arrived at a residuum of affirmation
that, from a neutral ground, an undifferentiated field of force which is neither mental
nor physical, arise all our physical conceptions. Heisenberg’s principle of uncertainty
unfolds the inability of science to isolate and to measure the electron as an entity in
relation to other entities with any appreciable degree of certainty.\textsuperscript{164} The ‘neutral’
ground — the neither real nor unreal force of the newer vision of science, in which the
macroscopic and microscopic worlds can be known in perfect unity, and from which the
human mind conceives the various forms to which it assigns a variety of attributes, is a
recognition of the first manifestation of the Cosmic Self.

Thus through scientific declaration name and form, the multiple individuality
that we have long thought to constitute the phenomenal world, is trickling back into
undifferentiated unity. So, it seems, that science in positing an impersonal and non-
material character to the basic or seminal aspect of the universe — the all pervasive
“field of energy” has approximated the sublimation of the multiple world into the unity
of spirit, so insistently demanded by Vedāntic scripture as well as Sankaradeva’s
thinking about \textit{Pra\=kṛtī}.

In science, positively charged protons and particularly the negatively charged
electron play a dominant role in the organization of matter, especially in negotiating the
all important biological functions of the metabolism, growth, gene, action etc., in living
beings. In the philosophy, the concept of \textit{Puruṣa} and \textit{Pra\=kṛtī} of Sankaradeva and a
multitude pairs of opposites collaborate the parallelism of the positive and negative
charges.
According to scientists, the universe is the function of the interplay of energy and that energy originates from nowhere or from zero. Hence for creation, the necessity of a creator is redundant. Vedānta as well as Sankaradeva postulate that the universe which is based on illusion has the origin in the all existent conscious, blissful Brahmān. According to the scientist the universe could have originated in a number of ways and present form is one of them. Its objects is not anthromorphic. However, the sole objective in Vedāntic creation, the creation is a pastime of the Almighty wherein the souls are purposely thrown out to undergo a rigorous ordeal of good or bad conduct of life of innumerable number and then return to Him only after sustaining on ethical life. Hence ethics is the key in the anthromorphic creation. Science assayed the properties of matter, rendered them through technology to the services of men, helped generating immense wealth and resource without the dictum of ethics in its distribution so much so that a few individuals or nations amassed huge resources resulting in a bulk of deprived ones.

Regarding the mind and matter, Puruṣa and Prakṛti, science says that spirit (Puruṣa) could not be explained in terms of matter. Charles Sherrington, Nobel Laureate and one of the greatest neuro-physiologists says in the same way in his book ‘Man on His Nature’- that ‘Biology cannot go far in its subject without being met by mind. Though living is analyzable and describable by natural science, that associate of living, thought, escapes and remains refractory to natural science. In fact, natural science repudiates it as something outside it ken. A radical distinction has therefore arisen between life and mind. The former is an affair of chemistry and physics, the latter escapes chemistry and physics.'
As Sankaradeva says that nothing is real i.e. the *Prakṛti* is not real except God. Nature or *Prakṛti* is just the manifestation of God, the *Brahman*. The same has been stated by J.S. Haldane, in his book "The sciences and Philosophy", that "It is only a narrow view of what is natural that prevents our recognizing the presence of God everywhere within and around us. Nothing is real except God and relations of time and space are only the order of His manifestation. Nature is just the manifestation of God. and evolution is not mere biological or physical phenomenon, but the order in time relations of His manifestation."\(^{166}\)

Thus we get different views regarding *Prakṛti* or nature. Both science and philosophy uphold different views on *Prakṛti*. However, the unanimous view is that *Prakṛti* is Energy- Law-system which rules and runs the universe. The Energy is that of God. which is present everywhere, here latent there manifest, producing great results from small causes. which is all powerful and ever at work and yet bound by laws made by God. which are fixed, universal, eternal and self acting. The forms of energy are numerous. *Prakṛti* is God’s energy and its manifestation is traced in matter and life. It is God’s own will expressed in permanent laws and systems.

Notes and References

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47b. Ibid., Vol – II, Anādipātan, Verse – 42.
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65. Ibid., Verses – 182-190.
66. Advaitavāda in Śāṅkaradeva’s Theology — Chetia, Dr. Bepin, pages 31, 32.
68. Ibid., Verses – 23-38, 168-173 and Bhāgavata-XII, 154-159.
69. Ibid., Bhāgavata- XII, Verses –155-158.
70. Ibid., Anādipātan, Verse – 169.
71. Ibid., Vol – I, Kīrtana-ghoṣā, Verse – 442.
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165. Ibid., pages 31-32.