

## CHAPTER - V

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ŚAṆKARADEVA

### 5.1 : General Idea of the Nature of God :

Almost all human beings believe that the ultimate reality behind the world of appearance is an all-comprehensive perfect experience of the personal type; and people also believe that this world of physical objects and finite spirits are self-expressions of this Supreme Mind. When human beings love, adore and venerate this Supreme Mind as the source of the highest ideals of human life, they make Him an object of worship; and then He becomes the God of religion. Almost in all religions, the concept of God is essential; and man is said to be incurably religious. The idea of God has taken various forms in different religious faiths. But the fundamental idea of the nature of God is that there exists some supernatural power that is supremely good and wise Who demands from man an attitude of worship.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5.1.1 : Attributes of God :

By Considering the attributes of God, it is understood the true concepts of the god-idea.

**(i) God is Infinite, Eternal and self-existent Being :** God is infinite in the sense that He is the ground of the finite world and finite beings. God is eternal in the sense that

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1. Sanyal, Jagadiswar (2006). *Guide to General Philosophy*. P. 181.

God is above the limitations imposed on man by time. God is self-existent in the sense that He exists in Himself and for Himself, Who doesnot depend on any other reality.

**(ii) God is Absolute and unconditioned :** God is Absolute in the sense that He is not related to any other being beyond Himself and God is unconditioned in the sense of not-being conditioned by anything outside Himself.<sup>2</sup>

**(iii) God is the Creator and the Ultimate Reason of the world :** God is the immanent spirit of the world, and the world is the outward expression of God. The world is cereated by God, Who is the material, efficient and final cause of the world. So, God is the ultimate reason of the world.

**(iv) God is the Moral Governor :** God is the living embodiment of our moral ideal. He is the moral arbiter and judge of our actions.

**(v) God is the source of ideals :** God is the source of ideals, because ideal values exist in God. God is the soul of the world, an indwelling spiritual presence, a creative, organising and perfecting power, the source of our moral, religious and aesthetic ideals.<sup>3</sup>

### **5.1.2 : Indentification of the Concept of God with the Concept of the Absolute :**

The Absolute is the all comprehensive universal ground of the world-order. The intellectual necessity of explaining and understanding the significance of the relative and finite world-process lends the idealistic philoshoprrers to the conception of the Absolute Experience, which is absolute and infinite. This Absolute is indeterminate,

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2. Sinha, J. N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. PP. 245-246.

3. Sanyal, Jagadiswar (2006). *Guide to General philosophy*. P. 182

since to ascribe any quality or attribute to the Absolute is to limit and determine it. This Absolute is not a person. Reality as personality involves self-consciousness and therefore, the duality of self and non-self whereby the personal self will be limited by the not-self. When men consider the Absolute or the Ultimate Reality from the emotional point of view, then the Absolute turns out to be the God of religion. The Absolute, then becomes the abode of moral ideals and values. He becomes a person, and men try to establish a personal relationship with Him. Thus, the Absolute or God is the same ultimate reality looked at from different points of view. In other words, the Absolute Reality of a philosopher is God of a devoted soul.

But all philosophers do not take the Absolute and the God to be identical. According to Bradley and Śaṅkārācārya, who are the Absolutists in the west and in the east, the Absolute is the highest reality and God is only a phenomenal manifestation of the Absolute in religious consciousness. Bradley holds that the Absolute is neither personal nor impersonal. Absolute is a supra-personal and all inclusive experience in which all contradictions and appearances are harmoniously held together. On the other hand, Śaṅkara, who is an abstract monist, believes in the reality of One and in the unreality of the differences. Consciousness is the only reality which is self-certified. According to Śaṅkara, this ultimate reality is called *Brahman*, which is an abstract principle of consciousness; it is not a personal being having consciousness. God is empirically real but only an illusion from the point of view of *Brahman* or Ultimate Reality. But according to Rāmānuja, the Absolute and the God are identical. Reality must be a concrete unity, a unity-in-plurality, that is, identity-in-difference. Rāmānuja regards that the highest reality is a person. The particular things of experience are relative and finite. They depend upon one another as parts of an all comprehensive

system. This all inclusive system is Absolute and has nothing outside it. This concrete point of view is consistent with theism and seems to be satisfactory.<sup>4</sup>

Śaṅkara takes his stand on the *Upaniṣadic* view that ‘All is *Brahman*’ and thus he believes that an Absolute Reality pervades the world of multiple things and beings. *Brahman* or the Absolute is indeterminate and as such no positive quality can be assigned to the Absolute or *Brahman*. This *Brahman* is *sat* (real), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss) in the sense that it is not *asat* (non-reality), not *acit* (non-consciousness) and not *nirānanda* (non-bliss). *Brahman* has no distinction – external or internal.

According to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* or the Absolute, qualified by *Māyā* becomes *Īśvara* or God Who creates the world. *Īśvara* and the world have no transcendental reality. So long as the world appears real due to ignorance, *Īśvara* or God is regarded as the creator, sustainer and withdrawer of the world. These are the accidental qualities (*tatasthalakṣaṇas*), not the essential qualities of *Brahman*. This higher aspect of *Brahman* or the Absolute is transcendental and the lower aspect of *Īśvara* or God is immanent.<sup>5</sup>

Śaṅkara’s *Advaitavāda* is a purely philosophical scheme. It is relatively free from theological obsessions. Śaṅkara’s *Īśvara* or God assumes many names and forms by the instrumentation of His will power *māyā*. Śaṅkara himself was an worshiper of different gods and goddesses – viz. – Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Śakti, Śūrya etc. He composed hymns of unmitakable grandeur addressed to these gods and goddesses.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Sanyal, Jagadishwar (2006). *Guide to General Philosophy*. PP. 195-196

5. Barua, Girish (ed.) (2011). *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and His Philosophy*. P. 80

6. Ibid. P. 76

From the above discussion, it is seen that according to Śaṅkara, the Absolute or *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality, which is Pure Consciousness or consciousness of the Pure Self, which is devoid of all attributes (*nirguṇa*) and all categories of the intellect (*nirviśeṣa*). When the Absolute is associated with its potency *māyā*, then it appears as the qualified *Brahman* or God (*Īśvara*), Who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this world, which is His appearance.

## **5.2 : Concept of God in the Thoughts of Some Western Thinkers :**

According to Plato, God is a creator of the whole world. God created the world by introducing order into it according to the original in the heaven. He created the world out of the four elements of water, air, fire and the earth. Thus, God is said to be an architect and not a Creator God, for God created the world not out of Himself, but according to the original pattern in heaven. Plato regards that God is perfect and He does not require anything for Himself. He is good and He desired that all things be as good as He is. God is the Supreme Reality, the most perfect Idea according to Plato.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle conceives God as the Unmoved Prime Mover, the pure form devoid of matter, pure activity, the unthought thinker. God is the efficient cause, formal cause, and final cause of the world. According to Aristotle, God is by His own nature an actual Being, for there is nothing of potentiality in Him. He is all perfect and nothing is lacking in Him. As God is eternal, and exists of His own necessity, so He alone sustains Himself and the whole universe, without anything outside Him to sustain Him.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Masih, Y. (2002). *A Critical History of western Philosophy*. P. 77

8. Ibid; P. 98.

The Stoics conceive God as Providence, the Universal Reason, which pervades the world, and governs human destiny. The moral law is identical with the cosmic law. The Law of Nature is the Law of Universal Reason. Nature and Fate are identical with Providence and Good will.

According to St. Augustine, who is an eminent mediaeval philosopher, God is the beginning, the middle and the end of all things. Nothing exists outside Him, beyond Him, and without Him. Omnipresence, omnipotence and eternity are His essence. He is everywhere, without being confined to any place. He is the principle of all changes, and yet immutable. God freely created the world out of nothing.

According to Plotinus, God is One, the Form, the Infinite. He is attributeless and indescribable. He is devoid of desire and will. Plotinus conceived God as transcendent, Predicateless and impersonal.<sup>9</sup>

Descartes says regarding God in his famous book 'Meditation' that "by the nature of God, I understand a substance, which is infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful and by which I myself and every other thing that exists, were created."<sup>10</sup>

Spinoza conceived God as One substance, devoid of intelligence, will and personality. God is an infinite Substance. Everything follows necessarily from the nature of God. Finite objects and finite minds are the finite modes of God, with no reality of their own. God is the substance, the only reality. According to Spinoza, neither intellect nor will pertains to the nature of God. The will of God is the sum of

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9. Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*; P. 242.

10. Masih, Y. (2002). *A Critical History of western Philosophy*; P. 206

all causes and laws; and the intellect of God is the sum of all mind. As substance is infinite and whatever there is follows from God or Substance, so God is said to be 'cause-sui' or self-evident.<sup>11</sup>

According to Leibnitz, God is the Monad of monads, the Monarch of the City of God, the harmonizer of the natural world and the moral world, the physical kingdom of nature and the moral kingdom of grace.<sup>12</sup>

Kant regarded God as a regulative ideal or Idea of Reason in order to reduce the mental phenomena and the physical phenomena to an unconditional totality. But from the standpoint of practical reason, Kant assumed the existence of God as a postulate of morality in order to harmonise virtue with happiness. Kant said that God has a rightful claim for being an object of faith, the justification for which comes from moral life. Apart from this practical gain, it affords speculative satisfaction to our intellectual needs. Thus, God is a mere ideal, it is yet an ideal, without a flaw which completes and crowns the whole of human knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

According to Fichte, God is the Absolute Ego, which affirmed itself by negating itself, and created many finite egos and finite non-Egos, which were ultimately real. According to him, the Absolute Ego is the moral will, moral order of freedom.

Hegel conceives God as Absolute Idea, universal Reason, Infinite and eternal Spirit or Self-consciousness, manifesting itself in Nature, finite minds and society in different degrees. According to him, the Absolute is a unity-in-plurality, an identity-in-difference, both transcendent and immanent. It is neither Absolute Ego, nor beyond

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11. Ibid. P. 227.

12. Ibid. P. 261.

13. Ibid. P. 386.

ego and non-ego, but infinite and eternal Self-consciousness, which transcends self and non-self and is immanent in them. According to Hegel, the Ideas which constitute Reality are concrete and not abstract, are non-empirical and not empirical and the system of concrete Ideas constituting Reality is logical and not arbitrary.<sup>14</sup>

Hamilton and Mansel conceive God as the Unconditioned beyond all conditions and relations, unthinkable and inconceivable. Herbert Spencer conceived the Absolute as Unknown and Unknowable, which is infinite and eternal inscrutable energy. According to Bradley, the Absolute is super-personal or impersonal. But God is personal, whose personality implies the duality of the worshipper and the worshipped. God is an aspect, an appearance of the Absolute. Royce conceives God as the Absolute Self-consciousness, will and love. He Identifies God with the Absolute. He regards God as a person, who knows the past, the present and the future in an Eternal Now. Lotze regards God as Infinite Personality. His creative energy is an expression of love. God has infinite knowledge, will, love, holiness and blessedness. God is the creator of free finite spirits and communicates his holiness to them. Rashdall, Howison and other Personal Idealists regard God as finite and limited by the finite selves who are free. According to James, God is an 'Ideal tendency' in the world, as a finite fellow-worker of men fighting evils and making the world better. Some contemporary realists regard God as the 'totality of values', which are not existents, but subsistent entities.<sup>15</sup>

These are some of the views of some western philosophers regarding the concept of God.

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14. Ibid. P. 426.

15. Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. pp. 244-245



Form the above discussion, it is seen that all the thinkers of the Western Philosophy are unanimous in the opinion that God is one, Omniseient, Omnipotent and 'He' is the Supreme power or Supreme Reality in the world. This Supreme Reality or God is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the whole universe.

### **5.3 : Theistic Arguments or Proofs for the Existence of God :**

Generally, there are four main arguments for the existence of God. These four traditional 'theistic proofs' are of great philosophical interest and have been receiving more rather than less attention from both secular and religious writers in recent years.

These are as follows –

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (i) Causal or cosmological argument. | (ii) Teleological argument |
| (iii) Ontological argument.          | (iv) Moral argument.       |

These are explained below –

**(i) Causal or Cosmological Argument for The Existence of God :** Every event in the world is an element within a causal situation. All things and beings in the world depend upon other things and beings. They are not independent entities; they depend upon their causes for their existence. All things and beings of the world are related to other things in the spatio-temporal order; they are finite and limited. The whole world is contingent, dependent, relative and limited or finite in time and space. So, the world must depend upon a necessary, independent, absolute and in finite Being or God for its existence. He is not contingent and dependent on any other being. He is not related to any other being. He is not related to any other being external to Him. He is Absolute, infinite and the ground of the world, Who is not limited in time and space. Again, it is said that the world is a system of effects; the effects have their causes; these causes

again are effects of their causes and so on. In this way, there is a causal series running back indefinite into the past. But we cannot go on indefinitely backward from effects to causes. So, it must be stop at a point, at a cause of the series of causes, a First cause of all causal situations, a cause of 'the world', and this cause is God. God is the first *Cause of cause Sui*, which is self-existence and self-caused, and independent of any other cause.

Martineau stated the cosmological argument in the form of causal argument. According to him, causal argument consists in the argument of the existence of God from the very nature and idea of causality. A cause is a power, force or energy which produces an effect. The causal energy is directed to produce a particular effect. So, the energy in Nature must not be unconscious physical energy, but mental energy of God or Infinite Mind. The cosmic energy is the divine energy, immanent in the world. Therefore, God is the Cause of the world; God is its material and efficient Cause.<sup>16</sup>

**(ii) Teleological Argument for The Existence of God :** The term 'teleological' has been derived from the Greek word 'telos', which means end or purpose'. So, the teleological argument holds that the order in nature points to design of an infinite intelligence. Thus, it is an argument from the order in nature to a divine design. This argument holds that the order in nature is contingent, since there is nothing in nature to guarantee it. Therefore, the order in nature has to be grounded in a self-existing, infinite intelligence, which is God. The Teleological argument was stated by William Paley. According to him, the whole contrivances of nature speak of an infinite intelligence. There are many evidences of design, adaptation and adjustment of means

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16. Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction To Philosophy*. Pp. 234-235

to end in the natural order. The mechanism of the human body is wonderful. There are innumeralde nerve-cels and fibres in human brain closely knit together in a system which is at work behind even the simplest thoughts of men. The lungs of land-animals are adapted to breathing air, while fish have gills rather than lungs, because they are to breathe the air dissolved in water. The colouration of animals varies with their environment so as to afford protection from enemies. These facts imply the existence of an intelligent and wise designer of the world. This designer of the world is God.<sup>17</sup>

The main facts which support the Teleological arguments are – the internal adaptedness of organic beings, the fitness of the inorganic to minister to life, the aesthetic value of Nature, the world's instrumentality in the realization of moral ends, and the progressiveness in the evolutionary process culminating in the emergence of man with his rational and moral status.<sup>18</sup>

**(iii) Ontological Argument for The Existence of God :** The ontological argument for the existence of God was first developed by Anselm, one of the greatest theologian. Anselm describes God as the being who is so perfect that no more perfect can even be conceived.<sup>19</sup>

Our idea of God is that of highest perfection, and since a non-existent being is not as perfect as an existent being, so God must exist. The main points of the ontological argument, described by Anselm are – God is an object of worship and to be worshipful God must be the highest or greater than whom nothing can be

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17. Masih, Y. (2009). *Introduction to religious philosophy*. Pp. 209-215

18. Tennant, F.R.. *Cosmic Teleology in the existence of God*, Edited by John Hick. P. 123

19. Hick, John H. (2004). *Philosophy of Religion*. Pp. 15-16.

conceived. Existence is a state of the highest perfection or excellence. So, in some sense, existence may be conceived as a predicate or quality like omnipotence, omniscience. A distinction has to be made between a contingent existence and necessary existence; God is necessary existence. Hence, the non-existence of God cannot be even thought. So, the necessary existence of God is contained in the very notion of a Being greater than which nothing can be conceived. Hence, it would be self-contradictory to deny the existence of God.<sup>20</sup>

It can also be said that all finite things, taken together cannot produce the idea of infinite being, for the sum of finite things is also finite. Therefore, the idea of infinite being must have been produced by an Infinite Being, Who is God.

**(iv) The Moral Argument for The Existence of God :** The moral argument for the existence of God claims that ethical experience, and particularly one's sense of an inalienable obligation to one's fellow human being, presupposes the reality of God as in some way the source and ground of this obligation.<sup>21</sup>

According to the moral argument, the moral experience of the race implies the existence of God as the conserver and preserver of the moral values. Moral values are objective and not merely ideal or fictitious. If the ideal is not real, it cannot influence human conduct and character. But the ideal influences and elevates man, though the ideal is not completely realized by him. There must be a Supreme Person in whom these ideals or values are completely and eternally realized. This Supreme Person is God. Kant also regards the existence of God as a postulate of morality. The highest

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20. Masish, Y. (2008). *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*. P. 176.

21. Hick, John H (2004). *Philosophy of Religion*. P. 28

good is virtue. Moral consciousness of man demands that virtue ought to be rewarded with happiness. Therefore, Kant argues that there must be Supreme Being or God Who will reward the virtuous with happiness in the next world. A person can make himself virtuous, but he cannot make himself happy. But God can make the virtuous happy in the next life, because God is the controller of the kingdom of spirits and nature. The existence of God is a postulate of morality.<sup>22</sup>

Again, James Seth inferred the existence of God from the moral ideal. According to him, the moral ideal is infinite, which cannot be completely realised by people. But what is ideal in men, is actual in God. The moral perfection of God is imperfectly revealed to men as the moral ideal, which inspires men to realise gradually.<sup>23</sup>

#### **5.4 : Concept of God in *Vedic* and *Upaniṣadic* Philosophy :**

The earliest literary and philosophical documents, which are handed down to us, are the *Vedas*. The Vedic culture is the main foundation to the Indian civilisation. All the religions and philosophies of India have their root in the *Vedas*. The word *Veda* means 'knowledge'. The ultimate reality of this universe cannot be found by our external and internal sense organs. These knowledge can only be known by the study of the *Vedas*.

##### **5.4.1 : Concept of God in *Vedic* Philosophy :**

The *Vedas* represent different phases of religious thought. There are manifest signs of polytheism, organised polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism. The grand, sublime, beautiful and useful aspects of nature are personalised and deified.

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22.Sanyal, J. (2006). *Guide to General Philosophy*. P. 192.

23.Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. P. 238.

They are regarded as supernatural and superhuman spirits akin to human spirits. They are the deities presiding over the diverse phenomena of nature. These are not natural phenomena. They are pervasive super natural entities, which govern the phenomena of nature, and which are benevolent to their worshippers, but terrific to their haters. They are mighty, invincible, wise, merciful, omniscient, pervasive, righteous, truthful and benevolent. They are easily propitiated by hymns, prayer, oblations, offerings and sacrifices. They give worldly prosperity, wisdom and moral qualities. They give victory in battles, wealth, long life, and happiness. The gods of fire is 'Agni', the sun is 'Sūrya', the dawn is 'Uṣās', the earth is 'Pṛthivi', the sky is 'Dyaus', the bright sky and day is 'Mitra', the dark sky and evening is 'Varuṇa', the storms is 'Maruta', the winds is 'Vāyu' and the like are mentioned.

The different gods are personifications of the different powers of nature. They are sometimes worshipped individually. This phase of religious thought is not naturalism, but anthropomorphic polytheism. The gods are supernatural and superhuman powers, and endowed with spiritual qualities. They preside over particular phenomena of nature but they are not confined to them. They pervade the whole of nature and beyond, or a considerable part of it, and are endowed with some qualities of the supreme god-head. This is the element of polytheism in the Vedas.

Sometimes the Gods are invoked and worshipped in groups. Sometimes two Gods, sometimes three, sometimes four or more Gods are invoked. Sometimes all Gods, also known as *Viśwa Devāḥ* are worshipped together, who are implicitly believed to be partial aspects of one supreme God. This phase of religious thought may be called organised polytheism.

The Gods are gradually related to one another as the major and the minor, as dependent on one another, and as generating one another. Heaven and Earth are the mothers of Agni, Rudra is the father of the Maruts. Aditi is the mother of Ādityas. The Aśvins are the brothers. Indra maintains the Earth and the sky is their places. He is a major God and they are minor deities. The Maruts maintain the Sun, the Wind and the Fire gods in the sky. They are superior to the three Gods. Varuṇa, Mitra and Aryaman kindle Agni, and are glorious through him. They are interdependent on one another. This phase of religion is organised polytheism.

Among the multitude of gods any one is treated as the supreme god for the time being when he is worshipped, Maxmuller calls this religion henotheism.<sup>24</sup>

*O Agni, thou art mighty Indra, the wide-ruling Viṣṇu, the king Varuṇa, the wondrous Mitra, Aryaman, the lord of beings. Thou art Rudra, the Maruts, the Winds, and Pusan. Thou art Savitr, a bestower of treasures, Bhaga, the lord of welth, Rbhu, Aditi, Bharati. Iḍa and Sarasvatī. Thou art united with all gods, equal to them in strength, nay, thou surpassest them. when thy power has expanded over heaven and earth.*<sup>25</sup>

Here, Agni is identified with many gods, and treated as superior to them. This phase of religious thought is called henotheism. It is a step from polytheism to monotheism

The conception of Ṛta further harmonizes the gods with one another, and paves the way for monotheism. Ṛta is the physical order. It governs the uniformities of

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24. Muller, Max (1903). *The six systems of Indian Philosophy*. P. 40

25. *Ṛgveda*. ii, 1, 3-5

nature. Ṛta reigns everywhere, in the sky, in the sun, in the mountain in the sacrifices and in truth.<sup>26</sup>

The gods follow the laws of Ṛta. It is the physical order and the moral order. It points to the existence of one supreme God, whose law is unalterable and inviolable. The conception of Ṛta prepares the way for monotheism, though it is an impersonal order, which upholds the gods and the world.<sup>27</sup>

Hiraṇyagarbha or Prajāpati, Viśvakarmā, and Parama Puruṣa gradually take the place of one supreme God. Hiraṇyagarbha is Prajāpati, the Lord of all creatures. He arose in the beginning. He established the earth and heaven. He is the sole king of the entire universe. He rules over the mountains, the seas, and the rivers. He governs men and beasts. His commands are followed by other gods. He alone is God above all gods. He may claim the rank of one Supreme God.<sup>28</sup>

Viśvakarmā is the creator of the entire universe He creates the sky and the earth. He is the world-architect. He is the seer of all. His eyes are everywhere. His face is everywhere. He is of all hands and feet. He is one God.<sup>29</sup>

There is a Cosmic Person who has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. He pervades the entire universe and transcends it. Whatever exist, existed, and will exist is this Supreme Person. He is the Lord of immortality. He is not affected by the fruits of actions. The entire universe is only one-fourth of his being. The remaining three fourths remain in celestial immortality.<sup>30</sup>

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26. Ibid. iv, 40, 5.

27. Jadunath Sinha (2006). Outline of Indian Philosophy; p. 20.

28. *Ṛgveda*. x. 121, 1-10

29. Ibid. x, 81, 2-4

30. Ibid. x, 90, 1-3



The Parama Puruṣa is both transcendent and immanent. He is immanent in the whole world. He transcends it, and remains beyond it in His immortal glory. The *Puruṣa Sūkta* teaches panentheism. These are the monotheistic tendencies in the *R̥gveda*.

Monotheism leads to monism. One Reality is conceived, which is manifested in diverse ways. There is one reality; sages call it by various names; they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvān.<sup>31</sup>

From the above discussion, it can be said that the central fact of religious experience is self-surrender of man to God; and this is possible only with one God. Henotheism is the result of the logic of religion, which helped towards the displacement of polytheistic anthropomorphism by a spiritual monotheism. But in henotheism, it is not found a conception of a supreme God, as required in monotheism in the ordinary acceptance of the term. It aims at the discovery, not of one god, who is above all other gods, but of the common power that works behind them all. The conception of the supreme God in the later Vedic period may be said to be more philosophic than religious. Omnipotence, a characteristic of all the gods, becomes personified as the Highest under the name of Viśwakarmā (all-does). 'He' is the great architect of the universe.

But Monotheism also failed to satisfy the later Vedic thinkers, because the God, who possesses more qualities and more grandeur was not installed as the supreme reality. Moreover, the mind of man is not satisfied with an anthropomorphic deity. God should be one, beginning less, infinite, all embracing and

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31. Ibid. i, 164, 46

omnipotent reality, where from everything that we find in this universe is derived and wherein will ultimately return.<sup>32</sup>

Attributing personality to God is to limit Him. Though personality is a limitation, still only a personal God can be worshipped. The moment of reducing the Absolute to an object of worship, it becomes something less than the Absolute. True religion requires the Absolute. The Absolute Reality is indiscriminately called 'He' or 'It'. Thus, it is found the emergence of the idea of *Sat* or Being, of an absolute conscious reality. The world of experience was, in this stage not traced to a creator, but to a single primordial cause which unfolds itself as the universe in all its diversity. All the different gods are, but manifestations of the one God. "The real is one. The learned call it by various names, Agni, yama and Mātariśvān".

It is expressed in the *Rgveda* as ---

*ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti,  
agnim, yamam, mātariśvānamāhuḥ* //<sup>33</sup>

This ultimate reality is impersonal, indeterminate and free from mythological elements. This Vedic concept of God or the ultimate reality is one and indeterminate.

#### **5.4.2 : Concept of God in Upaniṣadic Philosophy :**

The monism adumbrated in the *Rgveda* is developed into idealistic monism in the Upaniṣads. According to the Upaniṣads, the essence of the universe and the ultimate Reality is *Brahman*, which is omnipotent, omniscient, pure consciousness, eternal and infinite. *Brahman* is the subtle essence and substratum of all things in the

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32. Sanyal, Jagadishwar (2001). *Guide to Indian philosophy*. P. 30

33. *Rgveda* – I, 164/46.

universe. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Brahman* is described as *Tajjalan*. It means that it is by *Brahman* that the world has beginning, sustenance and end. This *Brahman* is divested of all objective attributes. In the *Taittiriya Upaniṣads*, *Brahman* is defined as that from which all these beings are born, by which they live and into which they are reabsorbed.<sup>34</sup>

It is found in *Upaniṣads* that *Brahman* is non-spatial, non-temporal and non-causal. In other words, *Brahman* is impersonal, transcendental, indefinable, incomprehensible and unknowable. Sometimes, this *Brahman* is conceived as transcendent and immanent. The transcendent *Brahman* is a cosmic, attributeless or higher *Brahman*. On the other hand, the immanent *Brahman* is cosmic or lower *Brahman* endowed with attributes and related to the world. The former is the *Parā-brahma*, who is the impersonal and indeterminate Absolute, the ultimate reality. The latter is the *Apara brahma*, who is personal God (*Īśvara*); creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. He is the moral governor and the inner controller of the world and the individual souls. According to *Chāndogya* and *Taittiriya Upaniṣads*, – “The cosmic Brahma is regarded as the cause of production, maintenance and destruction of this universe.”<sup>35</sup>

The *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣads* calls ‘Him’ ‘the lord of all, the knower of all, the inner controller of all, the final haven of all’. In other words, the entire creation arises out of *Brahman*. Just as when clay is not known, everything made out of clay becomes known, for it is only ‘name and form’, the reality being only clay, similarly when

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34. Sharma, C.D. (1987). *A Critical Survey of Indian philosophy*. p. 24

35. *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*. 3. 14. I; *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*. 3. 1.

Brahman, the cause is known, everything, being a mere effect, becomes known, for the effect are only names and forms, the reality is *Brahman* alone.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Saguṇa Brahman or God (Īśvara) in Different Upaniṣadic View :***

*Apara brahma* is the determinate Lord or *Īśvara*, Who is related to the empirical world and the individual souls. He is possessed of good qualities, and devoid of bad qualities. He is pure, sinless, untainted and holy. All created beings spring from Him, live by Him and are absorbed in Him.<sup>37</sup>

God is the material cause and the efficient cause of the world. He is omniscient and all-knowing. He is created formed and formless, temporal and non-temporal, contingent and necessary, conscious and unconscious beings, and the real and the unreal. *Brahma* is the creator of names and forms or diverse objects of experience.<sup>38</sup>

The sun, the moon, the earth and the sky are kept in their places by the command of God. The wind blows, the sun rises, fire burns, the cloud thunders and death overtakes all created beings at His command. He is the harmonizer of the different worlds. They are kept together by His unifying will. His will maintains, supports and harmonises them. He is the bridge, the support and the unifier of all worlds.<sup>39</sup>

It is also found in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that –*God*, who resides in the self, who is different from it, whom it does not know, whose body it is, whom he controls from within, is thy immortal Ātman and inner controller.<sup>40</sup> *Brahman* is the world-soul

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36. Sarma; C.D.. *A Critical survey of Indian philosophy*. P. 27.

37. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* – iii. 14, 1

38. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* – i, 1, 6 and 9; ii, 1, 3-9, *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*. iii, 1-6, ii, 6

39. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. iv, 4, 13; iii, 8, 9; v, 6, 1; *Kathopaniṣad*, ii, k 3, 2-3; *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, viii, 4, 1.

40. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. III. 7, 22

and the inner controller of the entire universe. He is the inner controller of each finite object, and of each finite self. He is imminent in the universe and finite selves.

From the above discussion, it is seen that according to the all *Upaniṣad*, God is the infinite, eternal, impershable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. God is the inner guide of the world and finite selves, Who is sinless, pure, moral, holy and perfect. “He” is the eternal embodiment of moral perfection.

It is also found that *Brahma* is both indeterminate and determinate. In his transcendental aspect, *Brahman* is devoid of attributes. But in his relation to the world and the individual souls, “He” is endowed with attributes.

### **5.5 : Concept of God in Śaṅkaradeva’s Philosophy :**

Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, a religious Guru and social reformer was not a systematic philosopher, yet his practice of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* has a philosophical root. Unlike Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmānuja, Śaṅkaradeva did not interpret *Brahmasūtra*, but accepted *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the essence of all Vedānta (*Sarva-Vedānta-Sāram*). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* and *Sahasranāma* section of the *Padmapurāṇa* are popularly considered to be the authorities from which Śaṅkaradeva accepted the main articles of his faith, namely *Satsaṅga* (the assembly of *bhaktas*), *Eka-śaraṇa* (shelter in one God) and *Nāma* (chanting the name of God).

Moreover, *Bhāgavata-bhāvārtha-dīpikā* and *Sobodhinī* commentaries of Śrīdharasvāmin have been found necessary to suit the peculiar tenets of the faith. He blended the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy of enlightenment by knowledge with pure devotion to the Supreme preached in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Irrespective of all these,

he paves his own way of thought. Śaṅkaradeva speaks of *matibheda* or difference in mental level of the people. The main theme of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* or *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* is to emphasise that the highest Absolute is one and it cannot be described by any human language.<sup>41</sup>

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the world of multiplicity is born out of *Brahman* and the world dissipates into it at dissolution. He holds that the Absolute Reality, which is *Brahman* is non-dual consciousness, pervading the world of multiplicity created by *Māyā*. Śaṅkaradeva explained it in his *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*māyātesa dekhaya vividha pariccheda /*  
*svarūpata tohmāra nāhike kichu bheda //*  
*caitanya svarupa vyāpi eka nirañjana /*  
*tohmāka bulibe dvaita kona ajñajana //*<sup>42</sup>

It means, God appears in diverse forms for illusion; but in reality, God bears no differentiation. God is supra consciousness, all pervading. Only the ignorant finds duality in God.

In Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, the only adorable deity is Lord Kṛṣṇa, Who is no other than God himself (*kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*).<sup>43</sup> In his philosophy, it is strongly interdicted to worship any other god or goddess; and for this reason, his religion is known as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* – the religion of supreme surrender to one God (Kṛṣṇa) and singing and listening to His name and attributes.<sup>44</sup>

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41. Chetia, Bipin; 1999. P. ii.

42. Saikia, Purnanand (2005). *Śrīmanā Śaṅkaradeva's The Kīrttana Ghoṣā; Uresa-Varnana*; verse 2122

43. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* :Book-1;Chap-3; verse28

44. Saikia, Purnanand (2005). *Śrīmanā Śaṅkaradeva's The Kīrttana Ghoṣā*; P-XXVIII

According to Śaṅkaradeva's metaphysics, the Supreme Reality is *Brahman*, which is also *Paramātmān*. This *Brahman* is also called *Nārāyaṇa* or *Viṣṇu*, the highest God. Śaṅkaradeva identified *Brahman* with *Viṣṇu* or *Bhagavān*, the highest God of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* and the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. This God is *Sat* (Existence), *Cit* (Knowledge or consciousness) and *Ānanda* (Bliss). Śaṅkaradeva stated this clearly in the very beginning of the *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*prathame praṇāmo brahmarūpī sanātana /  
sarvva avatārara kāraṇa nārāyaṇa //*<sup>45</sup>

It means, At first I pray to *Nārāyaṇa*, Who is *Brahman* in revelation, eternal and the root cause of all the incarnations.

Śaṅkaradeva conceived God as the *Puruṣottama*, which is mentioned in the *Puruṣasūkta* of *R̥gveda*. According to him, God is Eternal, Omnipresent and Omniscient. God is immanent in all things and beings of the universe. God is the abode of all good qualities. He is free from all imperfections. God is infinite reality by nature and qualities. There is no other Supreme Reality in Śaṅkaradeva's thought. God is one and the ultimate truth. 'He' is *advaita* or non second. Mādhavadeva writes this in his *Nāma-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*rāma kṛṣṇa nārāyaṇa nirañjana nirākāra  
nirvikāra nirāmaya hari  
cidānanda sadānanda puruṣa parmānanda  
bhajo tuā charaṇata dhari*<sup>46</sup>

It means – God, who is formless, changeless is Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Hari. He is the eternal ultimate Bliss. We devote ourselves to Him.

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45. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*: Caturviṃśati avatāra; verse-1

46. Mādhavadeva : *Nāma-Ghoṣā*; verse-700

From the metaphysical standpoint, Śaṅkaradeva advocates a monistic view. In other words, Śaṅkaradeva holds a special form of monotheism. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the eternal Reality, who is also known as *Brahmarūpī Sanātana* in the view of Śaṅkaradeva. According to Śaṅkaradeva, God is all pervading, omnipresent and dwells in all beings man and animal and even in the lowest of the low in the social hierarchy. Śaṅkaradeva also did not find any difference between *Brāhmaṇa* and *Chāṇḍāla*. Since he is a monotheistic thinker, so he worshipped the Godhead in the form of Rāma, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. He said that there is none but One Whom people should worship. In this respect, Śaṅkaradeva's *bhakti dharma* is also known as *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma*. The meaning of *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* is that – Supreme surrender to One Supreme Deity, Who is Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Hari and Vāsudeva. In other words, Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu is the only God, the One Supreme Deity of the Hindu religion. When Kṛṣṇa is worshipped, then all other deities are worshipped and satisfied.<sup>47</sup>

According to *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahapurāṇa*,

*sṛṣṭi sthiti pralayara hetu yīto deva /*  
*yāta pare parama īśvara nāhi keva //*  
*svapna jāgaraṇa yīto nirbhara nidrāta /*  
*samādhita sākṣi rūpe thākanta sākṣāta //*  
*sachetana karai deha prāṇa indiryaka /*  
*jīvaka bhuñjānta nānābidha biṣayaka //*  
*paramātmā buli tāka kahe munigana /*  
*tehente parama tattva jānibā rājana //*  
*hari hara bidhi yāra thāke ājñā dhari /*

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47. Sarma, Nilima (2008). *Philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva*. An Appraisal Vol : I, P. 182.



*īśvararo īśvara tehente mahāhari //*

... ..  
... ..

*samādhita bekata hovante guchhe bhrama /*

*buliyā tekhane jana mādhavaka brahma //*

*karanta yekhane yiṭo sṛṣṭi sthiti anta /*

*buliya tekhane mādhavaka bhagavanta //*

*brahma paramātmā bhagavanta eke tattva /*

*ekersese tini nāma lakṣaṇa bhedata //*<sup>48</sup>

It means, God is the cause of creation, nurturing and destruction; none other than Him is the supreme one. On whom dependent during dream awakening and sleep; The Lord exists as witness even in *Samādhī*. He makes conscious the body, life-force and organs of senses; ‘He’ lets *jīvas* to enjoy various sufferings and happiness. Saints say the Lord to be the Supreme soul, O’ king, know Him to be the Supreme essence. Hari (Viṣṇu), Hara (Śiva), Vidhi (Brahma) also obey His order. ‘He is the God of gods the Supreme God. When He reveals Himself in meditation, then Mādhava is called *Brahma*. When ‘He’ performs creation, nurturing and destruction, Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa) is then called *Bhagavanta*. *Brahman*, *Paramātmā*, *Bhagavanta* radiate from same theme. They differ in character with three names in one theme.

Again,

*cāri veda cauddha śāstra kṛṣṇake kahaya /*

*kṛṣṇarese aṁśasave jagata niścaya //*<sup>49</sup>

It means – Four Vedas, fourteen scriptures say about Kṛṣṇa; The universe is truly the part of Kṛṣṇa.

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48. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* : Book-XI: verse- 176-181

49. Ibid. Book-II; verse- 76.

According to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, God is immanent and transcendental, Who has both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* aspects. Śaṅkaradeva has laid more stress on the *saguṇa* aspect, without denying the *nirguṇa* or indeterminate aspect of God.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, there are three concepts of God; viz. –

- (i) The first concept of God is that “He” is as absolute or *Brahman*, “Who” is without a second. This God cannot be known by any source of knowledge like perception, inference and testimony. “He” is eternal, self-illuminating and one. Only for the adjunct of *Māyā* it appears as many.

In Śaṅkaradeva’s writings, it is expressed as –

*nitya nirañjana svaprakāśa ātmā eka /*  
*māyā upādhira pade dekhio aneka //*  
*yateka ākṛti māne māyāmaya sṛṣṭi /*  
*henajāni kevala brahmata diyā drṣṭi //*  
*svarūpata eke mātra mṛttikā ākāra /*  
*ghaṭa paṭa bhede dekhi aneka prakāra //*  
*ehimate aneka adavita ātmā buddha /*  
*māyā upādhira pade dekhi bahuvidha //*<sup>50</sup>

Again, in *Anādi Pātana*, it is expressed as –

*anādi īśvara yiṭo brahma nirañjana /*  
*jñānamaya ānanda ye satya sanātana //*  
*nayana kamala mudi yoga nidrā chale /*  
*āpunāke cinti mātra āchanta kevale //*<sup>51</sup>

It means, the beginningless God is *Brahman*, Who is unstained, full of knowledge, blissfulness, and eternal truth. He has been closing his lotus eyes as if He is sleeping. In this state, He thinks of Himself alone.

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50. *Kurukṣetra*; vs-510-512.

51. Kalita; Jagat Ch. (Editor) 2014. *Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva’s the Anādi-Pātana*. verse-40.

(ii) According to Śaṅkaradeva, the second concept of God is that, “He” is as a perfect person, Who creates, sustains and destroys the universe. This God is kind and benevolent, savior of his devotees, Who rides in the celestial abode *Vaikuṇṭha*. This God is not accessible. Arjuna along with Lord Kṛṣṇa had to this abode. It is expressed in the *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*viṣṇura teja dekhi dhanāñjaya /*  
*bhailanta manata āti vismaya //*  
*pauruṣa puruṣara kichu nui /*  
*kṛṣṇara prasāde samasta hui //*<sup>52</sup>

It means – A man has had no powers of own; Kṛṣṇa’s grace makes everything happen<sup>53</sup>

This is a concept of personal God, who possesses qualities. This God may be called *Saguṇa Brahman*.

(iii) The third concept of God is that “He” is a God of flesh and blood. According to Śaṅkaradeva, this God can be intimate and friendly, who gives inspiration and strength at the time of grave danger and distress. Such concept of God in human form is long predicted in the *Purāṇas*. Different incarnations are the suitable explanations through which God may come to this world in the form of *Avatāra*. It is expressed as--

*kṛṣṇarūpe daivakīta bhailā avatāra /*  
*śaṅkha cakra gadā padma karata tohmāra //*  
*pītavastre śobhe āti śyāma kalevara /*  
*kamalalocana cāru aruṇa adhara //*<sup>642</sup>

... ..

52. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣa*. Vipra-Putra Anayana. P. 756.

53. Saikia; Purnananda (2005). *Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva’s The Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. P.756.

... ..  
*acintya mahimā hari puruṣa purāṇa /*  
*līlā kari aneka daityara lailā prāṇa //*  
*kaṁsara pāñcani pāi yata daitya āse /*  
*tumi aganīta yena puri mare jāse //*<sup>54</sup>

It means, In Daivakī, God is incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, taking in thine hands *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā*, *padma*. God's bluish body is adorned with yellow robes; Lovely are thine lotus Eyes, and purple Lips. O Hari, Person inconceivable and old, God killed many daityas by the way of sport; The daityas that came to God as Kaṁsa's (maternal uncle of Kṛṣṇa) bidding; Perished in God as insects in a fire burning<sup>55</sup>

'God' is *Parameśvara* worth worshipping to the *bhaktas*. Due to the difference of mental capacity, man sees the same "reality" from different points of view. According to *Sāṁkhya* philosophy, God is *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. But for the wise (*jñāni*), God is unconditional *Brahman* (*Brahma niraṅkuśa*)<sup>56</sup>

This is expressed in *Bhāgavat Purāṇa* as follows –

*tomākehe bole jñāni brahma niraṅkuśa /*  
*sāṁkhya mate bole tumi prakṛti-puruṣa //*  
*bhakatara matī tumi parama īśvara /*  
*matibhede tomākehe pūje nīrantara //*<sup>57</sup>

It means, The wise call, Thee the unconditional Absolute; According to *Sāṁkhya*, Brahman or God is *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*; To the devotees, God is the great lord, people of different mental capacity, always worship God.

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54. *Kṛttana-Ghoṣā* : *Śiṣu-līlā*; verses- 642-649.

55. Saikia; Purnananda (2005). *Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva's The Kṛttana Ghoṣā*. P.331-334.

56. Chetia, Bipin (1999). *Advaitavada in Śaṅkaradeva's Theology*. PP. IX X.

57. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa*. Book- X, 1830.

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, God is depicted both as immanent and transeendent – including both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* aspects. Without denying the *nirguṇa* aspect, Śaṅkaradeva has laid more stress on the *saguṇa* aspect. The *saguṇa* aspect of God has been specially inscribed for the intention of devotion. As indeterminate, God is not graspable for human being, as a result, devotee worship and admire his innocent form, that is, Nārāyaṇa. In Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, there are theistic elements. His theism may be regarded as absolutistic theism as in his God, there is the Brāhmaṇic content. It is true that, at the level of devotion, God is all in all; apart from or above Him nothing is to be thought of. The theistic God is a person. But in Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, both the personalistic and impersonalistic concepts are there. For the devotee, God is a person, but this personal God has implicitly a greater position and this greater position refers to its impersonal character that consists in *Brahman*, the Absolute. Śaṅkaradeva, in all his writings tries to make the devotees understand that behind his God, there is *Brahman*, which has empowered God with an absolutistic import. Thus, Śaṅkaradeva has tried to synthesise theism with absolutism. Neither is he a theist nor an absolutist par excellence. Śaṅkaradeva's position comes in between absolutism and theism.<sup>58</sup>

In Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, the theory of "incarnation" is very important. He strongly emphasized this theory. Incarnation means *avatāra*. The word *avatāra* has come from *avatāraṇā*, which means coming down. So, *avatāra* means one who comes down. A temporary God is not the deification of man or animal; but coming down of a Supreme Power, which cannot come down as it is. So, *avatāraṇā* is a process of ingress, not of progression.

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58. Barua, Girish (2014). *Śaṅkaradeva - A Critical Appraisal of His philosophy and Religion*. P. 222.

*Avatāraṇā* is the participation of the eternal *Brahman* in time. It means the eternal reality descends to the temporal reality. According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, there are innumerable *avatāras*. These innumerable *avatāras* flow from “Hari”. It is expressed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as follows –

*avatāra hyasaṁ khyeyā hareḥ sattvanidherdvijaḥ /*  
*yathāvidāsināḥ kulyāḥ sarasaḥ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ //*<sup>59</sup>

It is significant to note that, in the above verse, the *avatāras* are said to be descending from Hari. So, it signifies that Hari is the Supreme God from Whom, the *avatāras* come down. In the literatures of Vaiṣṇavism, ‘Hari’ is identified with Kṛṣṇa and in the verse 1/3/28 of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa is regarded as God himself. The other *avatāras* are nothing but the incarnations from a part of God, not from his whole entity. Only Kṛṣṇa is the whole *avatāra* of God.

It is expressed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as –

*ete cāmsakatāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇstu bhagavān svayam /*  
*indrārivyākulaṁ lokaṁ mṛḍayanti yoge yoge //*<sup>60</sup>

In the opening chapter of his celebrated work, the *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, Śaṅkaradeva enumerates twenty four incarnations, which has been titled, as *Caturviṁśati avatāra varnaṇā*. These 24 *avātaras* are as follows –

(1) *Matsya*, (2) *Kūrma*, (3) *Varāha*, (4) *Narasimha* (5) *Vāmana* (6) *Paraśurāma* (7) *Śrī Rāma* (8) *Balarāma*, (9) *Buddha* (10) *Kalkī* (11) *Sanatkumāra* (12) *Nārada* (13) *Nara-Nārāyana*, (14) *Kapila*, (15) *Dattātreyā* (16) *Yajña* (17) *Ṛsabha* (18) *Prthu* (19) *Dhanvantarī* (20) *Mohinī*, (21) *Vyāsa* (22) *Hayagrīva* (23) *One who rescued Gajendra from the clutches of Grāha* (24) *One who appeared before Dhruva and*

59. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa*. Book – 1.Chap-3. verse -26

60. Ibid, Book – 1.Chap-3. verse -28

*subsequently liberated him.* Another incarnation has also been mentioned at the end, which is given as *Śrī Hari*, Who carried the Mandara Hill to chuten the ocean.

The last is not treated as a separate incarnation. It may be the same incarnation which rescued Gajendra and in both the incarnations *Śrī Hari* appears with his conveyance or *Bāhana Garuḍa*. All these incarnations taken from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* have been rearranged by Śaṅkaradeva's with some addition and alternation. Though Śaṅkaradeva gives the list of twenty four incarnations, first ten incarnations are given much important, which are called *daśāvatāra*. Although Śaṅkaradeva's was against image worship, yet he did not prohibit concentration on the mental image of Lord Kṛṣṇa (God) at the time of prayer.<sup>61</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva was a monotheistic thinker, so he worshipped the Godhead in the form of Rāma, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. It is seen that the Assam Vaiṣṇavism strictly prohibited the worship of many gods and goddesses and taught only devotion to a Supreme Being, that is, Kṛṣṇa. Thus, in Vaiṣṇavism, Kṛṣṇa's status and position stands above other gods. In the *Bhakti Ratnākara*, Śaṅkaradeva elaborates this point in the following verse –

*kṛṣṇamenamavehi tvamātmānam sarvadehinām /*  
*jagaddhitāya so'pyatra dehivābhāti māyayā //12*  
*vastuto jānatā mevaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ sthāṇuṁ cariṣṇuṁca //*  
*bhagavadrūpamakhilam nānyadvastviha kiñcana //13*  
*sarveṣāmapī bhāvānām bhāvārtho bhavati sthitaḥ /*  
*tasyāpi bhagavān kṛṣṇaḥ kimanyad vastu rūpyatam //15<sup>62</sup>*

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61.Sarma, Nilima (ed) (2008). *The philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva : An Appraisal : Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva Sachetan Maneha*, P. 182

62. *Bhaktiratanākara*. Chap.V, verses- 12, 13, 15.

Thus, it is said that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme Godhead and He is the essence of the world.

Śaṅkaradeva has emphasised the need of incarnation in his tenet; because without the *avatāra tattva* of *Brahman*, his religious faith is meaningless. All his writings are centered round the *avatāra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa and his sportive activities. Incarnation plays the most important role in his teachings; and Lord Kṛṣṇa is the nucleus of his faith. According to Śaṅkaradeva, the name and fame of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the means of release of the people from the bondage of *māyā*, for which the individual soul has to suffer from the pangs of disease, old age, death etc. in this world of misery. Chanting and hearing the names and fames of the Lord Kṛṣṇa is the highest means for a devotee to get release from the bond of birth and death. Chanting the *nāma* of Lord Kṛṣṇa can perform seven works in total. These are— at first, *nāma* of Lord Kṛṣṇa burns up the sins; then it produces great virtues. It also brings in indifference to worldly affairs and it produces love and devotion towards Lord Kṛṣṇa. It procreates knowledge; wards off *māyā* by burning her. It keeps the devotee united in Hari in the form of complete Bliss. The devotee also will not have any physical form at last.

Generally, God is regarded as having no body. ‘He’ is a spirit like our soul. But God takes a body when He is incarnated. So, there is an occasion, when the birth less God willingly takes birth as an *avatāra* to save the righteous persons and destroy the evil ones. It is expressed in the *Śrīmad Bhagavata Gītā* as follows –

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata /*  
*abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānāṁ sṛjāmyaham //*  
*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtam /*  
*dharma saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge //*<sup>63</sup>

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63. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*: Chap.IV; verse-7



It means, (For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, God comes into being from age to age).

Thus, it can be said that the final aim of an *avatāra* is the welfare of the devotee and to keep him merged in Him, without any different existence of his own. Even though Śaṅkaradeva is a Vaiṣṇavite saint, still he differs in some extent from the other Vaiṣṇavite philosophers of India in respect of the theory of non-duality. Other Vaiṣṇavite philosophers regard “Lakṣmī” or “Sītā” or “Rādhā” or “Rukmiṇī” as the part and parcel of the Lord and pay homage to them and others like Hanumāna, Gaṇeśa etc. along with Him. But Śaṅkaradeva regards the “Lord Kṛṣṇa” alone as the only worshipful deity. In other words, according to Śaṅkaradeva, there is only one God, that one is the only worshipful and nothing else than that one, who is Lord Kṛṣṇa alone.

### **5.5.1: Comparison Between Śaṅkaradeva and Śaṅkarācārya with Other Vaiṣṇava Philosophers :**

Monism is a philosophical theory, which believes in one primordial entity or substance as the ground of the whole universe and from which the universe has emerged. In Indian philosophy, it is known as *Advaitavāda* – one without a second. It is not a faith; but based on reasoning.

On the other hand, Monotheism is a theory of God as the sole creator and moral governor of the universe and especially, of human kind. In Indian Philosophy, it is called *Ekeśvarvāda*. In other words, monism regards the ultimate substance and monotheism searches for one single God at the root of the universe.<sup>64</sup>

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64. Chetia, Bipin (1999). *Advaitavada in Śaṅkaradeva's Theology*. Pp. V-VI

### (i) Śāṅkarācārya and Śāṅkaradeva

Śāṅkarācārya is called the Advaitavādin, who speaks of one Reality without a second. He takes his stand on the *Upaniṣadic* view that “All is *Brahman*” (*sarvaṃ khalvidam brahman*) and he believes that an Absolute Reality pervades the world of multiple things and beings. The soul is identical with Brahman. When *Brahman* is qualified by *māyā*, then it becomes *Īśvara* and creates the world. *Īśvara* and the world have no transcendental reality. So long as the world appears real due to ignorance in the philosophy of Śāṅkarācārya. *Īśvara* is regarded as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. The higher aspect of God (*Brahman*) is transcendental and the lower aspect (*Īśvara*) is immanent. This lower aspect is *Īśvara* or *Saguṇa Brahman* who is also illusory or transitory like the world (*jagata*) and the living being (*jīva*). According to him, Brahman alone is unqualified, passive, static and attributeliess. On the otherhand, *māyā* is without beginning and inexplicable in words. There is no relation between *Brahman* and *māyā*. Everything else including the world and all beings is false and illusory; that is *māyā*, other than unqualified *Brahman*.

On the other hand, Śāṅkaradeva is a monotheist. His philosophical and religious thought is monotheistic in character. According to him, the Absolute or *Brahman* is essentially qualityless or *nirguṇa*. According to Śāṅkaradeva, the ultimate Reality is viewed in the three aspects of *Brahman*, *Paramātmā* and *Bhagavanta* or *Bhagavān*. Among these three, *Brahman* stands for the transcendental *Nirguṇa*, *Paramātmā* for the indwelling *Brahman* (*Antaryāmīn*) *Bhagavān* synthesises both the concepts of *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* – transcendence and immanent. In Śāṅkaradeva’s *bhakti-dharma*, Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Hari, Bhagavanta, Viṣṇu etc. all are used

synonymously – all of them refer to the same ultimate Reality, Who is one, without a second. The Lord dwells as *Paramātmā* in the *jagata* as well as in the *jīvas* – constituting everything of the sentient and the insentient world.<sup>65</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva's concept of *māyā* is different from the concept of *māyā* of Śaṅkarācāryas. According to him, everything that is, in opposition to *bhakti* is *māyā*. The real thing, which is covered by the unreal one is called *māyā*. *Māyā* is originated from *Brahman*, which is controlled by Him. But according to Śaṅkaradeva *māyā* evolves out of Viṣṇu; it is the active and magical power of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, all that we see, all that we hear, and think about are nothing but unreal like a dream. It is written in his *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*yata dekhā yata śunā                      yateka manata guṇā*  
*save māyā maya swapna sama /*  
*samste jagat hari                      jānibā niścaya kari*  
*gucāyu buddhira iṭo bhrama //*<sup>66</sup>

According to Śaṅkaradeva, one who is without *bhakti*, finds God different and gets attracted to God's *māyā*. It is expressed in *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* as –

*yijana bhakatihīna                      si dekhe harika bhinna*  
*harira māyāye tāka mohe /*  
*harise parama deva                      harikese karo seva*  
*srjantā pālantā deva hari //*  
*harināma hiye dhari                      harināma sadā smari*  
*tevese harira māyā tari //*<sup>67</sup>

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65. *Prācy-Prajñā* : Vol –II; P.4

66. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*: Śrī Kṛṣṇar Vaikuṇṭha Prayāṇa; verse-1816

67. *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*: Haramohana; verse-600.

Thus, according to Śaṅkaradeva and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, wherever there is God, there is no *māyā*. So, *Vaikuṇṭha* is also free from *māyā*. Śaṅkaradeva has written in his *Bhakti-Pradīpa* as –

*nāhi taite māyā                      kālara vikrama*  
*lobha moha krodha kāma /*  
*sadāya ānanda                      maya mahā sukha*  
*prasiddha vaikuṇṭha dhāma //*<sup>68</sup>

It means, there is no *māyā*, no might of time, greed, delusion, anger and desire in *Vaikuṇṭha*. There is always peace and happiness in *Vaikuṇṭha*.

Regarding the world or *jagat*, Śaṅkarācārya holds that the world is the *kārya* or the effect, when *Brahman* is the *kāraṇa* or the cause. So, the world or *jagat* is not different from *Brahman*. But the world has no existence without *Brahman*. The world hangs on *Brahman*, but it doesnot affect *Brahman*. To the onesided dependence of the world on *Brahman*; Śaṅkarācārya has used the example of the rope and the snake.<sup>69</sup>

Śaṅkaradeva also holds that the world or *jagat* is unreal; but it has the appearance of reality as it rests on *Brahman*. It is expressed in his *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* as follows –

*tumi satya brahma                      tomāta prakāśe*  
*jagata iṭo asanta /*  
*asanta jagatakhāna                      tomāta udbhava bhailā*  
*santa hena prakāśai sadāya //*<sup>70</sup>

It means, the unreal *jagat* is created out of God; but it always appears as real.

According to Śaṅkaradeva, the world or *jagat* is not other than *Brahman*.

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68. *Bhakti-Pradīp* : Verse- 294

69. Barua, Girish (2011) : *Śrīmanṭa Śaṅkaradeva and His philosophy*; P. 86.

70. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*: Vedastuti; verses- 1662-1669.

According to Śaṅkaradeva the individual selves or *jīvas* and *Brahman* are absolutely identical. Individual being is composed of the body and the self. The body is material object, which is an illusory appearance. The self or soul is in reality identical with *Brahman*. Śaṅkaradeva also holds that *Brahman* and the *jīvas* are essentially identical. The apparent difference between them is due to *māyā* or *avidyā*.

It is expressed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as follows –

*dehāte ācāhā mātra tumi dehahīna /*  
*yena agni thākante kāṣṭhato kari bhina //*  
*yena ghaṭa bhāṅgi gaile ghaṭara ākāśa /*  
*ākāśate līna hovai nāhi tāra nāśa //*<sup>71</sup>

It means, only God is in the body of the *jīva* without form, as fire residing in the fire-wood is different from the latter, as the space in a pot is not lost, it mingles with the wider space when the pot is broken.

## (ii) Rāmānuja and Śaṅkaradeva

Rāmānuja's philosophy is also non-dualism; *advaitavāda*; but it is *Viśiṣṭadvaita* – that is qualified non-dualism. Rāmānuja also holds that “All is *Brahman*”. But Rāmānuja's *Brahman* is not indeterminate. Brahman and *Īśvara* are the same entity and real. It has internal distinction, though not external one. That is, God has two integral parts – the *cit* (finite souls) and the *acit* (the matter). The parts are also real. According to Rāmānuja God possessed of infinite number of good qualities. *Brahman* is *saguṇa* and this *saguṇa Brahman* is Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, Who is the personal God of theism.

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71. Śrīmad Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa Book – XII; verse -205

Like Rāmānuja, Śaṅkaradeva's God is also *saguṇa*. Śaṅkaradeva does not make any distinction between *Brahman* and *Īśvara*. *Brahman* is *Īśvara*, Who is called Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. Both of Rāmānuja and Śaṅkaradeva could realise the truth that the ultimate shelter of man's religious values must be a concrete personality and that is Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa.

According to Rāmānuja, *māyā* is the wonderful power of God. It is the real creation or the internal unconscious primal matter in God, which is really transformed into the world. Śaṅkaradeva also holds that the word *māyā* does not make the world; It is not a mere *vivarta* of *Brahman*; rather, the world is a *pariṇāma* of *Brahman* and so it is real, which is shown by Rāmānuja also.

Rāmānuja accepts only a personal deity as the Supreme eternal reality. He shows the ideal of Vaiṣṇavite monotheism, which is also the way of Śaṅkaradeva. In Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇavism, it is seen that there appears to be a sort of resistance against the worship of other Gods, except the highest God – 'Nārāyaṇa', Who is the primal cause of all. It is also seen in Śaṅkaradeva's *Eka-Śaraṇa-Hari-Nāma-Dharma* that worship of other gods and goddesses are strictly prohibited, except Viṣṇu.

Rāmānuja does not believe in *jīvan-mukti*; he only believes in *videha-mukti*. But Śaṅkaradeva, like Śaṅkarācārya, believes in both *jīvan-mukti* and *videha-mukti*. Śaṅkaradeva expresses in his *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* supporting *jīvana mukti* as follows –

*viṣṇumaya dekhai yiṭo samaste jagata /*  
*jīvante mukuta hovai acira-kālata //*<sup>72</sup>

### (iii) Madhvācārya and Śaṅkaradeva

Madhvācārya, the founder of *Dvaitavāda*, believes in God as absolutely independent and matter and souls are absolutely dependent on God, Who is the perfect

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72. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*: Śrī Kṛṣṇar Vaikuṇṭha Prayāṇa; verse-1824

Lord. According to Madhva, Viṣṇu is the efficient cause and *prakṛti* is the material cause of the world. “Lakṣmī” is His consort. Madhva does not regard matter and souls as the part of God. They are different from each other and from God, Who is both immanent and transcendent. Śaṅkaradeva has also propagated the attributes of the unqualified Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Reality. But like Madhvācārya, Śaṅkaradeva does not hold that the self is wholly different from *Brahman*, because the self has meaning as being part of God.

In the philosophy of Madhva, the word *dvaita* means difference, which is five fold. These differences are –

- (i) between soul and God (ii) between soul and soul (iii) between soul and matter,
- (iv) between God and matter and (v) between matter and matter.

But in Śaṅkaradeva’s philosophy the Supreme reality is non-dual and is devoid of all kinds of differences.

In the *Bhaktiratnākara*, Śaṅkaradeva expresses the difference between *Īśvara* and *jīva*; again *Īśvara* is the controller of *māyā*, which is his power of consciousness. *Jīva* is ever mortified under the pressure of *māyā*. *Jīva* can be released on when it attains knowledge through devotion to God.<sup>73</sup>

Though in the *Bhaktiratnākara*, Śaṅkaradeva shows the difference between *Īśvara* and *jīva*, still he again maintains that both *Brahman* or *Īśvara* and *jīva* are not different from each other. It is expressed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as follows –

*yadyāpi tomāta kari jīva nohe bhinna /*  
*tathāpito bhailā prabhu tomāra adhīna //*<sup>74</sup>

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73. *Bhaktiratnākara*; chap.22; verse- 1-10.

74. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa* Book – X; verse -1698.

But Madhva does not admit the unity of *Brahman* or *Īśvara* and *jīva*. In other words, according to Madhva, both *Brahman* and *jīva* are different from each other.

Both Madhva and Śaṅkaradeva regard God (whether Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa) is the material and efficient cause of all creations. In Śaṅkaradeva's view, the devotee prefers *jīvanmukti* as it is considered to be superior to the *videhamukti*, though he admits both *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti*. Śaṅkaradeva gave greater importance to *bhakti* than *mukti*. In this respect, Madhva believes only in *videhamukti* and he lays great importance on *mukti* and not in *bhakti*.

At the end, it can be said that both Śaṅkaradeva and Madhvācārya are the propagators of Vaiṣṇava faith. Both of them regard that Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate Reality, Who is *Brahman* alone. It is expressed in the writings of Śaṅkaradeva as –

*brahma paramātmā bhagavanta eke tattva /  
ekereṣe tīni nāma lakṣaṇabhedaḥ* //

<sup>75</sup>

#### (iv) Nimbārka and Śaṅkaradeva

The philosophy of Nimbārka bears a very close resemblance to that of Śaṅkaradeva. His dualistic monism holds that the relation of God to soul and the world is one of identity in difference. To Nimbārka, the *Brahman*, as a transcendental principal, different from the soul and the world. They are also not different from God, because both depend on God.

Both Nimbārka and Śaṅkaradeva maintain that *Brahman* or God is the cause of all. This *Brahman* or *Īśvara* is the cause of origination, sustenance and destruction of the world. In other words, both of them regard that *Brahman* or *Īśvara* is the material

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75. *Nimi-Navasiddha-Saṁvāda*. verse – 181



cause and efficient cause of the world. According to Nimbārka, though the world is a *pariṇāma* of *Brahman*, yet *Brahman* remains changeless and does not lose its fullness or purity. *Brahman* manifests and conceals the world and the individual selves from and in itself. But in this respect, Śaṅkaradeva does not regard this world as a transformation or modification of *Īśvara*; rather it is expressed in his view that this world is only a manifestation of the Supreme Reality.<sup>76</sup>

Regarding the concept of *māyā*, Nimbārka says that *māyā* is a real power of God by which God manifests Himself and the world. According to Nimbārka, *māyā* is *tri-guṇātmaka*, which is not different from the *Prakṛti*. Śaṅkaradeva also says that *māyā* is the strong and magical power of God and there is no difference between *māyā* and *Prakṛti*. Śaṅkaradeva describes this *māyā* as God's *ardhakāya*. It is expressed in the *Anādi-Pātana* as –

*anādirūpīni īśvarara ardhakāya /*  
*vyakta bhaila mahāmāyā sṛṣṭika upāya ||*<sup>77</sup>

According to Nimbārka, the *jīvas* and the *jagat* are the parts of *Brahman*. As the individual selves (*jīvas*) and the world (*jagat*) are the modifications of the powers of *Brahman*, so the individual selves and the world are not imaginary; both of these are real. *Saccidānanda Brahman* enters into each and every part of the endless world in its essential *cit-aspect*, which are called the *jīvas*. On the other hand, the world is the transformation of *Brahman*'s bliss aspect. But *Brahman* never loses its independence, though it manifests itself into the *jīvas* and the world. In other words, the *Brahman*

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76. Prācyā-Prajñā, Vol. II : 1997; P. 50

77. *Anādi-Pātana*; verse-40

manifests itself through the number less spirits and matter without losing itself in them.<sup>78</sup>

In this respect, the views of Śaṅkaradeva resembles to some extent to the views of Nimbārka. For example - Śaṅkaradeva also regards that the individual selves and the world are the part of *Brahman*. So being a part of *Brahman*, the world cannot be false. But the world is not absolutely real according to Śaṅkaradeva. The world is the imagination of the mind in his view. He expresses it in the *Anādi-Pātana* as –

*manara kalpanā iṭo samaste saṁsāra* /<sup>79</sup>

It can be said that according to Śaṅkaradeva, this world is not as real as *Brahman* and as such it is destructible. Regarding *jīva* also, Śaṅkaradeva's view is something different from Nimbārka's view; because according to Śaṅkaradeva, *jīvas* are like the reflections of God in mind. But like Nimbārka, Śaṅkaradeva also says that God enters into the embodied creatures as individual selves. It is expressed by Śaṅkaradeva as –

*īśvarara pratibimba lāgiche manata /  
tāke buli jīva mana ere bhinna nui* /<sup>80</sup>

Again,

*jīva aṁśe tumi praveśilā gāwe gāwe* /<sup>81</sup>

According to Nimbārka, the worship of God in *mādhurya-bhāva* is very much effective in the path of devotion. In this type of devotion, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is worshipped together with His beloved Rādhā. But in this case, Śaṅkaradeva prefers *dāsya bhakti*

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78. Dasgupta, S.N. (1975) : *A History of Indian Philosophy*; Pp. 405-406

79. *Anādi-Pātana*. verse-66

80. Ibid : verse-67

81. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*: Vedastuti, v.1656

only. According to him, the goal of life is serve to God as His servant. Śaṅkaradeva has never felt the necessity of propounding the worship of any female form like Rādhā as the consort of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For Śaṅkaradeva, *bhakti* is not only the means; but it is the end or goal in itself. *Bhakti* is greater than *mukti*. *Bhakti* is not an end in itself; rather, it is only a means or way according to him.

### (V) Vallabhācārya and Śaṅkaradeva

Another Vaiṣṇava saint, Vallabhācārya, who propagated pure monism doesnot admit *nirguṇa* or attributeless *Brahman*. He was also contemporary to Śaṅkaradeva. According to Vallabha's Vaiṣṇavite philosophy, *Brahman* is independent reality and is identified with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Whose essence is *Sat, Cit* and *Ānanda*. For Vallabha, *Brahman* is the inherent and efficient cause of the world. The qualities of Lordship are manifested in God, as Being in matter and consciousness in the *jīva*. It is by His power of will or *Māyā śakti* that He manifest Himself as matter and as souls revealing His tripartite nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss in different proportions. Such a view of Vallabha, cannot be said either as *vivārata* or *pariṇāma*. It is something in between the two and is called *Avikṛtapariṇāmavāda*.

According to Vallabha, non-dual *Brahman* is the only Reality. This Supreme Reality is none other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is also called *Puruṣottama*, *Paramātmā*, *Bhagavat* etc. For Vallabha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *saccidānandarūpa*, omnipotent, omniscient, indestructible and independent. He is not *nirākāra* (formless); but *sākāra* (possessed of form). He can assume innumerable forms for the gratification of His devotees.<sup>82</sup>

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82. *Prācy-Prajñā*. Vol –II; (1997); P.48

Like Vallabhā, Śaṅkaradeva also regards that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only Reality, Who is the Absolute *Brahman*. He is *Parama Īśvara*, Who is also called *Nārāyaṇa*, *Viṣṇu*, *Puruṣottama*, *Bhagavān* etc. Śaṅkaradeva also maintains that this ultimate Reality is non-dual and devoid of all types of differences. In the view of Śaṅkaradeva, the *Parama Īśvara* or the Supreme Reality is *nirguṇa* (qualityless); but He becomes the possessor of various qualities out of compassion to His devotees. So, it may be said that, in Śaṅkaradeva's view also, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. According to Śaṅkaradeva, *Īśvara* is not formless (*nirākāra*); rather His form is unlimited, eternal and immeasurable.<sup>83</sup>

According to Vallabha, the world is a partial manifestation of *Brahman*, which is brought out through the power of *māyā*; it is also called the *līlā* of *Īśvara*. For Vallabha, this world is not different from *Brahman* in essence and so it is real. But he makes a difference between *jagat* and *saṁsāra*. Due to the ignorance of the individual selves, the *saṁsāra* is produced; and so it is not real, and is destructible. *Samśāra* is a mental state, while *jagat* is a physical or material state. In this respect, Śaṅkaradeva also holds that the world is a part of *Īśvara*. Being of part of *Īśvara*, the world cannot be false. According to Śaṅkaradeva, in reality, this world is *Brahmamaya*. In this world, only Kṛṣṇa exists as both the cause and the effect. So, the world is not different from *Brahman*. But in the view of Śaṅkaradeva, this world is a manifestation of the Supreme Reality just like the 'rope-snake'; and so, it is not absolutely real. It is expressed in the *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* as –

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83. *Prācy-Prajñā*. Vol –II; (1997); P.49

*yateka saṁsāra naya                      sabe svapna māyā maya*  
*antake keśata āche dhari* /<sup>84</sup>

According to Śaṅkaradeva though the world is not real, it appears as real, because it is the production of *sat Brahman*. It is expressed in the *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* as –

*asanta jagatakhāna                      tomāta udbhava bhaila*  
*santa hena prakāśai sadāya* /<sup>85</sup>

In Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, there is no any difference between the physical world and the mental world. In his view, the world or the *saṁsāra* is not real; but destructible. It is clearly expressed in his *Anādi Pātana* by Śaṅkaradeva as follows --

*manara kalpanā iṭo samaste saṁsāra /*  
*jāgana svapana nidrā tini vṛtti sāra* /<sup>86</sup>

Regarding the concept of the individual selves, Vallabha says that the *jīvas* are not different from *Brahman* in quality; but they are different from Brahman in quantity. The *jīvas* are atomic in size, while the *Brahman* is infinite. The individual selves or *jīvas* are real, because they are parts and manifestations of *Brahman*. Śaṅkaradeva also says that the *jīvas* are the part of *Brahman*. Sometimes he shows that the individual selves or jives are like the reflection of God in mind. Śaṅkaradeva in his *Bhaktiratnākara* says that *Parameśvara* is the controller of *māyā*; and this *māyā* controls all the individual selves or *jīvas*. *Īśvara* is the supreme bliss, while the *jīvas* experience happiness, sorrows etc. *Īśvara* is the *saccidānandarūpa*, Who is connected with knowledge, but the *jīvas* are enveloped by ignorance or *avidyā*. These differences between the *jīvas* and the *Īśvara* are not ultimate; because they are dependent on

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84. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. Balichalana; verse- 626

85. *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā*. *Vedastuti*; verse; 1669

86. *Anādi Pātana* : verse -66

*Īśvara*. The difference between these two is caused by *māyā* or *avidyā*. So, it is seen that Śaṅkaradeva does not agree with the view of Vallabha except the view that the *jīvas* are parts of *Brahman*.

From the above discussion, it may be said that Śaṅkaradeva is more a monotheist than a monist upholding the *Vaiṣṇavite* ideal of love and devotion. In it, *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa Brahman* is placed in the highest position. So, many similarities are found between Śaṅkaradeva and the *Vaiṣṇava Vedāntin* Philosophers like Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbarkā and Vallabha.

Śaṅkaradeva's religious faith is known as Neo-Vaiṣṇavism. It is mainly based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Śaṅkaradeva is not a philosophical enquirer. He does not endeavour to establish his theology on his own philosophical argument, but in his writings, both the mythical and mystical elements are synthesised in a very lucid manner.

Śaṅkaradeva is not an absolutist. He believes in God, Who has been transformed by Śaṅkarācārya to a mere unreality. For Śaṅkaradeva, God is real, because for *bhakti* or devotion, such a real God is necessary. In Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, God is found with attributes (*saguṇa*). According to Śaṅkarācārya, *saguṇa Brahman* is unreal, because He is nothing but *Īśvara*. But Śaṅkaradeva has personified this unreal God and presented Kṛṣṇa of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as being the ultimate reality.

Though Śaṅkaradeva identifies God with *Brahman*, still he presents a personal God with all auspicious qualities. For him Kṛṣṇa is the ideal God, Who can fulfill all

the human desires. In Śaṅkaradeva's religious faith, the impersonal *Brahman* without any quality transcends common man's devotional sentiments.

The doctrine of inner controller (*Antaryāmīn*) is a prominent feature in Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy. According to him, God has created the *jīvas* and the world and entered into them as the inner controller. Thus, He makes the *jīva's* experience pleasure and pain and also guides and protects them and the world.<sup>87</sup>

In *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā*, Śaṅkaradeva writes, God or Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme soul and is the one and the only Lord of the universe. Nothing exists without Him. He is the cause (*kāraṇa*) as well as the effect (*kārya*) of the creation. Just as ornaments made of gold do not differ in substance from gold itself, similarly, there is no distinction between God as the cause and God as the effect. Śaṅkaradeva bows down at the very outset of his work *Kīrttana-Ghoṣā* to the Lord Who is the cause of all incarnations.

If somebody asks to give an epithet to Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy, in this regard, it can be said that it is *Brahmeśvaravāda*, which term may be translated into English as *Absolutistic Theism*.<sup>88</sup>

So, it is seen that Śaṅkaradeva did not want to create a new philosophy to base his *bhakti dharma*. He adhered wholeheartedly to the *Vedāntic* tradition and worked in this line.

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87 Neog, Maheswar (1965): *Śaṅkaradeva and His Times*; P. 229.

88 . Barua Girish (ed.) (2011) : *Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and His Philosophy*; P.188