



**CONCEPT OF ULTIMATE REALITY IN
MULLA SADRA AND UPANISHADS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN

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BY

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Under the Supervision of

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ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)**

2016

Dedicated

to

My Mother and Father

(خجسته شاملو و رضا كهنډل)



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH, INDIA

Dated.....

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mr. Hossein Kohandel** has done his research work on “**Concept of Ultimate Reality in Mulla Sadra and Upanishads**” under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied that his thesis is original and has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any other degree. He has consulted all relevant works of Upanishads and Mulla Sadra along with other works on the subject.

In my view, Hossein Kohandel’s present work is original and fit to be submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (India).

(Prof. Jalalul Haq)
Supervisor

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**COURSE WORK AND PRE-SUBMISSION
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This is to certify that Mr. Hossein Kohandel, research scholar in Department of Philosophy has satisfactorily completed the course work and fulfilled the pre-submission presentation requirement, and also published articles in journals as part of his Ph.D program.

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PREFACE

The primary goal of this study is to compare and contrast the concept of ultimate reality in the philosophical systems of Upanishads and Mulla Sadra. To be more specific, this project is an examination focused on the metaphysical theories propounded by them. The mystical and theosophical systems constructed by Upanishads and Mulla Sadra are often viewed as being representative of absolutism found within their respective traditions. A number of studies has compared Upanishads with the systems of some or other western philosophers (such as Spinoza and Hegel) their focus being on the commonalities between these philosophical and mystical systems. The striking differences generally perceived between aspects of Hinduism and Islam have however somewhat prevented scholars to develop interest in the comparison of philosophies rooted in these two theological traditions. This study will be exploring the systems of these influential schools to ascertain if this approach is true.

Comparing Upanishads and Mulla Sadra also affords us the opportunity to make observations on ontological issues that mixed with religious mysticism and how certain esoteric ways of thinking functioning within their surrounding religious environments still generated fundamental similarities amidst the disagreements of detail. Comparison of them allows for useful insights into each of them and may also provide a better understanding of the nature of mysticism and mystical ontology in general, as well as methodological issues faced in the scholarly study of these subjects.

One should in general recognize that the conceptual systems constructed by the two schools are not perfectly new creations derived from the core of their respective

mystical traditions. Rather, they contain fundamental pre-existing principles, concepts, and teachings that are accepted across the cultures and the systematic philosophy constructed on their foundation has always shared themes and theses. Upanishads and Mulla Sadra are in that sense only two representative schools that partake in this universal thematic. Certain ideas in Upanishads and Mulla Sadra's body of work have however fundamental importance in their uniqueness which can be comprehended only from the perspective of their respective systems of thought. A few of these, in particular, will serve as our focal points.

I hope that by providing a fair and clear comparison of these two systems, Upanishads and Mulla Sadra, we can shed some new light on both schools and find something new and instructive from them. I have chosen to narrow down the scope of the comparison in this dissertation on Upanishads and Mulla Sadra to the concept of ultimate reality for the specific reason of the subject being somewhat inclusive and yet not too wide to cover all the myriad issues discussed in the respective works. Any comparison of entire philosophical systems is problematic in any case. The future scholars however can expand on it and look for similarities/dissimilarities in other areas of these two thought-systems.

Chapter - 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

(Part-I)

I- Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus on Ultimate Reality

The question of ultimate reality properly belongs to metaphysics which is known as the core discipline of philosophy along with epistemology or theory of knowledge. Philosophers across the cultural differentiations have tried to grapple with the issues of nature of the ultimate source of the physical-phenomenal reality and the process involved in the origination of latter from the former. The Indian and the Greek philosophical traditions discussed these issues much more systematically than others and were consequently the source of many other philosophical systems that emerged and flourished in their respective areas of influence. Upanishads gave rise to religions like Buddhism and Jainism (even if by reaction) whose reach was far and wide beside the various schools of Vedanta in India itself. Greek ideas were, similarly, foundational for both the Christian and Islamic philosophical theology. Mulla Sadra belonged to this Greco-Islamic legacy being an important representative of it along with Farabi, Ibn Sina, Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, Ibn Rushd etc.

An introductory background discussion of the Upanishadic texts will be attempted in the second part of this chapter. Presently, we start with a brief historical introduction to the metaphysical theories of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus to be followed by a discussion of the main themes of the philosophies

of Ibn Sina and Ibn Arabi who were Sadra's predecessors and to whose works he constantly refers while expounding his own ideas. It should be remembered here that for all the Islamic philosophers whether those preceding Sadra or those following him the Neo-Platonism – besides their religious books – was their chief source of inspiration. Their whole philosophy was, in fact, done within the framework provided by Plotinus and Porphyry who were themselves inspired by Plato and Aristotle.

A short trip to this Hellenist and Hellenist-Islamic tradition is therefore necessary for the understanding of Mulla Sadra's own philosophy.

As is known, the word 'metaphysics' is derived from the Greek words 'meta' meaning 'beyond' or 'after' and 'physics' which means physical world. It was first used as the title of one of Aristotle's works titled *Metaphysics* where the prefix 'meta' indicated that this work came after the book on physics. However, Aristotle himself did not call the subject of these books 'metaphysics'. He referred to it as first philosophy.¹

As a core discipline of philosophy metaphysics seeks to explain the fundamental nature of what is there and what is it like. The assumption here is that behind the appearances of things there is a reality which is not immediately revealed to our senses and which can be accessed only by our rational faculty. This 'ultimate' reality is supposed to be the origin or source of everything. Historically, the God, the mind or matter (sometimes both), the 'ideas' or Idea etc are found out by philosophers to be the ultimate reality. Metaphysical theorization has thus a history even as it is done by the individual philosophers

across the cultures and communities. Metaphysics began as wonder about universe but it was started systematically as a field of philosophical inquiry in Aristotle's above mentioned work. Metaphysics has been classified in following three parts

1. Ontology (enquiring what is the constituent of existence).
2. Cosmology (enquiring what is the structure of existence).
3. Cosmogony (enquiring what is the origin of existence).

Metaphysics discusses the issues of being and non-being, the nature of human existence and essence and also the general problem of transcendence and immanence. It also discusses the problem of reality and appearance of change and permanence, of mind and body, time and space, freedom and determinism and problem of causality etc.

“...that metaphysical science is concerned with beings as such, is the study of being qua being. The special sciences isolate a particular sphere of being, and consider the attributes of being in that sphere; but the metaphysician does not consider being of this or that particular characteristic, e.g. as living or as quantitative, but rather being itself and its essential attributes as being.”²

After the pre-Socratic thinkers like Thales, Anaximander etc, Parmenides is the first philosopher who began a systematic discussion on the metaphysical problems. He is, accordingly, called the father of metaphysics. According to him, Being is unchanged and permanent. He said that destruction of universe is impossible because the universe was and is and will be. Universe cannot be created from nothing and reality is not just appearance. He also believed that the universe, thought and speech are related together. He however makes a

distinction between speech and thought.³ He omits time from universe which is one big problem in Parmenides' metaphysics. Plato later discussed the idea of Parmenides in his book Republic. He agreed that the reality is permanent and not subject to change. But this permanence and non-changeability belongs to what he called the world of ideas.

According to Plato, the world that appears to senses is finite and unreal. But there is another world that is called the world of forms or ideas that is infinite and changeless. Everything is changeable in nature like water bubbles that are not permanent and always changing. Beyond the material world are 'Models' or 'archetypes' that are eternal and immutable. These models are patterns or samples of the things which are in material world. They themselves belong to a world beyond. All the individual things of a class are dissimilar and yet they are same in some vital respects for otherwise they would not be members of that class. For example, all horses are not same and yet they are commonly given the name 'horse'. There are countless horses in the world all different from each other but the form of horse is one. The same applies to all other things such as 'table' 'chair' 'tree' 'man' and also concepts such as 'goodness', 'love', 'human' etc. These are all 'ideas' and Plato's theory is accordingly called theory of Idea or Ideas.⁴

In theory of knowledge Plato believed that we are not able to have true knowledge of material world because it is non-durable and changing all the time. Human body and senses are part of the system of becoming and so our senses being in a state of continuous change cannot have true knowledge. True

cognition is obtained only by logic and reason. It proceeds from the objects that are absolute and eternal like those of mathematics to abstract concepts such as 'white', 'color', 'quality' etc. We should also know that our soul had been created before coming to material world and the world of eternal ideas had been cognized by soul before coming into body. The real knowledge is not about learning but remembering the ideas implanted in our soul since birth or even before birth.⁵

Aristotle who came after Plato raised two main objections to this theory. Firstly he said that Plato's theory discusses the nature of things that are unreal in being the copies of actual things, and he is not able to provide any explanation of the existence of things and changes in those concrete things. Secondly, Plato's theory of forms creates a dualism between the world of intelligible ideas and material world and is not able to prove how sensible things and intelligible forms are related together.⁶

Aristotle himself does not agree with separation of the form or essence of a thing from the actual existent thing. Anything, any individual particular substance, a frog or dog or man, is a unity. The actual things cannot be apart from their essences. There is a unity of form and matter. The form of a thing is immanent in it. It is the universal and eternal form or essence which the thing shares with all other things of the same type or species. Matter is the physical stuff of the particular substance which is given shape by the substance's form. Matter and form are the inseparable aspects of every individual substance. With

his suggestion of the inseparability of matter and form, Aristotle is able to overcome Plato's dualism of the intelligible and sensible worlds.

For Aristotle, thus, the intelligible form and sensible matter-the universal and the particular-are united in individual things. Every individual thing consists of formed matter. The form is the purpose or end which the matter serves: the oak tree is the purpose or end which the matter of the acorn serves. Here Aristotle identifies matter and form with what he calls the potential and actual. Matter is the potentiality of the thing while the form is its actuality. Reality of everything is based on its form. Death and birth of a thing means the changing of one form into another. Matter is permanent and never separate from its form. There are four causes for coming into existence of everything. These are:

1. Material cause which is what a thing is made of. For example: soil is the material cause of clay.
2. Formal cause means that which makes the material to be organized. For example: the shape of a building.
3. Efficient cause is that by whose activity an effect is produced.
4. Final cause is the goal or the purpose which a thing aspires to realize at the end of causal process.⁷

The distinction between actual and potential is very important because it enables Aristotle to accept the theory of evolution-a theory which many Muslim philosophers also accepted and an echo of which is found in the Samkyha school of Indian philosophy which rivals the Upanishadic system.

According to Aristotle, concept of change does not mean that one existence is replaced by another. It rather means transition of one existence to another when the two are substantially related to each other. For example, the clay can be changed into a clay-pot because the two are substantially same. But a horse can never be changed into a deer because one species is never changed to another species. This act of changing happens under the principle of potential becoming the actual. It means one stable material should be there, for otherwise how a thing can change. Potentiality is a state between being and not- being or existence and non-existence. When a thing is in its potential state it neither exists nor does not exist. Conversely, it can be said to be a state of both existence and non-existence. It is non-existence because the actual thing is yet to come into existence. But it is also existence because only an existence can bring a thing to come into existence. Nothing comes out of nothing. The potentiality is what Aristotle calls matter while the actuality he calls as form. Matter in itself does not have form. It is without form and this deficiency leads it to achieve to its ideal which is form.⁸

After Plato and Aristotle, the philosopher who made a decisive influence on the subsequent history of metaphysical speculation was Plotinus who, in turn, decisively influenced the entire tradition of Islamic philosophy, not least the philosophy of Mulla Sadra himself.

Plotinus was born in Egypt and spent much of his time in Alexandria. He heard about many philosophers such as Ammonias Saccus who his disciples regarded as a god. Ammonias knew about philosophies of Persia and India and his

philosophy was a mystical philosophy. Plotinus also learned about Persian and Indian philosophy. After Plotinus' death, his student Porphyry gathered his 54 treatises that are now published under the title *Enneads*. All the western mystical philosophy after Plotinus was influenced by his ideas and he was a model for Jewish, Muslim and Christian theology in middle ages such as that of Augustine, Ibn Sina etc.

The philosophy of Plotinus is based on three principles which are called by him the principles of oneness, soul and intellect. The One is eternal and foundational principle of all things. It is the cause of everything and is itself uncaused. It is named One to suggest its absoluteness. The next to One is the realm of the (Platonic) forms and the real or primary being. This primary being is universal. The forms exist as the thoughts of intellect whose thinking of the forms is described as self-thoughts, and its knowledge of them is a kind of self-knowledge. Plotinus claims that the forms are internal to the intellect. Intellect is characterized by a greater unity than the sensible world. This is first of all brought out by the fact that the intellect is non-spatial and non-temporal and hence free from the dispersion that has to do with space and time.

After intellect comes the soul which itself is followed by beings of both spiritual and material world. Plotinus has famously given the idea of three 'hypostases' of soul. The first of these is the soul which remains in the intelligible realm. The other two are the world-soul and the souls of individuals. Within the two latter types of soul Plotinus further distinguishes between a higher and lower soul corresponding to a distinction between soul

which operates directly through a body and the soul which does not do so (this distinction coincides with the distinction between rational and non-rational souls). Soul at the intelligible level is responsible for the sensible world. The lower soul, sometimes referred to as nature (physic), produces pure matter, inorganic bodies and ordinary living things, including the sensible cosmos itself which, according Plotinus, is a supreme organism.⁹

According to Plotinus intelligible world is perfect and eternal, unchanged and absolute while the sensible world is not. The latter is a reflection of the eternal world and contains nothing which doesn't have its origins there.

Plotinus recognizes human being by his higher soul. The intelligible realm is different from body and survives the body. The human being is something between two worlds, the sensible and intelligible.

Those who try to realize the intelligible world do so by way of philosophy. Sense perception is the process of soul's understanding of something in the sensible realm but soul recognizes only intelligible realm. If the soul was to know about sensible realm, it should appropriate the intelligible objects. Plotinus says the goal of soul is to liberate itself from body and join the intelligible realm. This is also written in philosophy of Plato's middle dialogue.

Plotinus had a great impact on medieval philosophical theology of both Christian and Islamic variety. Ennead was known in Islamic world as the theology of Aristotle by mistakes. The Muslim philosophers, following the Neo-Platonists, defined knowledge as intellect's grasp of immaterial forms, the pure essences or universals, that constitute the natures of things, and thought

that human happiness is achieved only through the intellect's grasp of such universals. They stressed that for knowledge of the immaterial forms the human intellect should take recourse to intuitive faculty even as it relies on senses for the knowledge of material things.¹⁰

II- Ibn Sina: Theory of Existence and emanation

The early reception of Hellenistic philosophy was mixed in the Muslim world. It was initially seen as suspiciously foreign or heathen and was generally dismissed as dangerous. In the mid-eighth century, however, the picture changed somewhat. With the advent of rationalist theologians, the Mutazilites, the entire discourse of Muslim philosophers was affected by the dialectic method and the quasi-mystical speculation of Neo-platonism. The philosophers of the ninth and tenth centuries came to believe that Greek philosophy was a form of liberation from the shackles of dogma or blind imitation (Taqlid). For Al Kindi and Al Razi and all the rest, Greek ideas were completely consistent with the philosophy of religion and mysticism. They were rather the highest expressions of wisdom (Hikma) that the revealed words of scripture esoterically concealed-to be deciphered by the mystical contemplation within the framework of Platonic and Neo-platonic systems of ideas.

Like other Islamic philosophers, Ibn Sina was also a philosopher of existence or being (Wujud). According to him, being in itself is the cause of all particular existents without being reduced to a genre common to all of them. Being is higher than distinctions and polarizations and it is also the cause of the world of plurality. Existence is the reality of each thing, as it is the source of all

goodness and beauty as well as the cause of all perceptions. He differentiated between quiddity and existence and developed an ontological system based upon the tripartite division between the necessary, contingent and impossible beings. He said that only in the necessary being or God are essence and existence inseparably united, whereas for all other beings unity and existence are only accidents added to their quiddity. The necessary being whose essence and existence are one is pure truth and pure goodness; it is the source and root of all beings.

Necessary being exists by itself, self-caused and uncaused; it has an internal necessity about its presence such that its non-existence is impossible to conceive. The contingent existence, on the other hand, admits both the possibility of being and non-being and always depends upon some other being for its existence. The necessary being is, moreover, subsumes of simple substances while the realm of contingent existence is composed of bodies of the sublunary region that come into existence and pass away. If this latter type of existence is to be called the physical world of plurality and multiplicity, the first category applies to God as it is called in religious parlance.¹¹

Ibn Sina did not believe in the direct creation of world by God but subscribed to what was essentially a Neo-platonic theory of emanation in which the non-simple entities proceeded from the simple and single reality of God through some intermediary beings which were simple and necessary in respect to their relation to God but contingent and multiple in themselves. The flow of emanation effuses from the necessary being towards the world. In this flow, the

first intelligence emanates from the Necessary Existence. Considered from the contingency aspect, a heavenly body emanates from the first intelligence, whereas second intelligence emanates from the aspect of the necessary nature of this intelligence. The initial emanations are followed by a series of similar emanations in which intelligences and heavenly bodies are generated. Ibn Sina asserts that the emanation of the heavenly substances terminates at the point where that heavenly intelligence is generated from which no heavenly body can emanate. On some occasions he refers to this last heavenly intelligence specifically as the 'active intelligence'.¹²

The agent intellect is the producer of the forms of material things on earth. It plays an important role in generating life on earth. The agent intellect does not produce another lower intelligence since the creative power of the necessary being cannot be communicated to less perfect beings. Ibn Sina says that there is a difference in producing something from out of nothing and producing something by emanation from one's thought. In the latter case there is a resemblance between the agent and the product: this resemblance is not to be found in the first case.¹³

The necessary existence cannot be contingent but first intellect is both necessary and contingent. In its latter aspect, it generates multiplicity. The plurality has a triadic structure as the first intellect focuses both on the God and on itself. First Intellect is the necessary bridge between the necessary being and the rest of the universe. Ibn Sina uses the theory of emanation to account for the multiplicity of the universe. First intellect is the link between transcendent

God and the phenomenal world. The emanations happen eternally. The universe, in other words, eternally emanates from God. They are co-eternal with each other. First intellect is the prime motor of creation that must be the contemplation of the One. According to S.H. Nasr:

“The first intellect (al-aql al-awwal) is contingent in essence and necessary by virtue of the “cause of causes,” (‘illat al-‘ilal) or the necessary Being Itself. But because the first Intellect is contingent, it generates multiplicity within itself. By intellection of the Divine Essence, it gives rise to the Second Intellect, and by intellection of its own essence to two beings which are the Soul of the first heaven and its body. One may say that First Intellect has three forms of knowledge: 1. Knowledge of the Essence of the Necessary Being, 2. Knowledge of its own essence as a being necessary by virtue of another being (wajib bil-ghair), 3. Knowledge of its own essence as a contingent being.”¹⁴

As just said, the First Intellect is the link between God and the rest of the universe. Similarly, tenth intellect is the major link between the celestial and sublunary worlds. It is an active intellect in the sense that it sends out an undifferentiated range of forms and thoughts. The tenth Intellect, by its own activity, reduces the direct dependence of world on God. According to Ibn Sina, it is the Active intellect that also produces our souls.¹⁵

The Active Intellect, the last incorporeal Intellect in the series of emanations, is such that its power cannot produce any heavenly body. It has the power only to produce the substratum-matter and forms for the sublunary worlds. The Active Intellect generates the prime matter (hayula) with four forms of simple bodies (fire, air, water and earth) imprinted on it and also the three kinds of soul. Moreover, before it emanates from the Active Intellect, the prime matter

undergoes different movements of the heavenly bodies causing different temperaments and abilities in prime matter, as a result of which the four forms of fire, air, water and earth are attributed to it.

The Active Intellect generates sublunary matter, sublunary forms and intelligible thought. But not all the forms are same, since the forms which matter receives depend upon the composition of the elements. And hence we see the variety of the forms received by plants, animals and human bodies. The more harmonious the mixture the more perfect the result. The soul, moreover, has a hierarchy of beings. The animal soul falls between the vegetative and the human souls while the latter stands between the earthly and the heavenly worlds. The plant, the animal and the human souls emanate from the Active Intellect, and it is not possible for any other soul to emanate from it after the rational soul.¹⁶

The important point to be remembered is that for Ibn Sina the matter, no matter how pure or perfect, cannot produce or originate life or the soul-principle. Only when the matter is at a certain stage to receive the form of life, then is a soul, suitable for that body, added to it ab extra by the World Soul'. In this sense, each of the souls is considered a faculty of the World Soul. The human soul stands at the highest level of the hierarchical order; its relation to the Active Intellect can be compared with the soul of each sphere which has with the heavenly intellect.¹⁷

Ibn Sina followed the Neo-platonist view that from one only one effect can proceed. He says that the God directly or immediately produces only one

effect, the first intelligence. Metaphysically, he believed that every effect, when taken in relationship to its cause, is necessary. The effect necessarily follows given a sufficient cause for that effect. God is the sufficient cause for the existence of the universe. God always existed since necessary being always existed. Ibn Sina explains God as absolute transcendence; God is the source of being, love and knowledge.

Ibn Sina, like Plotinus, affirms the unity and transcendence of God. God's essence is simple and indivisible. Any attempt to describe it may violate his transcendence. The essence of God cannot be split into matter and form or into soul and body. Ibn Sina describes attributes of God as his properties. Properties can describe, but cannot define the essence. He attributes qualities to God without affecting his absolute unity. The attributes explain the nature of the being of God.

There are three ways to describe the God. The first is the explanation through negation. It means abstracting from him what cannot be applied to his being. The second is the way of description that involves adding what can be applied to his existence. Third way of describing is through adding and abstracting. Ibn Sina believes that God is the only existence whose essence is identical with his existence. It means that his existence comes from within his essence. Except God the existence of all other beings is added to their essence. In other words, existence of all other beings is in dependency while the existence of God is essential in itself.

According to Ibn Sina love is implanted in all things. Love emanates from God. It is the cause of the existence of all things. Love comes from God first to the Intellects and then, indirectly, to all other things. Love is the manifestation both of essence and existence. Ibn Sina calls love as the essence of God. We can say the same thing to the goodness also. Goodness also comes from God to all existence and makes the world to be well ordered. The origin of knowledge is in God. All intellects receive an overflowing of knowledge. This knowledge makes them know themselves and know God. Love, goodness and knowledge flow from God to all humanity.¹⁸

According to Ibn Sina, all the essences of things and all knowledge reside in the transcendental intellect, called otherwise the active Intellect. It bestows upon the human intellect true knowledge of things. The divine is pure and immaterial. It cannot have a direct epistemic relation with the particular things to be known. God knows things only in their universal aspects. God only knows *kinds* of existents and not individuals. The soul is separated and independent from body and is capable of abstraction. Following Aristotle, Ibn Sina defines soul as the perfection of the body. Soul is non-corporeal substance. According to him soul is particular to each individual. He locates intellect in the soul only.

Ibn Sina believed in the three types of souls: vegetal, animal and rational. Reproduction, growth and nutrition are the functions of vegetative souls. Motion and perception belong to animal soul. Reason is the function of rational soul. In higher creatures, lower functions co-exist with higher functions

although Ibn Sina locates the operation of rational soul in humans only. He believes that a unique individual is constituted by soul's attraction for the body. Soul and body together form a unit.

As to the question whether souls pre-exist bodies he replies that embodied souls by their very nature cannot have individual identity. Souls are separate non-corporeal substances. They cannot pre-exist the bodies. Ibn Sina doesn't have affirmative attitude about reincarnation. But he believed in the resurrection of soul. He recognizes intellect as the locus of thought occurring in the soul. Like Aristotle he says that ideas come to the intellect; they are not innate as Plato said. According to him the practical intellect actualizes or moves the soul by desire. The material intellect reveals the essences of the material objects. The habitual intellect enables the soul to gain knowledge. The actual intellect is the faculty of thinking. The active intellect brings things from potentiality to actuality. According to Ibn Sina there is some distinction between universal intellect and the intellect of the cosmos. The universal intellect is the sum total of expressions of the intellects of all people. It does not have a real separate being. Its existence is manifest in all individuals.¹⁹

In Ibn Sina's philosophy, creation takes place as a result of God's intellection of his own essence. Intellection, in conjunction with the knowledge of his essence, brings about the existence of all things. The act of intellection is eternal. The manifestation of the universe is because of God's eternal knowledge of himself. Creation is the giving of being by God as well as the radiation of intelligence. Each existent is, therefore, related to God by its being as well as by its

intelligence. Ibn Sina has identified God with the source of overflowing light in some of his less well-known works. The being and light are ultimately the same. To give existence is to illuminate them with the Divine Light which is the same as his being.

The critical question here is whether Ibn Sina, who upheld the emanation theory, adhered to the religious doctrine of creation. One view on this is that there is really no contradiction between the theory of emanation of Ibn Sina and the Islamic doctrine of creation. Hossein Nasr, for example, says that creation is like emanation. In his opinion, Ibn Sina does not step out of the Islamic perspective in his vision of the cosmos or in the doctrine of divine intellection.²⁰

Ibn Sina, however, diverges somewhat from orthodox Islamic doctrines in viewing the power of God as existing in a predetermined logical structure. In the Islamic doctrine God is absolute determination as well as absolute freedom. He is the source of all qualities. Hence his will cannot be limited to finite systems. In Ibn Sina's philosophy there is an explicit assertion that the necessary being does not produce the world in a determined manner. He affirms that the will of the God cannot in any case be changed by consciousness, choice, or deliberation.

This will of God is equated with His knowledge of the good universal world order, or of the general laws that best regulate the order of the universe. According to Ibn Sina, the God is governed by the physical and moral laws of the universe. He cannot act in an arbitrary manner. The structure of the laws

governing the universe is independent of the will of the God. The apparent conflict observed between the Islamic theory of creation and the Ibn Sinian view thus is extended over the issue of determinism. It results from different views on whether or not God's intellection is determined. In Ibn Sina's metaphysical system, the intellection itself is determined by the quality of the absolute perfection attributed to the necessary being. It can be argued that this determinism undermines the notion of a God that created the world. In this sense, Ibn Sina's necessary being does not seem to satisfy the criteria for the creation theory as it questions both God's logical independence from the world and His constitution being totally different from that of man. For Ibn Sina, moreover, necessary being is not directly related to persons and the world. It acts only through intermediaries. This goes against the conventional view regarding God's ability to intervene in the order of the world. Further, emanation as explained by Ibn Sina does not take place at a specified time but is rather an eternal process. This is, again, a view that seemingly goes against the idea of creation.²¹ Ibn Sina's emanationism is more or less a mystical system. The ultimate being, in mystical system, is related to persons by the emanation of the contingent realm. Secondly, it is possible for persons to relate to the ultimate being by means of a mystical union.

III- Ibn Arabi: Unity of existence

The philosophy of Ibn Arabi is called the philosophy of unity of existence or oneness of being (Wahdat al-Wujud). Ibn Arabi wrote many books the most famous of them being Futuhat al- Makkiyya and Fusus al-Hikam. Ibn Arabi

was both a thinker and a mystic. This meant that while formulating his philosophical views he took help both from his speculative faculty as well as his mystic intuition. The theory of *Whadat al-Wujud* is connected with Ibn Arabi because before him the mystics of Islam didn't use such a word.

According to Ibn Arabi there are two kinds of existence: the first is being-qua-being which is absolute and omnipresent. It is same as what Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and others called necessary existence or God. The other kind of beings were the beings or existent things experienced in the phenomenal world that were also called contingent beings. According to Ibn Arabi the existence of God cannot be separated from his essence and it is from him that all things of created world derive their existence.²²

It means that in absolute terms there is only one reality or *Wujud* the rest of things only having contingent existence or relative nonexistence or potentiality that is in the mind of God but that nevertheless exists. To say that God alone is real implies that other things have neither being nor non-being perfectly or that they are both being and non-being at the same time. It may also be mentioned that for Ibn Arabi being or existence is not only a theoretical concept but is also a perfect or pure consciousness. The universe or objective world on the other hand is defined as a reflection or shadow of spiritual world comprising of God and his sacred names or attributes. As an emanation from the God it also can be regarded as the manifestation of his being.

Ibn Arabi believed that all existent beings and all their components subsist through God, and it is through this dependence that God is considered as the

essential Wujud. In many instances created beings are said to exist within the ‘Sea of Necessity’, meaning that it is only through God’s *wujud* that beings can come into existence.²³

Ibn Arabi further said that existence or Wujud can also be used to denote the essence of God; in this usage Wujud implies our inherent inability to truly realize how this essence is manifested throughout the universe in its apparent plurality. As Chittick says:

“What do we know about wujud as wujud? First, we know nothing. Or rather, we know that wujud is indefinable and inaccessible, because we can know it only to the extent that we have it.”²⁴

Wujud can be regarded as the underlying fabric of reality that supports all of creation; at no point can it be fully conceptualized nor can it be divided or compounded. Wujud is the structural make-up of God’s creative manifestation. Furthermore, the disclosure of Wujud is never-ending and non-repeating, meaning that God’s cosmic self-disclosure is an endless display of His unity, which is perpetually renewed at every instant. The perpetual and non-repeating disclosure of Wujud points to God’s omnipotence; moreover, the all-encompassing nature of Wujud points to the singularity of God and the non-existence of anything is other than God. The word Wujud can be used as a blanket term that signifies humanity, God, creation, and the potentiality of all future creations.²⁵

Beside the notion of Wujud, another issue that plays a prominent role in the metaphysical discussion of Ibn Arabi is the question of divine names. In this

context the first thing to be realized is that Names are considered as being different from the words used to denote them. Just as our notion of God does not encompass the essence of God, the usage of the name 'Power' does not embody the totality of God's power. The second point is that, the names are not independent entities that stand outside of God. Chittick stresses that the names should be considered as relationships and not as existent entities.²⁶

Each divine name acts in a twofold way: by referring to the essence and then to the particular relationship the name comes to specify the manifest existence. Another significant point here is that what a divine name comes to represent is its reality. To be more specific, the microcosmic representation that a Name displays is rooted within the higher essence of that power (the transcendent aspect of the Name). The last thing is that particular names have essence that determines how the names relate and function within manifest being. A divine name specifies a particular manifestation of God, and it also goes back to its transcendent roots.

Ibn Arabi develops his philosophy about the theory of divine names by hierarchically ranking the names in accordance to the reality or level to which they point. The doctrine of levels isn't based on or pertains to the essence and does not introduce any form of division whatsoever; rather, it is the nonexistent aspects in creation that superficially manipulate the hierarchy of names. The divine essence at the highest level of transcendence is called Ahadiyya (Oneness). (This can be compared with Brahman as Tat Ekam that was spoken of in Upanishads.) According to Ibn Arabi the words 'Wahid' and 'Ahad' refer

to ultimate reality that is called God in the Quran and ‘unity of existence in the philosophy respectively.’²⁷

The reality can be considered as having three levels: the absolute existence to be called God, his divine names, and the world of phenomena. In the state of absolute existence God transcends all the experiences and knowledge. In this state he is also indefinable, indescribable, incomparable, unconditioned and undetermined; he is also something which is independent of universe. But at the level of divine names he is awareness of everything, a being with attributes and having relation with the world of creation which itself is determined and differentiated. Ibn Arabi said that we are the product of God’s unconditional generosity toward the divine names which demand creation as their logical complement. According to him manifestation means ‘sustained through being (God)’ and it is through the diversity of Names that each existent thing takes on its particular characteristics. Divine names are reflected throughout the universe and it is the appearance or manifestation that demonstrates these individual Names back onto God (for God is the origin of the Names and the source for all ‘loaned’ existence).²⁸

Perfect Names that get reflected back onto God are more representative of his totality when compared to other names, and it is through this provisional order that the universe and man come to display the hierarchy of God’s names. The term ‘provisional’ is important because the hierarchy of names does not possess its own continued existence and will eventually be folded back into the indivisible essence. The transience of manifestation witnessed throughout the

universe, and most notably in human beings, can be partially credited to a change in the reflected names. This though does not mean that every existent thing can choose what divine name it will reflect; rather, Ibn Arabi credits humans as the only beings that are able to reflect all the Names, as he says:

“If there were no ranking in degrees in the cosmos, some of the levels would remain inoperative (mu’attal) and uninhabited. But there is nothing in existence inoperative; on the contrary, all of it is fully inhabited. Every level must have inhabitants whose properties will be in keeping with that level. Hence He made some parts of the cosmos more excellent than others.”²⁹

It can be seen that the things occupying the base levels do not have the potential to display the vast array of Names, unlike human beings that have inherited this ability from their primordial ancestor, Adam. Men, Ibn Arabi claims, have an inherent ability to reflect the Names back onto God (and with the achievement of their theomorphic potential, these people gain the ability to reflect all the Names back onto God), yet it is impossible for the Essence of God to be comprehended or compacted so that it could be represented in its totality.³⁰

The summation of all levels and the essence can only be referenced through the name ‘Allah’, which is the most comprehensive of all the names. Ibn Arabi credits the name Allah with certain transcendental qualities that extend beyond the bounds of its linguistic articulation. No other name, save Allah, can be used as a capstone designation for the Essence and the Levels. Ibn Arabi claims that the supremacy of name Allah derives from our ability to understand this ‘Name’.

The manifested reality of both subjective-personal and cosmic levels is characterized by Ibn Arabi as the 'veil'. This veil, according to him, has both immanent (Tashbih) and transcendent aspects (Tanzih). Furthermore, the veils hold a precarious position as being both real and unreal at the same time. Chittick said that Ibn Arabi considered the veils as the manifestation of God, which grants the veils an aspect of reality.³¹

It is however important to realize that the veil is not radically distinguished or separated from the God of whom it is a manifestation. The dualistic view of the world is based on ignorance. The unrealized individual does not understand this immanent disclosure and makes wrongful judgments in ignorance.³²

There is in fact an underlying unity between the veil and the veiled. There is no veil other than the God himself who is his own manifestation. It follows that the veils facilitate existence and therefore cannot be completely escaped. It is the permanence within the manifestation that makes the veil real; though, due to misunderstanding, it is often taken as something other than God. It is through this mistake that the veils introduce the idea of unreality into our worldview.³³

“Since His Entity is identical with the curtain, nothing veils us save the fact that we make what we see a curtain, so our aspiration attaches itself to what is behind the curtain, that is, the curtained.”³⁴

The veils possess a degree of immanence because they are partially composed of God's direct manifestation. Yet this immanence is also laden with signs of transcendence (Tanzih). Transcendence, indicated through the veils, is in

respect to the fact that the veils point to the transcendental Essence that is beyond the immediate representation and human comprehension.³⁵

Ibn Arabi further develops his idea on veiling by positing that we, as human beings, are veils onto ourselves. The veiling that occurs through human subjectivity is due to our mortal nature, which has subjectivity at its base. Ibn Arabi believed that the human individuality also possesses the immanent and transcendent marks of God that accompany all veils:

“So He has made you identical with His curtain over you. If not for this curtain, you would not seek increase in knowledge of Him. You are spoken to and addressed from behind the curtain of the form from which He speaks to you. Consider your mortal humanity. You will find it is identical with your curtain from behind which He speaks to you. For He says, ‘it belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil’ [42:51]. Hence, He may speak to you from you, since you veil yourself from you, and you are His curtain over you.”³⁶

Ibn Arabi categorically said that it is the inability to recognize God’s essential Wujud, including his unity with one’s own self, which leads to the dualistic worldviews.

However, human beings have an inherent knowledge (or a longing) that leads them to seek the transcendental source behind the manifestation. An end to this longing is not reached through the rational faculties, nor can the veils be comprehended through the employment of logic. It is rather, the imaginative faculty inherent within each person that enables him to access the Barzakh (the intermediary place) between the immanent veils and the transcendental source to which the veils point. Mirroring this transcendent/immanent barzakh is Ibn

Arabi's concept of the veils, which possesses degrees of unreality and Ultimate Reality.³⁷

IV- Shahabuddin Suhrawardi: Illuminationism

Shahāb ad-Dīn Yahya Ibn Habash Suhrawardi (1154-1191A.D.) was an Iranian thinker and founder of the school of Illuminationism or Ishraq which is one of important schools of Islamic philosophy and mysticism that combined Zoroastrian and Platonic ideas. He is among the pioneers of the esoteric movement called Batiniyyah that belonged to an extremist sub-sect of Shias. Suhrawardi was given the title Shaikh al-Ishraq or 'Master of Illumination' and Shaikh al-Maqtul 'the Murdered Master', for the fact of his being executed by orthodox Sunni rulers. Sadra's apparently heretical views were not even approved by mainstream Shias and even Mulla Sadra describes him as one who revived the theosophy of pre-Islamic (Iranian) sages. Suhrawardi wrote his works in both Persian and Arabic languages. He wrote four long treatises, the first three dealing with Peripatetic philosophy with certain modifications and the last with Illuminationist wisdom proper. These books, written in Arabic are Talwihat, Muqawwamat, Mutarahat, and the Hikmat al-Ishraq. He also wrote shorter treatises mainly dealing with the subject of mystic's journey leading an initiate to his final illumination. Suhrawardi also wrote commentaries on the earlier philosophical texts and sacred scripture. He translated into Persian the Risalat al-Tair of Ibn Sina and wrote commentary in Persian upon Ibn Sina's Isharat, and the treatise Risalah fi Haqiqat al-Ishq which is based on Ibn Sina's Risalat al-Ishq. His works, finally, include his commentary upon the verses of

the Qur'an and on the Hadith which is of a very exclusive type in the sense that many verses and statements of prophet are given an allegorical interpretation in keeping with his esoterist ideas.³⁸

Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi made famous the school of illuminationism or Ishraq and established it as a strong philosophical tradition in the Islamic East. The metaphysical theory of this school is centered around the idea of 'divine lights'. It is the core principle of Suhrawardi's ontology and cosmology that puts a vision of light and darkness as covering and comprehending all dimensions of reality. The philosophy of Suhrawardi consists of his discussion of issues related to immaterial realities, the highest and purest of which is of course the ultimate reality that is called the light of lights or Light itself. This principle of light disrupts the ontology of Peripatetics by rendering irrelevant the idea of difference between quiddity or essence and existence in contingent beings. Being influenced by Aristotle, Ibn Sina favored the primacy of quiddity over existence, considering the latter as an abstract concept. Suhrawardi denied the Peripatetic's logical difference between the two concepts, insisting that the concept of being is added to quiddity. According to Suhrawardi, concepts such as quiddity and existence known as a priori and real were 'merely mental considerations (i'tibari) with no corresponding reality'.³⁹

As the distinction between essence and existence is considered notional, the distinction between necessary and contingent beings become related to the question whether a being possesses light in itself or light from other than itself. According to Suhrawardi the idea of light has two aspects: 'light of itself and in

itself and light of itself but in another'. The accidental light is light in another. It is thus not a light in itself although it is a light of itself. According to Rizvi, Suhrawardi "clearly states that quiddity/essence in itself is as conceptual and unreal a notion as existence."⁴⁰

We could say that the position of Suhrawardi is nominalist, as both the existence and quiddity are viewed as mere mental concepts, reality having been redefined with the primacy given to light. Although light and quiddity cannot be synonymous, both light and darkness exist. According to Rizvi, Light is the being of things as their instantiating principle in concrete and not their essences. Light cannot be identical with substance, while both of them accidental lights and substances, exist. Entities grasped as essences through presential knowledge are "apparent aspects of what one might regard as 'light monads'" – an idea whose source appears to be greatly Platonic. According to Suhrawardi existence is gotten through the realization of lights that lies beyond the quiddity or essence, as even the being of bodies relate to incorporeal lights. Nothing that has an essence of which it is not unconscious is opaque, for its essence is evident to it. It cannot be a dark state in something else, since even the luminous state is not a self-subsistent light, let alone the dark state. Therefore, it is nonspatial, pure incorporeal light.

The absolute reality of beings is accordingly attained by the direct experience of its ontic reality, rendering intuitive and non-discursive knowledge (logically) prior to any other type of knowledge. Here Sadra claimed that Suhrawardi suffered confusion between the concept of existence and the truth of existence

and he changed the concept of light for the notion of existence. Sadra would rather combine the ontology of Ibn Sina with the illuminationist idea of hierarchy of lights.⁴¹ Al-Ghazali had earlier talked of mystical illumination using Qur'anic light terminology, whereas Suhrawardi, in his *Hikmat ul Ishraq* or *Philosophy of Illumination*, refers to original light ontology culled from Greek and Persian sources. When light always keeps itself identical, its distance from the Light of lights determines the ontic reality of all beings. Truth develops from the Light of lights and unfolds via the First Light and all the subsequent lights bring about the existence of all entities. As each new light interacts with other existing lights, more light and dark substances are generated. Light makes both immaterial and substantial lights, such as immaterial intellects (angels), and human and animal souls. Light also produces opaque substances, such as bodies. Light can generate both luminous accidents, such as those in immaterial lights, physical lights or rays, and dark accidents, whether it is in immaterial lights or in bodies.

As mentioned before, the ontological idea of Suhrawardi about lights has two central points that stand for all the basic classes of beings such as substance and attributes, dependent and independent beings, and light and darkness. The first principle is 'the principle of the most noble contingency' which says that nothing can exist without a cause of higher ontological level. The second principle is based on the peripatetic idea of 'impossibility of an ordered, actual infinity' which, with the first principle, guarantees that 'there cannot be an infinite number of levels of being and that there must be one being whose

existence is necessary in itself. In other words, Ibn Sina's 'Necessary Existence'.⁴²

Suhrawardi then develops his view of two processes of light to give the idea of gradation of light. Here a horizontal hierarchy of pure immaterial lights structure his illuminationist metaphysics. From the Light of lights proceeds a first vertical hierarchy of lights in which a First Light first makes its appearance by emanation and then a second and then a Third Light and the Second barzakh, or the Sphere of Fixed Stars, and so forth emerge. Suhrawardi believes that Light (nur), the essence of which lies above comprehension does not need any definition. Again like Mulla Sadra, he said that it is the most clear and obvious thing in the universe because its nature shows or manifests itself. Again as Sadra later said about the gradation of existence, Suhrawardi accepts the manifestation of multiplicity by the different degrees of light and darkness.

Explaining this point Hossein Nasr writes:

“Suhrawardi “divides” reality according to the types of light and darkness. If light is subsistent by itself, it is called substantial light (nur jauhari) or incorporeal light (nur mujarrad); if it depends for its subsistence on other than itself, it is called accidental light (nur `ardi). Likewise, if darkness is subsistent by itself it is called obscurity (ghasaq) and if it depends on other than itself for its subsistence it is called form (hai'ah). This division is also based on the degrees of comprehension. A being is either aware of itself or ignorant of it. If it is aware of itself and subsists by itself it is incorporeal light, God, the angels, archetypes, and the human soul. If a thing has need of a being other than itself to become aware of itself, it is accidental light like the stars and fire. If it is ignorant of itself but subsists by itself, it is obscurity like all natural bodies, and if it is ignorant by itself and subsists by other than itself, it is form like colours and smells.”⁴³

Suhrawardi mentions the 18000 worlds of light and darkness that are levels of irradiation and effusion of this Primordial Light which shines everywhere while remaining immutable in itself. According to him there are various stages between supreme Light and the obscurity of bodies. These stages are the orders of angels, which are personal and universal at the same time, and which govern all things. In enumerating these angelic orders Suhrawardi follows the idea of Zoroastrian angelology and departs completely from the Aristotelian and Ibn Sinaian schemes which limit the intelligences or angels to ten to correspond to the celestial spheres of Ptolemaic astronomy. But however we could see in the works of Ibn Sina and his followers, the angels that are known as intellect are bound in three parts of intelligible 'dimensions' which constitute their being, namely, the intellection of their principle, of the necessity of their existence, and of the contingency of their essence.⁴⁴

According to Suhrawardi the first effusion from the Light of lights is known as *nur al-a`zam* (Great Light). In this stage this light thinks of the Light of the lights and, since no veil exists in between, receives direct illumination from it. After this a new triumphal light (*nur al-qahir*) comes into being which receives two illuminations, one directly from the Supreme Light and the other from the first light. This is followed by the third light receiving illumination four times, twice from the light preceding it, once from the first light and once from the Supreme Light. The fourth light comes forth eight times, four times from the light preceding it, twice from the second light, once from the first light, and once from the Light of lights or Supreme Light. And so on so forth.

According to Suhrawardi each higher light enjoys domination over that which is lower to it and each lower light has a relation of love (mahabbah) for the higher. Further, each light is placed in the position of intermediary or Barzakh and this is the position that is between higher and lower light. Here the supreme order of angels is illuminated from the Light of lights that consists of love only for Itself because the perfection of its essence are obvious to Itself. According to him this supreme hierarchy of being makes new polarity of Being. Its positive or masculine aspect such as dominance, contemplation, and independence gives rise to a new order of angels the members of which are no longer generators of one another. Rather, each is integral in itself and is, therefore, known as Mutakafiyah. The hierarchy thus presented corresponds with the system of Plato which refers to them as the lords of the species (arbab al-anwa') or the species of light (anwa' nuriyyah). So each species in the universe consists of its arche-type where one of these angels or, in other words, each being in this world is the theurgy (tilism) of one of these angels which are, therefore, called the lords of theurgy (arbab al-tilism).⁴⁵

V- Mulla Sadra: Life, Works and Method

Sadr al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Yahya Qawami Shirazi (1571–1636 A.D.) has been given the title of Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Master of the theosophists) for blending the theology of Islam with Gnosticism on the one hand and Greco-Alexandrian philosophy on the other hand. He developed a radical philosophical method in which the dichotomy between a discursive mode of reasoning, and a more intuitive mode of knowledge was transcended.

Coming almost at the end of a long line of Islamic speculative thinking that started with Farabi and Ibn Sina and passed through the gnostic–illuminationist theories of Suhrawardi and his followers and then in more rationalistic formulations of Ibn Rushd, Sadra combines in his system the finer points of all the philosophies of his predecessors and peers. He discussed the metaphysical, ethical and theological issues within a peripatetic-Neo-plotonic framework but always keeping the scriptural sayings before his mind and not before getting their confirmation by his own personal intuitive experiences.⁴⁶

Mulla Sadra, though born in the city of Shiraz, spent most of his life in Isfahan, another great city of Iran famous for its culture of learning and education. There he learned the traditional and rational sciences (al-ulum al-naqliyya wal-aqliyyah). During this time he also familiarized himself with the entire Greek speculative heritage and combined it with the study of previous Islamic philosophers like Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Tusi, Al-Farabi etc. Sadra also got interested in gnostic path as a result of his own study of Ibn Arabi who also combined in his person and in his writing the wisdom of Greeks and his mystical experiences. Sadra is also said to have become familiar with the Indian philosophy through his teacher named Mir Findriski.

But as it happened in the case of many others, after learning rational and transmitted sciences he became dissatisfied with them and longed to see the truth through some more direct intuitive sources. Leaving for a while the formal learning, he went into seclusion to practice meditation and mortification. He started doing inner purification and looked for spiritual

illumination. Finally, in this state, he could realize the truth that was unknown to him through his traditional and formal learning.

Mulla Sadra tells about the experiences of this stage in following words:

“While I lived in seclusion and isolation for a long time, I enlightened myself with the help of purification... so I got the light of celestial world...so I realized the reality that the gnostics have known before....I realized truths of self-sufficiency of God by mysteries that I sought before with the help of intellectual reasoning...”⁴⁷

The going beyond the drudgery of exoteric sciences and adopting Khalwat (isolation) led him to be in union with the Universal Intellect, and that made his intellect divine. The veil of multiplicity was removed resulting into an immediate intuitive knowledge of unity. Sadra then permanently isolated himself from society and spent his time in a village near Qum.

Sadra mentions in Asfar about these events as follows:

“Therefore when I found that the place was bereft of one who acknowledged the sanctity of the secrets and the sciences of the pure-hearted, and that gnosis and its mysteries have vanished and the truth and its light has been effaced...I abandoned the people of my time and concealed myself from them. Thus the tranquility of my perspicacity and the stillness of nature came to my rescue from the enmity of the age and the impotence of my rambles, until I isolated myself in a place by the outskirts of the city and in a state of apathy and dejection hid myself; this happened while I experienced despair and broken-heartedness and while I engaged in compulsory acts of worship and struggled to cover up the excesses I had committed in the presence of Allah. In that particular state I neither taught nor engaged in writing; for writing on matters of gnosis, refuting the incorrect ideas, elucidating the objectives and removing the difficulties are among those things that require the lavation of one’s intellect and purification of one’s faculty of imagination from those things that

result in restlessness and confusion...Thus I turned instinctively towards the Source of all the means, and naturally expressed my humbleness in front of the Simplifier of the difficulties; and when I remained in this particular state of concealment and isolation and obscurity and seclusion for a long time, my soul was enlightened through spiritual struggle and my heart was powerfully lit up through many austerities (riyazat). This made the celestial rays of light pour down into my spirit; and the mysteries of the realm of Divine Omnipotence (jabarut) were untangled for me; and the rays of unity touched my spirit and the Divine grace embraced it. Hence I came to learn of secrets I had not yet known, and mysteries that had not been clear through intellectual proof were now unraveled for me. I witnessed more details by way of vision and spiritual disclosure than I had known before through intellectual proof...’’⁴⁸

Thus the life of Sadra can be divided in three parts. The first is his learning rational and transmitted sciences including the science of Quranic exegesis and mysticism. The second part of his life is devoted to prayers and self-purification. In the third part of his life he taught philosophy to educated students who were looking for deep knowledge. After that, he began to write books where he articulated his philosophical ideas and developed a full blown speculative system especially in *Asfar*.⁴⁹

Although Sadra brought a new philosophical system, he was influenced by many previous philosophers – both Greek and Muslim. His transcendental philosophy was more or less inspired by *Ennead* which he thought to be of Aristotle but which was actually written by Plotinus. Sadra was also influenced by Ibn Sina and through him by Aristotle. He respected Ibn Sina especially for the scientific character of his works. He mentioned the ideas of Ibn Sina in his books frequently both by way of criticism and appreciation. After Ibn Sina, his

greatest inspiration was Ibn Arabi as he shared with him the method of integrating speculative philosophy with the experiences of mystical nature. He also followed Suhrawardi in pursuing the path of wisdom and gnosis. Because according to Suhrawardi a philosopher must have mystical experiences through self-purification if he wants to avoid mistakes and falsehood in his intellectual journey. Sadra also discussed thinkers like Fakhruddin Razi and Dawani though he denounced them for their crude criticism of Ibn Sina. Lastly, Sadra imbibed the influence of his teacher Mir Damad as is evidenced by the close similarity between him and the ideas of teacher. But on several issues he also disagreed with him. And it was this opposition of Sadra to Mir Damad that made him build his own distinctive new ideas.⁵⁰

Mulla Sadra is the author of more than forty-five books the most important being al-Hikma al-muta‘aliya fi-l-asfar al-‘aqliyya al-arba‘a, known in short as al-Asfar al-arba‘a (The Four Journeys). It is a large summery of philosophy and theology that, instead of following the traditional divisions of logic, physics, and metaphysics, makes an intellectual inquiry that is in consonance with the soul's mystical journey in this world and beyond.

Mulla Sadra started to write this book in 1015 AH/1606 in Kahak and completed it in Shiraz in 1038 AH/1638. Of the four journeys mentioned in the title, the first is from the world to Allah where the seeker seeks to know the truth with the help of intellectual principles. He seeks an understanding of the basic principles of philosophy and metaphysics and grapples with the questions of existence, essence, soul, matter etc. He travels from the realm of plurality to

unity and becomes aware of the nature of truth. Then he starts his second journey which is in God with God and which concerns comprehension of the nature of God and his attributes. He then gathered proofs for the existence of an absolute **being** or God. In this stage of journey he alludes to a mystical way of the elimination of the self. In the third journey which is from God to the realm of multiplicity he describes the relation between God and universe, nature, time and other creation and ontological categories in this world. The fourth journey comprises of human psychology, soteriology and eschatology and reveals most clearly the influence of Twelver Shi'ism on his **thought**.

Mulla Sadra discussed philosophical theology in his other books such as *al-Hikma Al-'Arshiyya* (Wisdom of the throne) and *al-Shawahid Al-Rububiyya* (Divine witnesses). Another work, *al-Masha'ir* (Inspired recognitions) carries forward his thinking of the issues of existence and essence that he started in the first part of his Four Journeys. *Al-Masha'ir* is a short but profound work on ontology and related subjects. Professor Henry Corbin has translated it into French and written an introduction to it. This book has recently been translated into English, too. *Al-Arshiya* or *Al-Hikmat Al-Arshiyah*, is another book that deals with the questions of beginning and the end concisely. This book has been translated by Professor James Winston Maurice into English. He has also written an informative introduction to it. *Al-Shawadhid Al-Rububiyyah*, on the other hand, is written in Illuminationist style, and represents Mulla Sadra's ideas during the early periods of his philosophical thoughts.

The major issues with which Mulla Sadra grappled in his works were:

Principality of existence (asalah al-wujud), quiddity as veil on the real being, gradation of being (tashkik-wujud), substance in motion (al-harika al-jawahariyya), unity of existence (wahdat al-wujud), the necessity of Allah or God and the truth of possibility in contingents, the study of the theory of causality, the unity of known and knower and connectivity of cause and effect, research on the relation between stable and variable and creatable and everlasting (hadith wa qadim), manifestation of a type of unity that is true and real unity (wahdat-i haqa-I haqiqiya), research on composition of matter (madda) and form (sura) as a composition by way of unification to be called Tarkib-i Ittihadi, proving God by arguments called ‘truthful reasoning’ (burhan-i seddiqin), study about the spiritual knowledge that recognizes this type of knowledge as simple and non-detailed (basit-i ijmal) but at the same time also as a detailed and unveiling knowledge (kashf-i tafsili), research on soul as bodily in its origin and divine **substance etc.**

While dealing with the above issues Mulla Sadra keeps close to peripatetic philosophy, but a strong presence of illuminatist ideology can also not be missed. It is indeed often said that his philosophy has a peripatetic body with an **illuminationist soul**. As Fazlur Rahman says:

“Sadra tells us that from the beginning of his career as a student, he was deeply interested in theosophy or philosophical theology and that he applied himself keenly to a study of the basic problems and fundamental issues in the field as expounded by the masters of the past, unlike most other students who in order to gain vainglorious fame, devoted themselves to the hairsplitting details found in later learned books which offered little insight into real problems. Our philosopher, having learned the wisdom of past philosophical

traditions – the peripatetic and the illuminationist – wished to write a comprehensive work combining the wisdom of earlier masters with his own intellectual insights. But this noble objective was thwarted by an intense opposition – indeed, persecution – by those religious men who showed the characteristic stolidity of traditionalism and unmitigated ex-ternalism in religion and who regarded any deviation from popular religious beliefs as pure heresy and dangerous innovation.”⁵¹

Mulla Sadra called his philosophy a ‘transcendental philosophy’ which was a critical mix of rational speculation and theology and gnosticism. But in the background and foreground was a strong faith and belief in Quran and Hadith. Sadra was inspired by the divine revelation of the Qur’an and he made use of sacred verses in solving philosophical problems and also made use of hadith and Sunna (traditions) of the Holy Prophet and his descendants. Especially, he tried to bring the verses of Quran as proof for his argument to show the truth and rationality of Quran.

“Unlike other heavenly books, the Qur’an involves some very profound and discussion- raising verses and statements on theology, worldview, and anthropology. This Holy Book, from the very early days of the prevalence of Islam - when there was no word of Greek or Oriental philosophy – could introduce a series of important philosophical issues such as God’s knowledge, the meaning of His Will and Attributes, the concepts of Divine Decree and Destiny, predestination, renunciation, life after death, resurrection, and the Hereafter to the field of thought and philosophy. Moreover, it makes references to the quality of the creation of the material world, the birth of prime matter, the end of world, the annihilation of matter, and, basically, cosmology. It is true that the collection of such verses and their interpretations, which had been given by the Prophet (p.b.u.h), Imam Ali (AS) and Muhammed’s descendants, planted the seeds for the growth of Shi’ite theology and, later, for the so-called science of theology; however, it was not limited to theologians’ use. The gate of

knowledge and teaching in the Qur'an has always been open to all, as it became a source of inspiration for Mulla Sadra, too. Our great philosopher, who always criticized theologians' ideas, viewed Qur'anic verses and the interpretations given by Muhammed's descendants with utter respect, relied on them, and was inspired by their heavenly words. The other point to be emphasized here is Mulla Sadra's power of intuition in the sense of communicating with the hidden world and unveiling the realities. This was a power possessed by all prominent masters of Ishraqi philosophy. In some of his books, Mulla Sadra emphasizes that he first perceives the truth of every philosophical and rational problem through intuition, and then demonstrates it on the basis of rational and philosophical arguments. He claims that he is the only philosopher who has been able to transform the issues that Ishraqi philosophers had perceived through unveiling and intuition, and presented as undemonstrated theories into logical and philosophical arguments. He does this so conversantly that even those who do not believe in intuitive perception surrender to his ideas. A great number of his well-known theories and ideas had been previously stated by Ishraqi sages; however, they had not been philosophically proved."⁵²

“Further, He states that man's intellect confirms revelation, and revelation completes the intellect. One who has a religion and depends on revelation must accept the role of the intellect in discovering the truth; likewise, one who follows the intellect and wisdom, must confirm and accept revelation. Intuition and illumination can be demonstrated by means of argumentation and reasoning and, as a result, grant universality to personal experiences, exactly in the same way that the hidden principles of nature could be proved by resorting to mathematical laws.”⁵³

The Quran was the divine text and the repository of complete truth for him. The Quranic revelation confirms the truth of intuition that is acquired by ascetic practice, prayers, and meditating on the world beyond the matter and sense. The conclusions of revelation and intuition are further confirmed by reasoning by intellect.

Mulla Sadra called his philosophy as ‘Transcendental Wisdom’ because ‘wisdom’ or ‘Sophia’ has old historical roots and it covered a very wide field of knowledge that included all natural and mathematical sciences besides the matters spiritual and transcendental. Wisdom is praised in the Qur’an and Hadith, and it plays a special role in the theology of Shia sect to which Sadra himself belonged. ‘Wisdom’ also makes a bridge between mysticism and philosophy that are otherwise considered as two distinct fields of knowledge. In the philosophy of Mulla Sadra wisdom is the secret key to access the higher realities and to make peace between **philosophy and mysticism**.

“The Peripatetics agreed that wisdom or philosophical journey is, in fact, a process of becoming which comes to an end through the development and growth of material intelligence (*intellectus materialis*) into *intellectus in habitu* and, then, into actual reason (*intellectus in actu*) and acquired reason (*intellectus adeptus* or *acquisitus*), and through connection to the origin of knowledge (perhaps the same Promete of ancient Greece), which Aristotle called active intellect. The end result of this process is man’s transforming into a wise man.”⁵⁴

Philosophers and mystics accepted that becoming a wise man is to pass from the realm of multiplicity to the realm of unity and to start the process of awareness of true self involving soul’s journey on a path that ends in the realization of the truth and beauty that are eternal. This journey was in fact the four-fold divine journey that Mulla Sadra inscribed in the title of his opus *Asfar*.

In the transcendental philosophy of Mulla Sadra different schools of philosophy come all together, making a coherent philosophical system that

grappled specially the issues of ontology and metaphysics but dealt also with theology, psychology, eschatology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and logic, etc. The ontological ideas connect with other metaphysical issues and epistemology leads to the discussion of psychological issues like mental existence, psychological qualities and accidents, the unity of the knower and the known, and the unity of the intellect and the intelligible, etc. Mulla Sadra did not focus on the issues of ethics and political philosophy, but wrote two books on formal logic. He adhered to old adage that says: 'know yourself to know Allah'. A quarter of Asfar is accordingly assigned to the issues of nature of soul and the end of its ontological journey on the Day of Resurrection, and Paradise, and Hell. Finally, Mulla Sadra discussed the problems of life after death of animate beings to differentiate it from what awaits man after his death.⁵⁵

Part-II

V- Main Concepts in Indian Philosophy and Religion

The **mystical** philosophy which first entered Western world from 'the East' was primarily in the form of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and, later, the teachings of the early representatives of Buddhism. From the earliest of times, Greek citizens, entering into Persia and India, had interacted with residents of those lands, and no doubt brought back something of that foreign metaphysics to their own lands. Also, Brahmins and Buddhists from India had moved into Greece, bringing their mysticism with them, and had doubtlessly shared their teachings with at least some residents of their adopted land. Socrates was said

to frequent gatherings of such Brahmins. It is difficult to make distinction between Vedanta as non-dualism and Polonius who was born in different culture. They were only different in terminology and language. We must assume then that, while there was some cultural interchange between East and West going back to at least fifth century B.C., these two philosophic and mystical traditions, , for the most part, have developed independently.

Indian philosophy has grown up along with the Hindu religion. Except Buddhism and the school of Jainism, there is no any theoretical science or system which could be separated from the religion based on Vedas. While the religion itself consisted of extensive and disparate collection of spiritualist values and ideas, its ties with philosophy were never severed. If we look at the Indian ideas, monotheism, polytheism and monism can be found, though it would not be wholly correct to say that they were paganism. Coomaraswamy says that calling Hinduism paganism in the manner of Greek and Roman paganism is a superficial idea that is not borne out of the depth and width characterizing the Indian philosophy and religion.

Radhakrishnan divided the history of Indian philosophy in the following four parts:

1. Vedic period (1500 BC-600 BC)
2. Epic period (600 BC to 200 AD)
3. Sutra period (200 AD)
4. Scholastic period (After 200 AD)⁵⁶

Vedic period started with the Aryan invasion of India. When they settled down here, the Aryan culture developed. In this period, the hymns of Rig Veda and Brahmanas and Upanishads were written. The oldest writings that have come from the Aryans are the hymns of Vedas which are the odes to various nature gods and the rituals and ceremonials attached to them. The time of Brahmanas has been contemporary with the domination of Brahmans and priests on society and their practice of sacrificial ceremony.⁵⁷

After this time the philosophical ideas began to be conceived and a culture of philosophical discussion developed among the priestly and ruling classes. Such philosophical discussions became in time the subject matter of the books called Upanishads. The ruling Kshatriya class which appears to be quite active in philosophical speculation and discussion in these books of Upanishad was also responsible for generating heterodox spiritual systems such as those of Buddhism and Jainism. In later periods new philosophical systems emerged that were considered orthodox and focused on the divine figures of Vishnu or Shiva and were accordingly called Vaishnava and Shaiva schools of philosophy.

Upanishads are the last part of Vedas and are, for that matter, also called Vedanta. They are often put in the category of Aranyaka. Deussen says that the classification of Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads is based on the following principles.

Brahmanas are the collection of ritualistic formulae used for the family and other ceremonies. Aranyaka is meant for the persons who want to renounce

society and go to forest (Aranya) for spiritual pursuits. The Upanishads, on the other hand, are written for someone who desires to get free of the material world and work his way for ultimate release and realization.⁵⁸

The word 'Upanishad' is made up of three parts: Upa, Ni, and Sad. Upa means near, Ni means down and Sad means seating. The word 'Upanishad' was thus used for the verbal teachings that were given to students by their teachers who sat close to them. Other writers believe that this word stood for the secret interior truths known only to a spiritually accomplished person. Shankara says that the word Upanishad is derived from 'Sad' that means removing. Because, according to him, the goal of Upanishads is to remove the ignorance and give the spiritual knowledge that is the principle of freedom.⁵⁹

Upanishads are believed to be divine writings and are accordingly considered part of Sruti i.e. the revealed scripture. The oldest Upanishads were written in prose style but the later ones were written in verse. Moreover, while the earlier ones of them were committed to writing in 500 – 800 B.C many of them were written in much later times. According to scholars, around 200 Upanishads are available but more important of them are the following:

Isa Upanishad, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya and Brhadaranyaka Upanishads.⁶⁰ Shankara has included among these the Svetasvatara and Kausitaki Upanishads also.

Even a cursory glance at the Upanishadic writings shows that their whole philosophy revolves around the twin notions of Atman and Brahman and their inter-relationship. The search for the knowledge of Atman-Brahman is,

moreover, not an academic or theoretical search but a spiritual quest for hidden truths.⁶¹

The purpose of Upanishads is not the superficial search for spiritual powers but to realize the deeper truths of reality called Atman or Brahman. Upanishads turn Vedic view from outside to inside so that the mystery of existence and creation can be fully and internally comprehended. The idea of sacrifice that is given so much prominence in the Vedic Samhita is given an entirely new meaning and significance. We can see in Kausitaki Upanishad that the meaning of fire sacrifice is changed to give it an esoteric flavor. Now it is the self-mortification or austerity (Samyamanam) that is called the real sacrifice and that belongs to one's soul (Antaram-Agnihotram) rather than what the sacrificer ceremonially performs with his family. It is thus said:

“Now follows the restraint (samyamana) instituted by Pratardana (the son of Divodasa): they call it the inner Agni-hotra. So long as a man speaks, he cannot breathe, he offers all the while his prana (breath) in his speech. And so long as a man breathes, he cannot speak, he offers all the while his speech in his breath. These two endless and immortal oblations he offers always, whether waking or sleeping. Whatever other oblations there are (those, e. g. of the ordinary Agnihotra, consisting of milk and other things), they have an end, for they consist of works (which, like all works, have an end). The ancients, knowing this (the best Agnihotra), did not offer the (ordinary) Agnihotra.”
(Kaushitaki Up., 4. 5)

According to above, man can be considered to be comprised of two parts: spiritual and material. The spiritual side is eternal, immortal and connected with Brahman. The material side, on the other hand, is ephemeral and an illusory supplement to the reality of Brahman. Man's real quest is therefore not

to get entangled into the world of senses but realize the reality that is beyond.

On this the Upanishads say:

“Let no man try to find out what speech is, let him know the speaker. Let no man try to find out what odor is, let him know him who smells. Let no man try to find out what form is, let him know the seer. Let no man try to find out what sound is, let him know the hearer. Let no man try to find out the tastes of food, let him know the knower of tastes. Let no man try to find out what action is, let him know the agent. Let no man try to find out what pleasure and pain are, let him know the knower of pleasure and pain. Let no man try to find out what happiness, joy, and offspring are, let him know the knower of happiness, joy, and offspring. Let no man try to find out what movement is, let him know the mover. Let no man try to find out what mind is, let him know the thinker...”
(Kausitaki Up., III. 8)

As already observed, the oldest writings that have come from the Aryans are the hymns of Vedas which though polytheistic in nature contain germs of philosophical speculation at least in their latter parts. The books of Upanishads became the source of much philosophic speculation in the later times, especially in the writings of Vedanta thinkers of various hues. While the heterodox religions of Buddha and Jaina didn't accept the Vedas as repository of divine revelation and rejected the ideas of Atman and Brahman which the Upanishads espoused the chief point of controversy among those two currents was regarding the permanent or changing nature of reality. Buddhism introduced the theory of substance as being the assemblage of accidents and relativities that were not essential or permanent. According to Buddhism, unity of world isn't real because such unity is caused by continuity of successive moments. The Jainas, on the other hand, believed in substance but were equally

dismissive of Brahman and the creator God. The six philosophical systems namely, the Nyaya, Vaishesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta appeared later to represent the orthodox side. Further on, the great thinkers like Kumarila, Shankara, Ramanuja, Vacaspati Misra competed for acceptance of their views against the heterodox figures such as Vijnanbhikshu, Asvaghosa and Buddhaghosa etc.

The issues that emerged as of fundamental concern in all Indian philosophical systems whether orthodox or heterodox were the doctrines of Karma and Moksha (Liberation). Karma means action. Most Indian systems believe that there is a connection between the natural system and the moral system. Each action causes reaction on the basis of its inherent goodness or evilness. Each one has to eat the fruits of his actions performed in either this world or the other world. The status and position, the pleasure and pain etc that I enjoy in the present life is the result of my actions in my previous life. Since the man doesn't get the full perfection, he has to make successive appearances till the final release is achieved. Death isn't the end of life, but the beginning of another life and then of another and so on. This is called the cycle of transmigration.

The principle of Karma thus consists of causation, rules of morality and transmigration. Karma cannot be separated from the human life and it is a way for the attainment of perfection and to finally become free. There is small difference between Upanishads and later systems regarding the concept of Karma. Upanishads say that the occurrence of action and reaction is in this

world, not in the other world, and if the origin of it is in desire and will, then it is not compulsory. In Vedas, the idea of Karma was associated with sacrifices. The creation of the world is by the fruit of sacrifices. The sacrifices are regarded as possessing an occult mystical potency superior even to the gods who, it is sometime stated, attained to their divine rank by means of sacrifices.⁶²

Closely associated with the concept of Karma or action is the idea of Moksha or liberation. Moksha is one of the four great ideals of Hindu tradition that are; Artha (material prosperity), Kama (emotional pleasure), Dharma (duty) and Moksha that means liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Moksha has two aspects: freedom before and after death. The concept of Moksha in Upanishads means being identified with Brahman. When the Atman gets purified it is released from the cycle of birth and death and becomes immortal having merged in Brahman. In this state the individual self is removed and the identity of Atman with Brahman is realized.

All Indian philosophical systems accepted the idea of a permanent essence except Buddhism. They believed that there is some stable essence beyond the realm of becoming and this essence is called variously as Purusa, Atman, Jiva etc. The material world creates the veil of ignorance (Avidya) and illusion (Maya) and doesn't let us know the real reality. The realization of this essence is possible only by intuition because intellect is bound in the realm of becoming. The stable essence or Brahman is realized only by those who have cleansed their selves of all attachments. The real self or Atman itself is free of

all stain, sin and limitation. It is pure and free from the veil of plurality that hides it. This veil makes oneness appear as multiplicity and being as becoming. If the veil of plurality is removed man realizes that the distinction between object and subject is only in name; basically they are same. The doctrine of Karma and its relation with the idea of Moksha is summarized by Upanishads in the following manner:

“He is then with determinate consciousness and as such he comes out. Knowledge, the deeds as well as previous experience (prajna) accompany him. Just as a caterpillar going to the end of a blade of grass, by undertaking a separate movement collects itself, so this self after destroying this body, removing ignorance, by a separate movement collects itself. Just as a goldsmith taking a small bit of gold, gives to it a newer and fairer form, so the soul after destroying this body and removing ignorance fashions a newer and fairer form as of the Pitrs, the Gandharvas, the gods of Prajapati or Brahman or of any other being..... As he acts and behaves so he becomes, good by good deeds, bad by bad deeds, virtuous by virtuous deeds and vicious by vice. The man is full of desires. As he desires so it happens. There is also a verse, being attached to that he wants to gain by Karma that to which he was attached. Having reaped (lit. gone to the end) the full fruit of the Karma that he does here, he returns back to this world for doing Karma. So it is the case with those who have desires. He who has no desire, who had no desires, who has freed himself from all desires, is satisfied in his desires and in himself, his senses don't go out. He being Brahma attains Brahmahood. Thus the verse says, when all the desires that are in his heart are got rid of the mortal becomes immortal and attains brahma here.” (Brh. Up., IV. 1-7)

According to above, soul destroys body and appears in a new form with the help of activity it performs till the end of its present life. When the death happens, soul keeps all the previous memory and knowledge of that life.

Dasgupta says:

“The falling off of the body at the time of death is only for the building of newer body either in this world or in the other worlds. The self which thus takes rebirth is regarded as an aggregation of diverse categories.”⁶³

The soul that undergoes the process of birth and rebirth consists of the combination of diverse psychological and moral tendencies. The physical elements also hold through in this process of transmigration. The possibility and actuality of rebirth is rooted in desire and the consequent emergence of will and acts. The world of plurality too emerges in this process. The Karma is then the connecting link between desire and rebirth as they produce the world of plurality and bondage.

“He who knowingly desires is born by these desires in those places (accordingly), but for him whose desires have been fulfilled and who has realized himself, all his desires vanish here.”(Mundaka Up., III. 2. 2)

As just said, Karma connects desire of self with its rebirth. Upanishads mention that the creation of semen in the womb of woman is the first birth of man, the actual birth of him is the second birth and death is regarded as the third birth.

“It is in man that there comes first the embryo, which is but the semen which is produced as the essence of all parts of his body and which holds itself within itself, and when it is put in a woman, that is his first birth. That embryo then becomes part of the woman’s self like any part of her body; it therefore doesn’t hurt her; she protects and develops the embryo within herself. As she protects (the embryo) so she also should be protected. It is the woman who bears the fetus (before birth) but when after birth the father takes care of the son, he is taking care only of himself, for it is through sons alone that the continuity of the existence of people can be maintained. This is his second birth. He makes this self of his a representative for performing all the virtuous deeds. The other self of his after realizing himself and attaining age goes away

and when going away he is born again that is his third birth.” (Aitareya-Aranyaka Up., III. 4)

According to Upanishads a person who gets released from the cycle of birth and re-birth attains the state of Brahmanhood. Mukti or emancipation is regarded as the state of infiniteness that a man attains when he knows his own self and thus becomes Brahman.⁶⁴

The cycle of transmigration is for someone who is ignorant. Wise person will get free of it. Moksha is possible by true knowledge of self. All the pain, limitation and suffering are only as long as we don't know our self. The goal of man in the world of plurality is the Moksha or emancipation. The true knowledge of self can only remove the false knowledge, i.e. the all-pervasive illusion.

“One thing is good, another is pleasant. Blessed is he who takes the good, but he who chooses the pleasant loses the object of man. But thou considering the objects of desire hast abandoned them. These two, ignorance (whose object is what is pleasant) and knowledge (whose object is what is good), are known to be far asunder, and lead to different goals. Believing that this world exists and not the other, the careless youth is subject to my sway. That knowledge which thou hast asked is not to be obtained by argument. I know worldly happiness is transient for that firm one is not to be obtained by what is not firm. The wise by concentrating on the soul, knowing him whom it is hard to behold leaves both grief and joy. Thee O Naciketas, I believe to be like a house whose door is open to Brhaman. Brahman is deathless, whoever knows him obtains whatever he wishes. The wise man is not born; he does not die; he is not produced from anywhere. Unborn, eternal, the soul is not slain, though the body is slain; subtler than what is subtle, greater than what is great, sitting it goes far, and laying it goes everywhere. Thinking the soul as unbodily among bodies, firm among fleeting things, the wise man casts off all grief. The soul

cannot be gained by eloquence, by understanding, or by learning. It can be obtained by him alone whom it chooses. To him it reveals its own nature.”
(Katha Up., II)

Thus the self that knows itself and does not live by desires that lead him to act and reap the fruits of his acts in the present and future ceases to exist except in himself. He that knows this highest truth realizes himself in all.

“As a lump of salt, when thrown into water, becomes dissolved into water, and could not be taken out again, but wherever we taste (the water) it is salt, thus verily, O Maitreyi, does this great Being, endless, unlimited, consisting of nothing but knowledge, rise from out of these elements, and vanish again in them. When he has departed, there is no more knowledge (name), I say, O Maitreyi.’ Thus spoke Yagnavalkya. Then Maitreyi said: ‘Here thou hast bewildered me, Sir, when thou sayest that having departed, there is no more knowledge.’ (Brh. Up., II. 4. 12)

VI- Monism in Rig Veda

As indicated above, the Upanishads uphold basically a monistic philosophy centered around the idea of Brahman as the ultimate reality. This monistic theory, according to scholars of Indian philosophy, grew out of the monotheistic view of God found in the last portion of Rig Veda. Though this Veda is known to carry a predominantly polytheistic religion, with the passage of time the idea of one supreme God as the creator of universe emerged which however existed side by side with the belief in the multiple gods.

Generally, monism is the idea of one in many. In other words, all the systems which believe that there is one principle in universe to explain it, are in the category of monism. This unitary principle is said to be the source and the origin of other realities (satyasya satyam) such that we can call it as the highest

reality. The monotheism, on the other hand, is belief in one God who is the source of world and also the object of worship. In monism the unity of existence is emphasized. All this existence is called God, it is given an absolute and impersonal character whereas in monotheism the God is personal and with attributes though not necessarily anthropomorphic.

When the absolute existence is identified with the God of religion, as in most mystical philosophies, the distinction between monism and monotheism is blurred. When we have a cursory look at Vedas a few themes seem to emerge some of which even appear to be in conflict with the other. There are, for example, many natural beings which are assigned the status of gods like Indra (god of rains), Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Ushas (dawn) etc. But there are some passages that make a distinction between natural deities and deity that is heavenly and beyond nature. The names of most gods, moreover, suggest a clear conception of them but there are many who are obscure. All gods are however important equally. No one is more important than another. The gods are conceived in such a way that there is a difference between gods and the ultimate reality that is absolute. But at other places this difference appears to be blurred. There are some verses in Vedas to show individual gods as omnipotent or omniscient. Some verses say that all is God and the gods are indeed called the sons of Aditi (Aditya) and the Aditi herself the immanent principle of nature. (R.V., II. 27. I)

Deussen says that in the earliest of Vedas there are no mystic or special features of the gods. It is nothing but just the worship of natural deities. But

Max Muller says that there is no one single doctrine in Vedas. He, in fact, believed that the hymns of Vedas are neither polytheism nor monotheism but something that needs a new description. For this new conception he coined the term 'henotheism' which was explained by Kaegi in the Introduction to his translation of Rig Veda in the following words:

“A belief in single gods, each in turn standing out as the highest. And since the gods are thought of as specially ruling in their own spheres, the singers, in their special concerns and desires, call most of all on that god to whom they ascribe the most power in the matter, to whose department if I may say so, their wish belongs. This god alone is present to the mind of the suppliant; with him for the time being is associated everything that can be said of a divine being; he is the highest, the only god, before whom all others disappear, there being in this, however no offence or depreciation of any other god.”⁶⁵

Macdonell, however, has another theory to offer. According to him:

“That Vedic deities are not represented, as independent of all the rest, since no religion brings its gods into more frequent and varied juxtaposition and combination, and that even the mightiest gods of the Veda are made dependent on others. Thus Varuna and Surya are subordinate to Indra (X. I. 101), Varuna and the Asvins submit to the power of Visnu (X.I. 156).....Even when a god is spoken of as unique or chief (eka), as is natural enough in laudation, such statements lose their temporarily monotheistic force, through the modifications or corrections supplied by the context or even by the same verse.”⁶⁶

While Macdonell accepted that the worship of nature and the multiple deities suggest polytheism in Vedas, there is also seen a clear transition from polytheism to monotheism. The result is that while in the early hymns of Vedas, there is no one God, in the later chapters the idea of a single supreme

God presiding over other gods is conspicuously maintained. It is also seen that the attributes of the supreme God are assigned to the various nature gods like Agni, Indra, Varuna etc. It is this elevation of gods to the highest status by the sages in the hymns that Max Muller calls henotheism.

“The implicit demand of the religious consciousness for one supreme God makes itself manifest in what is characterized as the henotheism of the Vedas.”⁶⁷

In Vedas sometime the multiple gods are assimilated into larger conception of God called Visvadevah or pantheon. This naturally leads to monotheism because we cannot have two supreme and unlimited beings at the same time. It also cannot be said that one God is created by another because that will be a contradiction. We can see the same monotheism in the worship of Varuna who is said to have moral and divine qualities like justice, beneficence etc. Varuna is known as the God of cosmic and moral order (Rta). He takes care not only of the objective world but also man’s internal purification.

Max Muller says that when man worships any divinity he implicitly thinks as if it is the highest and even the only God. But this whole situation is rather unsatisfactory. It isn’t possible to have many gods and also the one God. All the religious consciousness is against it. Henotheism is thus, according to Radhakrishnan, an unconscious and unknown move towards monotheism.

“Varuna is the heaven, Varuna the earth, Varuna the air, Varuna is the universe and all besides. Sometime Agni is all the gods. Sometime Indra is greater than all gods. For the moment each God seems to become a composite photograph of all others. Self-surrender of man to God. The central fact of religious experience is possible only with the belief in one God. Thus

henotheism seems to be the result of the logic of religion. It isn't, as Bloomfield suggests, polytheism grown cold in service, and unwise in its distinction, leading to an opportunist monotheism, in which every god takes hold of the scepter and none keep it.”⁶⁸

The monotheism in Vedas thus implies that all gods are subordinated under one higher power or higher divine controller that manages the functions of lower gods. According to Radhakrishnan:

“The many gods were looked upon as the different embodiments of the universal spirit, they were ruling in their own respective spheres under the suzerainty of the supreme. Their powers were delegated and their lordship was only a viceroyalty, but not sovereignty.”⁶⁹

Rig Veda rhetorically asks:

“Where is the sun by night? Where go the stars by day? Why does the sun not fall down? Of the two, night and day, which is the earlier, which the later? Whence comes the wind, and whither goes it?” (R.V., I. 24. 185)

“Who has seen the firstborn, when he that had no bones bore him that has bones? Where is the life, the blood, the self of the universe? Who went to ask of any who knew?” (R.V., I. 4. 164)

It could be said that the gods that were spoken of in Vedas like Agni, Indra, Varuna etc, are only the forms or names of one God rather than of many gods. The reality is one but it is called by different names.

“Were all the working of one mind, the features of the same face, blossoms upon one tree; characters of the great apocalypse, the types and symbols of eternity, the first and the last and without end.” (R.V., X, 129. 2)

Man seeks to find the truth and he cannot be satisfied with pluralistic pantheon; he cannot also be satisfied with anthropomorphic deity. If it was said that there

is one powerful God that is under the power of another God, it will not be acceptable. There is one immanent in the world. The reality is something different from things of earth, sunshine, storm etc. The reality has invisible essence which may be called Rta. It is indefinable and indescribable.

“We never will behold him who gave birth to these things. As a fool, ignorance in my own mind, I ask for the hidden places of the gods – not having discovered I ask the sages who may have discovered, not knowing in order to know.” (R.V., X. 121)

Radhakrishnan concludes:

“The Hindus arrive at this monism by a method essentially different from that of other countries. Monotheism was attained in Egypt by a mechanical identification of the various local gods, in Palestine by proscription of other gods and violent persecution of their worshipers for the benefit of their national god Jehovah. In India they reached monism, though not monotheism on a more philosophical path, seeing through the veil of the manifold the unity which underlies it.”⁷⁰

According to Max Muller:

“Whatever is the age when the collection of our Rig Veda Samhita was finished, it was before that age that the conviction had been formed that there is but one, one being, neither male nor female, a being raised high above all the conditions and limitations of personality and of human nature, and nevertheless the being that was really meant by all such names as Indra, Agni, Matarisvan, and even by the name of Prajapati, lord of creatures. In fact, the Vedic poets had arrived at a conception of the godhead which was reached once more by some of the Christian philosophers at Alexandria, but which even at present is beyond the reach of many who call themselves Christians.”⁷¹

As already said, the Vedic religion was predominantly polytheistic or henotheistic but in the last hymns of Rig Veda, the idea of a single God appeared that overshadowed all other gods. This God is expressed in various ways such as Visvakarman, Purusa, Prajapati etc. The chief attributes of this single God is creativity. The name Visvakarman has occurred in Rig Veda only five times in the chapter X (121. 2). The hymns 81 and 82 of this chapter or Mandala is assigned to oneness of God. Visva means all and karma means creator, then Visvakarma means the creator of the world. Visvakarma is also the watcher of everything he creates in the world. According to Rig Veda:

“Who is the father, our creator, maker, who every place doth know and every creature, by whom alone to gods their names were given, to him all other creatures go to ask him.” (R. V., X. 81-83)

Visvakarma is also same as Hiranayagarbha Vacaspati which is the cosmic egg from which the world in generated:

“In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born as the only lord of all existence. This earth he settled firm and heaven established: what god shall we adore with our oblation? Who gives us breath, who gives us strength, whose bidding all creatures must obey, the bright gods even; whose shade is death, whose shadow life immortal: what god shall we adore with our oblations? Who by his might alone became the monarch of all that breathes, of all that wakes or slumbers, of all, both man and beast, the lord eternal: what god shall we adore with our oblations? Whose might and majesty these snowy mountains, the ocean and the distant stream exhibit; whose arms extended are these spreading region; what god shall we adore with our oblations? Who made the heavens bright, the earth enduring, who fixed the firmament, the heaven of heavens; who measured out the air’s extended space: what god shall we adore with our oblations?.” (R.V., X. 121)

In the process of creation water plays a significant role. Water is the potential power which is mother of all creatures while the golden womb makes things and Vacaspati reins over all creatures. In Rig Veda the creation happens by primal sacrifices by the Brhaman, the creator God who is given this name in the later parts of Rig Veda. Rig Veda says about creation:

“Then there was neither being nor not-being. The atmosphere was not, nor sky above it. What covered all? and where? by what protected? Was there the fathomless abyss of waters? Then neither death nor deathless existed; of day and night there was yet no distinction. Alone that one breathed calmly, self-supported, other than It was none, nor aught above it. Darkness there was at first in darkness hidden; the universe was undistinguished water. That which in void and emptiness lay hidden alone by power of fervor was developed. Then for the first time there arose desire, which was the primal germ of mind, within it. And sages, searching in their heart, discovered in nothing the connecting bond of being. Who is it knows? Who here can tell us surely from what and how this universe has risen? And whether not till after it the gods lived? Who then can know from what it has arisen? The source from which this universe has risen, and whether it was made, or uncreated, he only knows, who from the highest heaven rules, the all- seeing lord- or does not he know?.”
(R.V., X. 129)

In Rig Veda it is also mentioned that the gods sacrifice the Purusa, yet other name given to creator God. They divide his body into parts. His mouth is called as Brahmans and his arms became the Kshatriya and his legs became Vaisya and his feet the Sudra. In this hymn gods perform the first sacrifice and the world is created through this sacrifice of Purusa. The creation is thus considered a universal sacrifice. The world is created by sacrifice of Purusa and different parts of him become different levels of creation. After this, Purusa

makes Brahman from itself (Avayam Bhava). In later mythology the Brahman is created by lotus flower that was connected to the navel of Vishnu.

This primal sacrifice of Purusa can be interpreted both from an internalist and externalist points of view. According to external view, the Purusa was sacrificed for generating time and space and to make his descent into material world. In the internal view, however, the Purusa is eternal and infinite. Purusa is creature and creator, appearance and reality. After his sacrifice the world of multiplicity was generated. Now the duty of man is to collect the separated parts of Purusa and turn it into unity again. (R.V., X. 90. I)

The idea of one God as the highest god slowly evolved into the conception of Prajapati that is described as the lord of all beings. It is recognized as a separate deity that is highest, supreme and greatest. He is also often called by his fuller name Brahma Prajapati.

In Rig Veda, the meaning of Brahman has been associated with the concept of sacrificial mind. Brahman is the Svayambhu which means self-born. We could look at the concept of Purusa as the supreme man which generates universe through the fourth part of him with three parts remaining as transcendent to a region beyond. (R.V., X. 90)

VII- Soul and Body in Rig Veda

In Samhita we see the separation of soul and body in the swoon state and it can also be seen that such a soul exists after the material world but there is no passage about the theory of transmigration. According to Satapatha Brahman,

one who doesn't act under the truth of knowledge has to be born again after death; he comes again to this world to suffer. In Vedas there are several passages that show the belief in the existence of another world that is higher than the material world. According to Satapatha Brhamana death is passed between two fires that remove evil-doers. It mentions that everyone can be born after death to make balance between his actions.

The world of soul is called by several names in Vedas such as Manas, Atman and Asu but the concept of Atman is systematized in later Indian thought in Upanishads. In Vedas, Manas is the seat of thought and emotion though Macdonell recognizes it as dwelling in the heart. It is sometime regarded as breath, too. But gradually it passes from breath to blood and then to Atman that is described as cosmic soul.

“Who has seen how the first-born, being the bone-possessing (The shaped world), was born from the boneless (The shapeless)? Where was the vital breath, the blood, the self (Atman) of the world? Who went to ask him that knows it?”⁷²

To conclude, in the pre-Upanishad literature the word Atman is primarily taken to mean vital breath. But as this concept develops, it comes to stand for the cosmic soul. Atman is also called at some places as essence of the world. When we look at the idea in the Brahmanas, we find that the Atman is made to signify the supreme essence in man as well as in the cosmic world.

VIII- Eschatology in Upanishad

Deussen divided the themes discussed in the Upanishads in following four parts:

1. Theology and principle of Brahman;
2. Cosmology and theory of creation;
3. Psychology and principle of soul;
4. Resurrection and soul's journey in levels of creation.⁷³

The first three of the above are metaphysical issues that will be dealt with in our main chapter on the philosophy of Upanishads. To confine the present introductory discussion on the fourth point we can see that the soul's journey is considered a journey that a seer undertakes to realize the ultimate goal of his life. The following dialogue in Chandogya Upanishads that takes place between a teacher and his disciple so describes the need of this journey:

“Svetaketu Aruneya went to an assembly of the Pankalas. Pravahana Gaivali said to him: 'Boy, has your father instructed you?' 'Yes, Sir,' he replied. 'Do you know to what place men go from here?' 'No, Sir,' he replied. 'Do you know how they return again?' 'No Sir,' he replied. 'Do you know where the path of Devas and the path of the fathers diverge?' 'No, Sir,' he replied. 'Do you know why that world never becomes full?' 'No, Sir,' he replied. 'Do you know why in the fifth libation water is called Man? No, Sir,' he replied. 'Then why did you say (you had been) instructed? How could anybody who did not know these things say that he had been instructed?' Then the boy went back sorrowful to the place of his father, and said: 'Though you had not instructed me, Sir, you said you had instructed me'.” (Chan. Up., V. 3. 1-4)

According to above there are two ways for the soul's journey after death. These are the way of gods and the way of ancestors. Since the Vedas Hindus believed that, after death, the man's eyes return to sun, breath returns to wind and speech returns to fire and, finally, his body parts dissolve into universe.

The subject of resurrection is not fully treated in Rig Veda. But it is developed in Upanishads. Rig Veda deals with the punishment of souls after death. The good souls will stay along with the gods Agni, Mitra and Varuna under the Yama's rule. Guilty souls will suffer. The good souls will turn to Yama which gathers all creatures together. Yama judges between souls and gives punishment or reward to them.⁷⁴

As for the way of ancestors, it is said that the souls that follow this way, they at first turn to smoke, and then enter into dark and half dark regions, finally reaching to ancestor's realm where they first become ether and then connect to moon till their rewards of good works are fully enjoyed by them. After that they come back to world and start life again.⁷⁵

As the Upanishads often spoke in figurative language, it is necessary to first know what is the concept of moon in old times? The one thing which could be said about moon is its cycle of rise and fall that might refer to wheels of life and death in the universe. Thus the ancestor's way is made for the normal people who could not complete their duty perfectly in world and, as a result of which they couldn't achieve the liberation (Moksha). Such people are condemned to come back to the world to undergo the cycle of death and life again. Moon is temporary paradise for such souls and they stay there to fully exhaust their rewards. Shankara says that these rewards are like temporary light that is extinguished after the fuel is finished.⁷⁶ The cause of transmigration or re-birth of such souls in the world is that they couldn't remove the impressions caused by the actions (Karma) of pervious life which then

remained in their subtle body (Suksma Sarira). These previous life-impressions can only be removed by the fire of wisdom.

According to Upanishads, the path of gods is made for wise men and sages who are trying to do purification of mind and body by practising seclusion and austerity in the forests. The souls of such people first go through the fire and then enter in light of day, and then into light of night. Thereafter they enter into light of month, half-light of month, half-light of year and then reach to sun and moon and finally they can connect to Brahman. (Chan. Up., V.10. I)

The concept of full light and half-light of moon and sun means the different stations which these souls must pass through to connect with Brahman.

According to Deussen when the soul rises to the region of gods, it will reach still higher positions till it achieves the highest light known as Brahman.⁷⁷

Thus whoever can get free of bondage of this world, he can achieve the liberation and get free of being and becoming which happen in the material world.

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad describes the relation of soul and body thus:

“As a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass, and after having made another approach (to another blade) draws itself together towards it, thus does this self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, and after making another approach to another body, draw himself together towards it.” (Brh. Up., IV. 4. 3)

It means that like when the worm reaches the end of leaf (Trna-Jalayuka), it changes its place (Antaram Gatva) and gathers its body (Atmanam

Upasamharati) the Atman, too, leaves the body (Idam Sariram Nihatya), and changes its places to gather its own self.

It is also like the gold seller who changes the form of gold to make a new one.

The Atman also leaves the body and refreshes it in another form.

“As a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another, newer and more beautiful shape, so does this self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, makes unto himself another, newer and more beautiful shape, whether it be like the fathers, or like the Gandharvas, or like the Devas, or like Pragapati, or like Brahman, or like other beings.” (Brh. Up., IV. 4.4)

Upanishads say that the human behavior is caused by desire. It means that as the desire of soul is, so will be the action of body. This is how the law of Karma operates. The Upanishads also say that the root cause of the re-birth lies in the desire of soul that generates certain type of actions. We have choice in our actions. Desires make us come back to this world again and again. When the soul has desire, it has to perforce enter into the cycle of death and life to fulfil its desire. The person who follows the ancestor's path is the one who had desire and who couldn't remove the seed of desire in him. Such a one is then condemned to come back to the world to suffer the consequence of his actions. The person who follows the path of gods is the one who has succeeded in removing the desire from inside him and is for that reason able to achieve the liberation (Moksha); he then never comes back to the world of becoming.

The Upanishads thus believe that the root of Karmas and the cause of re-birth are present in this world. It means that Karmas and their effects happen by one's self-will. Man should always think of finding a solution to his existential

problems by being released from the cycle of birth and death. For the Upanishads this solution lies in the realization of Atman principle. The reality of everything is the Atman and everything returns to Atman. Whoever can realize the reality of Atman, will become immortal and whoever is away from the knowledge of Atman, is in ignorance (Avidya). When a saintly person starts the purification of body and mind through meditation, he will become free from the feelings of sorrow and joy. At this time the internal truth is experienced because at this time nothing is created and destroyed. The Atman is now immortal and eternal; it is not destroyed even by the destruction of the body. (Katha Up., I. I. 29)

The liberation, in short, is achieved by the self-understanding and this self-understanding can be only by austerity, meditation and purification of mind and body.

Upanishads propound a theory of radical distinction between external appearance and inward reality. They consider senses, mind (Manas), memory, and the pleasures as relative, perishable and changing modes. The reality of human self (Ego) is hidden behind a veil. The truth of self with knowledge is pure awareness and having knowledge about something particular is small demonstration of this larger awareness. Since the pure awareness is not limited to any other knowledge it must be considered as unlimited. This self is called Atman in Upanishads. The truth of this self is the universal truth which comprehended the whole world. Human soul, in its essence, is unlimited and as such it is equal with Brahman.

“That Self is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect.” (Katha Up., 3. 12)

The highest knowledge is realization of self. All other knowledge is subordinated under it. Self-realization is possible through self-mortification. Upanishads say man cannot reach his transcendent goal with the help of sacrifices, ritual ceremony etc. It accordingly rejected Vedic ideas which are based on sacrifice. Sacrificial ceremony can only keep man in heaven temporarily because when the rewards are gotten over, he has to fall back in the cycle of life and death. When man realizes that there is no difference between God and self, then the rituals of sacrifices become of no use for him. He realizes that rituals are superficial and it is only good for ordinary people who don't know the secret truth.

According to Upanishads the rituals of Brahman or Atman are higher than ritual for gods. Brahman is not only the ultimate reality but is the source of lasting bliss. So if someone wants to have permanent happiness he has to unite with Brahman. For this unity, he needs to have self-realization. For the self-realization, he must stop desires. When, for example, man is in dreamless sleep he leaves his connection with senses, mind, and objective world. In this state there is no desire and when there is no desire happiness is there. The permanent happiness is realized with the unification of Atman with Brahman.

IX- Philosophy in Later Vedanta

Upanishads give differing accounts of the creation of the world which do not correspond with each other. But generally according to Upanishads, the world

is created by Atman or Brahman or Sat who is both creator and cause of the world. The question here however is whether the creature is distinguished the creator or not? This question is answered differently by the later commentators of Upanishads such as Shankara and Ramanuja and others who followed. Shankara says that creatures are unreal and there is only one reality that is Brahman. But Ramanuja recognizes both as real i.e. as two realities that are different from each other while yet co-existing as whole and its parts. Madhva the theist propounded a dualistic theory as against the absolute non-dualism of Shankara and qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja. According to him the God and the world were two distinct realities that could never be identified with each other. All of them, however, believe that the unconscious cause cannot create the world. God is one and world and soul have originated from same source. They believe the oneness of God. This God cannot be known by intellect. We must realize him by divine text and intuition. Brahman and Atman are two major columns on which the systems of Vedanta is built. The whole philosophy of Upanishads and Vedanta is encapsulated in the phrase ‘Tat tvam asi’ which means ‘you are that’ (Chan. Up., VI. 8. 7). Another phrase “Ayam Atman Brahma” also proclaims the identity of Atman and Brahman. (Brh. Up., II. 5. 19) Further, there are places where the entire universe is called the Brahman.

“This (Atman) is the horses; this (Atman) is the ten, and the thousands, many and endless. This is the Brahman, without cause and without effect, without anything inside or outside; this Self is Brahman, omnipresent and omniscient.” (Brh. Up., II. 5. 19)

All these phrases affirmed that creator, creatures and creation are one and multiplicity doesn't exist. The endeavor of Vedanta is to release us from the mirage of plurality and concentrate on Brahman. Brahman is the truth that we know as self (Atman) because everyone is aware of his own self as 'I exist' and this self-awareness doesn't need to be proved by argument.

“In the beginning,' my dear, 'there was that only which is (to on), one only, without Second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (to me on), one only, without a second; and from that which is not, that which is born? But how could it be thus, my dear?' the father continued. 'How could that which is be born of that which is not? No, my dear only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second.’ (Chan. Up., VI. 7. 1-2)

The Atman is identical with Brahman and the secret of Upanishads is that if everyone knows Brahman he becomes Brahman. (Mundaka Up., III. 2. 9)

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Chapter - 2

Metaphysics in Upanishads

Chapter 2

METAPHYSICS IN UPANISHADS

I- Nature of Absolute: Atman-Brahman

The ultimate reality was described in the hymns of Vedas as being One (Ekam Sat) that realized itself in multiple things. The Upanishads refer to this same reality as both Atman and Brahman. But the concept of Atman in these books is obscure. In Rig Veda (16. 3) it is taken to mean 'breath' or 'vital essence' which is also the general meaning of soul. The question here is what exactly is meant by the term 'Atman' in the Upanishads. In Chandogya Upanishad there is a dialogue between Prajapati and Indra where this Atman or self is said to have four states namely, the empirical self, the bodily self, the transcendent self and the absolute self. What is obvious first of all is that the Atman is not to be identified with the empirical or bodily self as the Chandogya says:

“The self which is free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing but what it ought to imagine, that it is which we must try to understand.” (Chan. Up.,VII. 7. 1)

There is nothing in the world that has the ability to destroy Atman. Its features are infinitude, unity, continuity and eternal activity. Everything is in it and it is in everything. Prajapati declares that human soul exists in subjective state and can never become an object.

The Atman, moreover, cannot be said to have the common attributes that people ascribe to it. The self is beyond the qualities and attributes. Besides, it is

also generally thought that the reality of self can become an object in the case of introspective experiences. But whatever becomes an object relates to the not-self and all the things that are known as actual in the world are different from self. The person who looks into other eyes or into the mirror or looks at himself into the water, he sees just a picture that is not the self. Such a self undergoes changes, and is amenable to disease and death. Radhakrishnan explains:

“Prajapati asks Indra to adorn himself, put on the best clothes and look again into the water and the mirror, and he sees his likeness well adorned with best clothes and clean. A doubt occurs to Indra. ‘As this self in the shadow or the water is well adorned when the body is well adorned, well dressed when the body is well dressed, well cleaned when the body is well cleaned, that self will also be blind if the body is blind, lame if the body is lame, crippled if the body is crippled, and perish, in fact, as soon as the body perishes.’”¹

Brhदारanyaka conveys the same idea in the following words:

“Though it is true that self is not rendered faulty by faults of body, nor struck when it is struck, nor lamed when it is lamed, yet it is as if they struck him in dreams, as if they chased him. He becomes even conscious as it were of pain and sheds tears; therefore I see no good in this.” (Brh. Up., VIII. 10. 2. 3)

Prajapati thinks the state of dream to be higher than other states because in dream the self is more independent of body. There it first manifests itself through purely mental experience. This stage of self is to be called the empirical self because it is subject to the accidents of experience. But it is not the final truth because empirical self is not stable or permanent. It is changing every moment. Although the self that we see in the dream is more independent of body it cannot be eternal self which is completely independent and liberated. The empirical self cannot be the Atman that is eternal because empirical self is

bound by time and space and what is in limitation of time and space cannot be eternal. Prajapati says Indra that the object is dependent on subject but subject can be independent. Object is non-existence without subject but subject exists essentially in its own right. Prajapati wanted to explain absolute superiority of the subject over the object. And so Yajnavalkya says:

“When the sun has set, when the moon has set, and when the fire is put out, the self alone is his light.” (Brh. Up., IV. 3.6)

Prajapati says that the true self is active universal consciousness. It is the unitary self which is both immanent and transcendent. All the states of our consciousness are comprehended by universal self. According to Upanishads this subjective reality which is the universal ground is present in all individuals. It penetrates all. It is one without the other.

It is the absolute self that is realized in all states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, bondage and liberation. It is both universal subject and object. According to Upanishads:

“And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not see, yet he is seeing, though he does not see. For sight is inseparable from the seer, because it cannot perish. But there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could see. And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not smell, yet he is smelling, though he does not smell. For smelling is inseparable from the smeller, because it cannot perish. But there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could smell. And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not taste, yet he is tasting, though he does not taste. For tasting is inseparable from the taster, because it cannot perish. But there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could taste. And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not speak, yet he is speaking,

though he does not speak. For speaking is inseparable from the speaker, because it cannot perish. But there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could speak. And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not hear, yet he is hearing, though he does not hear. For hearing is inseparable from the hearer, because it cannot perish. But. there is then no second, nothing else different from him that he could hear. And when (it is said that) there (in the Sushupti) he does not think, yet he is thinking, though he does not think. For thinking is inseparable from the thinker, because it cannot perish.” (Brh. Up., IV. 3. 23-28)

Knowledge always creates in man the illusion of duality and definability although the self is non-dual and indefinable.

“The soul which is not this or that, nor aught else, is intangible, for it cannot be laid hold of.” (Brh. Up., III. 7.3)

Upanishads thus reject the view that self can be identified with body. According to Radhakrishnan sums up the description of reality and transcendence of Atman thus:

“The Upanisads refuse to identify the self with the body, or the series of mental states or the presentation continuum or the stream of consciousness. The self cannot be a relation which requires a ground of relations, nor a connection of contents, which is unintelligible without an agent who connects. We are obliged to accept the reality of a universal consciousness which ever accompanies the contents of consciousness and persists even when there are no contents. This fundamental identity, which is the presupposition of both self and not-self, is called the Atman. None can doubt its reality.”²

According to Upanishads the soul consists of three states: waking, dreaming and deep sleep. In the state of waking, soul is to be considered as common consciousness of external objects that gets pleasure out of gross things. In the second state soul enjoys subtle things. The third state is called sleeping without

dream. In this state there is no dream or desire. Here soul enjoys bliss but not permanently. Intellect can realize the unity of the world in its highest level. It means that in the ideal state it can realize the unity of subject and object. Intellect can realize unity in the plurality of the world. This is however the kind of realization that cannot be fathomed by intellect.

“The eye doesn’t go thither nor speech nor mind. We don’t know. We don’t understand how anyone can teach it.” (Kena Up., II. 3)

It is the kind of knowledge where the description of subjective and objective evaporates.

There is no doubt that Atman as the transcendent self is nearest to absolute who is called Brahman. But this individual self is not the absolute itself. Individual self is a combination of real and unreal, existence and non-existence and true and false. It is still created by ignorance but it is synonym to absolute in its essence i.e. when it is pure consciousness, self- light and self-proved.

Upanishads emphasize that Atman doesn’t need any reason to prove itself because it is the reason of all reasons. Nobody can deny or suspect its existence. Its existence is assumed in the very act of suspicion such that if someone suspects of it, he would testify to its being automatically. While it is itself self-existence the existence of other things depends on it. If we remove all the dependency from Jiva, it becomes synonym to Atman. Shankara says that Atman is not something that can be proved by reason. It is the deep interiority of man. He says that Atman is not individual soul because individual soul admits conflict and distinction but there is no conflict and distinction in Atman.

When Atman enters into the matter it becomes limited and changes into the Jiva-Atman. Jiva is the individual ego and it is definable, describable and conceivable. There is distinction between different individual Jivas. Each Jiva has its own form and shape and that is the basis of distinction between one Jiva and other Jiva.

Although Jivas are rooted in Atman the two are different because Atman is the interior truth of man and is for that reason identical with Brahman. Atman and Brahman are inseparable because they are one. The Atman has two sides: one side of it is connected with universal truth that is known as Brahman and the other side relates to human body. The relation to body however doesn't change its eternality for while at the Jiva level it undergoes changes, at the rest of levels it remains same. The truth of man is Atman and Atman is nothing but Brahman. According to Upanishads at the first Atman is the empirical self but gradually it develops to bodily self and then through the dream and deep sleep it finally changes into absolute. In the dialogue between Indra and Prajapati referred to above, the Atman is the state of dreamless enjoyment in deep sleep. In dreamless state there is no feeling, no consciousness, no awareness of anything. But it is also not an abstract thing. While it cannot be identified with body, or the mental process, it is yet the principle of universe, immanent and transcendent. All the creation subsisted in it.³

“This body is mortal and always held by death. It is the abode of that Self which is immortal and without body. When in the body (by thinking this body is I and I am this body) the Self is held by pleasure and pain. So long as he is in the body, he cannot get free from pleasure and pain. But when he is free of

the body (when he knows himself different from the body), then neither pleasure nor pain touches him. The wind is without body, the cloud, lightning, and thunder are without body (without hands, feet, &c.) Now as these, arising from this heavenly ether (space), appear in their own form, as soon as they have approached the highest light, 'Thus does that serene being, arising from this body, appear in its own form, as soon as it has approached the highest light (the knowledge of Self He (in that state) is the highest person (Uttama Purusha). He moves about their laughing (or eating), playing and rejoicing (in his mind), be it with women, carriages, or relatives, never minding that body into which he was born 'Like as a horse attached to a cart, so is the spirit (Prana, Pragnatman) attached to this body. 'Now where the sight has entered into the void (The open space, the black pupil of the eye), there is the person of the eye, the eye itself is the instrument of seeing. He, who knows, let me smell this, he is the Self, and the nose is the instrument of smelling. He, who knows, let me say this, he is the Self, the tongue is the instrument of saying. He, who knows, let me hear this, he is the Self, the ear is the instrument of hearing. 'He who knows, let me think this, he is the Self, the mind is his divine eyes. He, the Self, seeing these pleasures (which to others are hidden like a buried treasure of gold) through his divine eye, i. e. the mind, rejoices. The Devas who are in the world of Brahman meditate on that self (as taught by Prajapaty to Indra, and by Indra to the Devas). Therefore all worlds belong to them, and all desires. He who knows that Self and understands it, obtains all worlds and all desires.' Thus said Prajapati, According to some, the body is the result of the Self, the elements of the body, fire, water, and earth springing from the Self, and the Self afterwards entering them." (Chan. Up., VIII. 12)

Prajapati teaches that self can be called as consciousness but is itself not in consciousness. There is some enjoyment in the state of waking for the self; here the self has external consciousness which is called 'Visha'. The self also has enjoyment in dream state; here it has internal consciousness that is called 'Taijasa'. But we have neither object nor subject in the state of sound sleep; the duality of subject and object is transcended and in this position the self is

named 'Prajna'. In the state of deep sleep there is no pain, or desire and even no dream. So in this state we can realize the shadow of ultimate bliss. It is called a shadow because the positive bliss is not yet enjoyed.

“The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses their roads. When he (the Highest Self) is in union with the body, the senses, and the mind, then wise people call him the Enjoyer.” (Katha Up., 2. 3. 4)

In this stage there is both ignorance and knowledge. The still higher state is the fourth state where there is no duality of subject and object. When ignorance is removed there is only pure consciousness. Here the self-shines by its own light. This is the pure self that is the structure of all beings and root of all knowledge. The self in this stage can be realized directly by intuition. According to Katha Upanishad senses are higher than the objects, the mind is higher than the self, the intellect is higher than the mind and subtle reason is higher than intellect. Avyakta or the unmanifest is higher than the subtle reason and Atman or Purusa is higher than the unmanifest.⁴

Atman is the highest being and there is no second for it. It exists in everything and everything exists to support its purpose. It is immortal, eternal, and unlimited and it can only be realized by experiencing non-duality. This identification or non-dualism of subject and object is most important principle in Upanishads; it suggests the synthesis of self and non-self in absolute. It is regarded as pure self-consciousness.

“It was here that for the first time the original thinkers of the Upanishads to their immortal honor, found it when they recognized our Atman, our inmost,

individual beings, as the Brahman, the inmost being of universal nature and of all her phenomena.”⁵

The phrase ‘Tat tvam asi’ in Upanishads means “Thou art that”. Atman is Brahman. Both of them are eternal and infinite. The self and non-self are the manifestation of absolute. Individual and universal are not separated from each other. Both of them exist together. After the three stages of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, there comes the fourth stage in which the self is realized as immanent, eternal, infinite and transcendent reality. In waking (jagart) universal principle is related to Virat or cosmos, in dreaming (svapna) to Hiranyagharbha and deep sleep or Susupti to Ishvara. The final and fourth stage of self corresponds with Brahman. In this universal stage, body goes to the Virat, mind goes to the Hiranyagharbha, self-consciousness to Ishvara and Bliss or Ananda is Brahman. Sachhidananda means the absolute that consists of pure being, knowledge and bliss. All is one. If this is realized then unseen becomes visible, unknown becomes known.

II- Personal and Impersonal God

In Upanishads while the identity of Brahman with the Atman is clearly established, a certain ambiguity remains about Brahman’s relation with the physical world. On the one hand is the saying that ‘The world is nothing else than Atman’ but on the other hand the world as objective form of Atman is made to take up a position over against the Atman. Atman as the first principle is contrasted not only with the world, whose outward form it has put on, but also with the self within us with which it is said to be ultimately identical. This

idea of otherness of self and world opens the possibility of a theistic view. According to Deussen this theistic idea is not taken from Vedic polytheism but first makes its appearance long after it was superseded by the monistic doctrine of Atman. The Atman is not the 'god' (deva) in the old Vedic religion, but is the lord that is known as Ishvara. In Upanishads all ancient Vedic gods such as Indra, Agni, Varuna etc are recognized but subordinated to one God i.e. the Brahman. According to Brihadaranyaka Upanishads all the gods are dependent on Brahman and all of them are created by him. (Brh. Up., 1. 4. 6)

“Therefore when the people say of each separate god, ‘sacrifice to this, sacrifice to that, (it should be known that) this created universe proceeds from him alone; he therefore is all the gods. This (creation) here is an over-plus of creation of Brahman. Because he created the gods higher (than he himself), and because he as mortal created the immortals, therefore is it called the over-plus of creation (atisrishti).”⁶

Deussen also says that in Upanishads, the personal god is known as 'Is' 'Isa' 'Isana' and Ishvara (the lord). In later times he is called Parameshvara which means supreme lord. The theism of the Upanishads is also traceable in such texts as the following where the Atman is described as the “inner guide” (Antaryamin) in all the parts and power of nature and mankind.

“He who dwells in the seed, and within the seed, whom the seed does not know, whose body the seed is, and who pulls (rules) the seed within, he is thy Self, the puller (ruler) within, the immortal; unseen, but seeing; unheard, but hearing; unperceived, but perceiving; unknown, but knowing. There is no other seer but he, there is no other hearer but he, there is no other perceiver but he, there is no other knower but he. This is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal. Everything else is of evil.' After that Uddalaka Aruni held his peace.” (Brh. Up., 3.7. 23)

The theistic strain is even more pronounced in the following quote from Brhdaranyaka Upanishad (4. 4. 22):

“Here within the heart is a cavity, therein he dwells, the lord of the universe, the governor of the universe, the chief of the universe; he is not exalted by good works, he is not degraded by evil works; he is the lord of the universe, he is the governor of living beings, he is the protector of living beings; he is the bridge that holds asunder these worlds, and prevents them from clashing together.”

Similarly, the Chandogya reinforces the theistic view by calling Brahman as the refuge of love, the lord of love, the lord of brightness etc:

“They call him Samyadvama, for all blessings (vama) go towards him (samyanti). All blessings go towards him who knows this. 'He is also Vamani, for he leads (nayati) all blessings (vama). He leads all blessings who knows this. 'He is also Bhamani, for he shines (bhati) in all worlds. He who knows this, shines in all worlds.” (Chan. Up., 4. 15. 2-4)

We could also see the trace of Saguna Brahman in Kaushitaki Upanishad (3. 8):

“He is not exalted by good works nor degraded by evil works, but it is he who inspires to do good works the man whom he will lead on high out of these worlds, and it is he who inspires to do evil works the man whom he will lead downwards. He is the guardian of universe, he is the ruler of the universe, he is the lord of the worlds, and he is my soul (atman), that ought man to know.”⁷

In the Sevetasvatara Upanishad, again, the same theistic view is discerned in the following verse:

“The Self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of that creature. A man who is free from desires and free from grief, sees the majesty of the Self by the grace of the Creator.” (Sevet. Up., 3. 20)

In most Upanishads while the identity of God and the soul is not rejected, they are yet said to be different from one another. Deussen says:

“Beneath the characters of theism are discerned, half obliterated, those of pantheism, and under the latter again those of idealism.”⁸

According to Upanishads Brahman is to be understood as being of two kinds: Para and Apara. This distinction is for example indicated by Prasna Upanishad in the following verse:

“Then Saivya Satyakama asked him:--‘Sir, if someone among men should meditate here until death on the syllable Om, what would he obtain by it?’ He replied: ‘O Satyakama, the syllable Om (AUM) is the highest and also the other Brahman; therefore he who knows it arrives by the same means at one of the two.’ (Prasana. Up., V. 2-3)

Here we can see that the word ‘Om’ is made to refer to both lower and higher Brahman. Actually the symbol ‘Om’ is a sign both for the personal and impersonal Gods. Commenting upon this verse Swami Chinmayanand writes:

“The symbol OM is indeed the symbol of both the lower and higher Brahman; the conditioned and the unconditioned, the finite and the infinite. Therefore, he who knows it by this means surely attains either of them.”⁹

In Upanishads the word ‘Para’ is used for the higher Brahman which is a-cosmic, quality-less, indeterminate, indescribable, (Nisrapancha, Nirguna, Nirvishesha and Anirvachaniya). The word Apara, on the other hand, refers to lower Brahman which is cosmic, all-comprehensive, and full of all good qualities— (Saprapancha, Saguna and Savishesha). The first is the Absolute God while the second is called the Ishvara.¹⁰

In Svetasvatara Upanishad are mentioned some qualities of Ishvara such as creator of universe and protector of creatures. Here Ishvara is also called as being the cause of virtue and vice. He is the cause of bondage and also the cause of liberation from this world. He is the creator of time, while himself being beyond time. He is without any name and without any attributes, yet He is the Lord of all the attributes. In essence, Brahman and Ishvara are conjoined like fire and its power to burn, like the sleeping and the moving serpents. Matter, Self and God are only manifestations of the Absolute. The words Brahman and Ishvara are two aspects of the same entity i.e. impersonal and personal God. Personal God or Ishvara refers to ultimate reality that has qualities and impersonal God is the one that is devoid of attributes. The Brahman or Nirguna Brahman is unconditioned Brahman or Brahman that is without attributes. He is beyond all relations and creativeness. This state is the unmanifested state of Brahman and is beyond our intelligence. The other aspect is its attributive aspect and is also called as the Saguna Brahman. The Brahman and Ishvara are both represented by the same symbol 'Om' and the realization of either leads to deliverance. The Saguna Brahman as Hiranyagarbha is the 'Prathamaja' or the 'First Born' since it is the first Jiva born of Nirguna Brahman and the rest of the creations arise from Him, live in Him and are absorbed in Him. He creates this universe out of himself and remains permeated into it.

“He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as Hiranyagarbha), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere. The god who is in the fire,

the god who is in the water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration!.” (Svet. Up., II. 16)

Svetasvatara Upanishad also describes Him as the great magician who by his miraculous power creates and rules this world:

“The snarer who rules alone by his powers, who rules all the worlds by his powers, who is one and the same, while things arise and exist they who know this are immortal. For there is one Rudra only, they do not allow a second, who rules all the worlds by his powers. He stands behind all persons, and after having created all worlds he, the protector, rolls it up at the end of time. That one god, having his eyes, his face, his arms, and his feet in every place, when producing heaven and earth, forges them together with his arms and his wings. He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts. O Rudra, thou dweller in the mountains, look upon us with that most blessed form of thine which is auspicious, not terrible, and reveals no evil!.” (Svet. Up., III.1)

The question here is whether the Ishvara or Hiranyagarbha creates this world? According to schools of Vedanta in the state of dissolution or Pralaya the world of beings remains in the form of Vasana or mental impressions. These Vasana, in the state of their maturity, project forth a world of potential beings that is suitable enough for their fruition. These Vasana in their totality then become the cause of the creation of the world. The ultimate reality or the Infinite Consciousness, expressing through this totality of the mental impressions is known as Ishvara. He is both the material and efficient cause for the world and is also the Dispenser of the fruits of actions. He is regarded as the cause of production, substance and destruction of this universe. Ishvara, although he is

not independent to create a world as He likes, is yet compelled to project forth a world as determined by the needs of the Vasanas and their fruition.

“(He who knows) Aditi also, who is one with all deities, who arises with Prana (breath or Hiranyagarbha), who, entering into the heart, abides therein, and was born from the elements. This is that.’ ‘There is Agni (fire), the all-seeing, hidden in the two fire-sticks, well-guarded like a child (in the womb) by the mother, day after day to be adored by men when they awake and bring oblations. This is that.’ And that whence the sun rises, and whither it goes to set, there all the Devas are contained, and no one goes beyond. This is that.’ ‘What is here (visible in the world), the same is there (invisible in Brahman); and what is there, the same is here. He who sees any difference here (between Brahman and the world) goes from death to death. Even by the mind this (Brahman) is to be obtained, and then there is no difference whatsoever. He goes from death to death who sees any difference here.” (Katha Up., 4.7.10)

According to Upanishads, the Ishvara or the great Lord, also known as Sat-Chit-Ananda is the Brahman for the common people. So long as duality exists in the seeker and the appearance of the world exists, Brahman appears as the creator of the universe. It is when the existence of the world is transcended through the Nirvikalpaka Samadhi, attributeless and formless Brahman is intuited. That is why even the word ‘unconditioned Brahman’ refers really to ‘conditioned Ishvara’, for the moment we speak of Brahman, He ceases to be Brahman and becomes Ishvara.

II-A- View of Shankara

In the school of Vedanta Shankara is the most famous thinker who built his philosophy on the notion of pure unity of existence otherwise also called the principle of non-dualism (Advaita). He placed Absolute Brahman at the center

of his thought. According to him there is only one reality, which is indeterminate, and non-dual. He strictly followed the Upanishad texts that said: 'All is Brahman' (Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman). He believed that the scriptures and spiritual texts were written in secret language and symbolic style for the persons who cannot realize truth in direct way. Therefore when these books spoke about the attributes of Brahman, they were using only metaphors and symbols. The ultimate reality is beyond the intellect and ordinary people can never grasp it. Without going beyond the mind and speech one can never comprehend this indeterminate Brahman. The finite minds can never reach the heights of it. Sankara accepted Brahman as being devoid of attributes and quality. According to him God or Brahman with attributes is not perfect truth but is just a relative truth for the persons who want to think of Brahman as the source of creation and who think they are living in him and finally return to him. But for the Upanishads the whole universe is just Brahman. This neutral or pure Brahman is so unlike other beings that he is often called as non-being.¹¹

He is not being because he is radically dissimilar to any other creatures and doesn't have quality. There is no second for him. The place where he would not be seen, not heard and not realized, Brahman is there. According to Upanishads the most important negative attribute of absolute is non-being. Shankara says Upanishads want to say that the ultimate reality is beyond the being so it is known as non-being. It means that the being is not its attribute because it is just pure being. Thus when Brahman is known as non-being it refers to its eternality. Yajnavalkya says:

“He the Atman is not this, nor this (Neti-neti). He is inconceivable, for he cannot be conceived, unchangeable, for he is not changed, untouched, for nothing touches him; he cannot suffer by a stroke of the sword, he cannot suffer any injury.” (Brh. Up., IV. 5. 15)

When we define something on the basis of whatever we could experience of it, it becomes limited; but Brahman is unlimited.

Shankara described Brahman as non-being but he also said that he is not pure non-being. It is because of the inability of our limited minds to fully comprehend the nature of Brahman that we call Brahman as non-being; otherwise he is beyond and higher than beings that we know in objective world. He doesn't need existence for his existence because he is pure existence. Brahman is unknowable because we cannot know him by senses and describe him by empirical language. He cannot be seen by eyes; but whoever sees him, he could realize that the power of seeing has come from him. He cannot be breathed but whoever breathes could realize that the power of breathing is based on him. The human intellect cannot comprehend him because intellect is limited while nature of Brahman is unlimited.

It should be mentioned that although Shankara regards Brahman as absolutely devoid of qualities, in Upanishads, he is regarded both with and without qualities. What Upanishads say is that it is impossible to have positive definition of Brahman. The term “neti-neti” makes clear that Brahman cannot be experienced. He is undividable and simple. Shankara says that we cannot know Brahman even with the help of negative definition because if we give some negative definition to Brahman, it would put limitation on him indirectly.

According to him in the very act of knowing him the Brahman gets descent from its pristine neutrality to the level of Godhood as reflected in divine names.¹²

When we try to bring Nirguna Brahman within the categories of intellect, we are making this ultimate subject into an object of our thought, and thus miss its essential nature. It then no longer remains the unconditioned, indeterminate Brahman, but becomes conditioned by space time and causality which are, together, called Maya. The Ishvara in the school of Shankara is the Brahman that is conditioned by Maya. This is the highest conception of the Absolute that we, finite men, can have. Thus to reconcile his absolute monism with the practical standpoint of believing in Ishvara, Shankara accepts the Upanishadic distinction of Para Brahman and Apara Brahman. Para Brahman or Higher Brahman is the unconditioned, indeterminate and attributeless Absolute (Nirguna Brahman), while Isvara or God is the Apara or lower Brahman, which is also called determinate Brahman or Saguna Brahman. He is Saguna because we ascribe human qualities and attributes to Him and make him a Personal God for our own purpose.¹³

In other words, there are according to Shankara two kinds of Brahman: Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. Nirguna is Brahman that is devoid of attributes and Saguna is the Brahman with attributes. Brahman gets attributes by Maya. It means that Brahman loses its purity by Maya. As Saguna Brahman He is the Concrete Universal. He is the object of worship and devotion, inspirer of moral life and is the final heaven of everything. He is the Lord of Maya. In this stage,

God is a knower, for, he is confronted with an object to be known. Again, while Brahman is beyond activity and inactivity Ishvara cannot be changeless and inactive. Being empirically real, he must be ever acting. Ishvara is thus the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of this universe. Ishvara creates the universe out of himself, and at dissolution draws the entire universe towards himself. Ishvara is able to control both soul and matter.

But here it should be kept in mind that though God goes out as the universe and again comes back to himself, the alterations belong to his body alone and not to His essential nature. Ishvara's oneness is not impaired by his self-expression in the many. God remains both in the world and beyond it. This way Shankara has explained both the immanence and transcendence of God as mentioned in the Upanishads. According to Shankara, as immanent inner ruler Ishvara rules, from within, for He is the soul of souls. But He also transcends the universe as the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. But, though, from the practical standpoint Ishvara or God is the highest object of reverence, the description of God as creator etc, rests on our ignorance or Avidya. Man can never realize the distinction of subject and object. Brahman as indeterminate is devoid of all kinds of distinctions, external as well as internal (sajatiya, vijatiya and svagata).¹⁴ When mind is limited by Maya or Avidya, Brahman which is essentially a non-dual Reality appears as Ishvara (personal God), Jiva (the individual soul) and Jagat (the world). Shankara says that the essence of Brahman is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. These are the essential characteristics of Brahman or Svarupa laksana, whereas description of Him as

the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, are merely accidental description or *Tatastha laksana*. According to Shankara if a shepherd plays the role of a king, then he is the king so long as he remains on the stage. In the same way the description of God as the creator of the world is true only from the practical point of view i.e., so long as the world-appearance is regarded as real. Creatorship of the world does not touch his essence, just as loss or gain of a kingdom does not affect the actor who is playing the king on the stage; or just as a rope is not affected by the illusory character of the snake.

The concept of *Saguna Brahman* is also necessary for it has its own importance because it is essential to describe the changeable universe. *Brahman* is immutable. But we come across changes in the universe. This changing universe cannot be traced to *Prakriti*, which is unintelligent. By itself the unintelligent *Prakriti* cannot cause anything without the aid of an intelligent Spirit. It is only through the power of an intelligent subject, God, that the object or *Prakriti*, develops into the world. Not only that, to posit *Prakriti* by the side of *Brahman* as an ultimate category would be to limit the nature of *Brahman*, which is without a second. The point is that this is the only way to posit a 'Saguna Brahman', or *Ishvara* who combines within himself the nature of being and becoming, the unattached *Brahman* and unconscious *Prakriti*. *Ishvara* combines the two principles of *Brahman* and *Prakriti*. Shankara refutes those arguments which regard other principles to be the cause of the world. The unintelligent *Prakriti* could be the cause of the world but the immanent teleology of nature cannot be explained by the unintelligent *Prakriti*. The

intelligent Brahman also with its associated power of Maya can only be the cause of the well-designed world. The stones, bricks, mortars, etc cannot by themselves fashion the well-designed buildings; that certainly needs the help of intelligent workman. Even if we grant activity to Pradhana, the unintelligent Prakriti can still have no purpose to design this world.¹⁵

According to Purva Mimamsa, the principle of Apurva, and not God, that accounts for the ordered way in which men reap the fruits of their deeds. Shankara replies that Apurva is unspiritual and cannot operate unless it is moved by something spiritual. He says that for the Nyaya-Vaisesika God is an extra-cosmic being, not the material cause of the world. This position is also untenable because being only the efficient cause of the world, God cannot be the ruler of matter and souls without being connected with them. But what connection can be conceived between the two? It cannot be conjunction, since God, matter and souls are all infinite and without parts. It cannot be inherence since it is difficult to decide which is the abode of which and what the abiding thing is. It follows then that God should be believed both as the material and efficient cause of the world. Shankara here anticipated many arguments against his position and answered them accordingly. Though Ishvara is said to be both material and efficient cause of the world, in our experience we do not find the material cause to be conscious enough to be the efficient cause since it does not possess knowledge. According to Shankara it is not essential that it should be here the same as in experience; for this subject is known by revelation and not

inference. While we rely on scriptural statements it is not essential for us to conform to experience.¹⁶

It may be objected that Ishvara cannot be the cause of the world since there is a difference of nature between cause and effect. A piece of gold cannot be the cause of a vessel of clay; so also Ishvara, a pure and spiritual being, cannot be the cause of the world which is impure and unspiritual. Shankara replies that unconscious objects frequently take their rise from conscious beings, such as hair and nails arise from living body of men. From inanimate dung, the animate dung beetle comes forth. If it is argued that in these cases, in spite of apparent diversity, there is fundamental identity, since both of these spring from the earth, Shankara answered that Ishvara and the world have the common characteristic of being, or Satta.¹⁷

Finally however, Shankara admits, the existence of God cannot be proved by reason. He has shown the futility of several arguments such as cosmological, moral, and logical. In the cosmological arguments, for example, an attempt is made to prove the existence of God by considering Him as the 'First Cause' or the 'Uncaused cause'. But such a cause should be of the same order as the other causes of the universe; it must belong to the same order as the other empirical objects, since the latter are said to be connected with it. The causal chain proceeding from the phenomenal world must end in this phenomenal world. We aren't able to accept within this world of phenomena an uncaused cause. But, in that case, Ishvara is an empirical phenomenon, limited to the space-time framework. But a finite God is no God. Similarly, in the teleological argument

one proceeds from the systematic harmony of the world which is endorsed both by science and common sense to a hypothesis of a divine being which consciously conducts everything. But such an argument may be cogent if it can be proved that our human experience can know reality in its entirety. As a matter of fact, our knowledge is limited, and there is much in the world which never directly enters our experience. According to Radhakrishnan:

“If the universe is small enough for little minds to explore, if we can tell whence it comes and whither it goes, can understand its origin, nature and destiny, then we are not finite and we do not demand an infinite.”¹⁸

According to Shankara moral argument may try to prove God as a benevolent adjudicator of values. But, then, he will have to take the responsibility of both good and evil of the world. If, to relieve him of the authorship of evil, we accept something like the mythology of Persia and make Satan responsible for it, then the oneness of God disappears and we reinstate a dualism between God and Satan.¹⁹

We can conclude that the existence of God cannot be proved logically. Such an attempt only belongs to the phenomenal world, having no connection with Reality as such. But this does not mean that God does not exist. Sruti is the basis of His existence. We can be sure of the existence of God by the spiritual insights of the seers as recorded in the scriptures. The rational proofs only tell us that God is a possibility. The reality of God transcends our rational powers. There is no other way to admit the statement of the scriptures that Ishvara is the cause of the world.

II-B-View of Ramanuja

The theory of Ramanuja on the nature of Brahman is known as Vishistadvaitavada or qualified non-dualism. It has been named thus because in this theory the absolute Brahman is conceived as being qualified (Vishista) by real parts (conscious and unconscious). The concept of Vishistadvaita was present even before Ramanuja, for he himself tells us that he is only carrying on the Vishistadvaita tradition of the ancient writers. Ramanuja is however known as the greatest thinker of Vishistadvaita, for it was he who developed elements of the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutra to generate a system that came to be recognized by his name.

In his exhaustive commentary on the Brahma Sutra called Shri Bhasya, Ramanuja recognizes both personal and impersonal God as equally real. According to him Nirguna is identical with Saguna Brahman but with qualification and determination (Savisesa). Ramanuja, like Shankara, accepted Brahman to be eternal and uncreated, material as well as efficient cause of the world, but he said it cannot be attributeless or a bare identity. The matter and soul are the body of Brahman. Nirguna Brahman is experienced in transcendent state, since all our experiences are of qualified objects. According to him one object is distinguished from another by the presence of its variable characteristics. Moreover, he says, it is impossible to reject the existence of the plurality and the finite objects in the universe. In order to explain their existence and their mutual relations, there must be a common bond of unity

inhering in them, and that, according to Ramanuja, consists in a metaphysical principle which cannot be a bare identity.²⁰

Saguana Brahman or God of Ramanuja, therefore, admits determination, limitation, difference, etc. When the Sruti says: “He thought ‘I shall be many’,” or “By the knowledge of one everything will be known” the existence of plurality is affirmed, and Brahman is understood both as the cause and also as the effect. During the time of creation the world becomes manifest, i.e., insentient beings attain a gross state with names and forms. This state is regarded as the Karyavastha. At the time of dissolution or Pralaya the creation goes back to the Brahman and thus becomes again unmanifest. This is known as the causal state or Karanavastha. But even in the latter condition the attributes of souls and matter exist, though subtly. In the causal state they are so subtle that they cannot be designated otherwise than as Brahman itself. Brahman or God is a synthetic whole, with souls and matter inside it. The Absolute is non-Dual in the sense that it is free from any homogeneous difference (Svajatiya Bheda) and heterogeneous difference (Vijatiya Bheda). But it has internal difference (Svagata bheda). Ramanuja’s Vishistadvaita, thus, means non-dualism qualified by difference. Shankara explains the famous text ‘Tat tvam asi’ as the metaphysical identity between Brahman and individual soul but Ramanuja says that the judgment ‘that thou art’ brings out the complex nature of the ultimate reality, which has individual souls inhering in it.²¹

Three fundamental entities are thus conceived in the theory of Ramanuja: God (Ishvara), matter (Achit), and souls (Chit). But the question here is what is the relation between them? Though all are real and eternal, Ramanuja has attributed finitude to matter and souls which are however not external to God. They form the body of God and are thus inseparable and utterly dependent on God. The relation is also of whole and parts – God being the whole and matter and soul constituting his parts. Again Ramanuja says that body has only derivative being, while the movement of the body is subject to the will of the soul, and it is destroyed when the soul departs.

The relation of body and soul to God can also be described as that holding between Prakara and Prakari or attributes and substance. There is no separation between substance and its attributes. The relation between a substance and its attributes is that of inner inseparability or Aprithakasiddhi and not of inherence which is an external relation. However, if souls and matter are attributes of God, it does not mean that they are not in themselves substances possessing attributes, with their own distinct modes, energies and activities. According to Ramanuja Ishvara is not only the possessor of matter and soul; he is also the controller (Niyanta), or internal ruler of them. He alone is uncaused while the rest are caused. Brahman has for its body the sentient and the insentient beings both in the causal and the effected states. Here the question may be asked if matter and spirits are parts of the God then doesn't God undergo modifications with the change of matter? Ramanuja explains that it is like when a child grows

up to be a youth, there is no change in the person himself but only in the body.²²

Similarly, during the Karyavastha, it is the body of Brahman, i.e. the matter and soul that undergoes change, not the Ishvara who is their unmoved Mover. During the creation the insentient part of his body which was in a fine condition before creation, manifests in a gross form assuming names and forms, and produces objects of enjoyment, while the souls attain expansion of intelligence as a result of taking to a gross body, which makes them fit for the enjoyment of these objects as a result of the fruit of their karma.²³

Question also may arise whether Brahman is polluted by imperfections due to its having for its body the sentient and the insentient worlds. But Ramanuja says, Brahman is not sullied in the least by the imperfections of the sentient and non-sentient beings in which it abides, for God is not only immanent in the matter and soul, he is also transcendental. He is the perfect personality. As the sun reflected in a sheet of water or in a mirror is in no way contaminated by the imperfections of the water, so Brahman is not affected by the imperfections of the various places like earth etc.²⁴

Ramanuja says that Brahman is free from imperfections and possesses all blessed qualities like omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, immortality, knowledge, power, mercy, love etc. He possesses all merits and is devoid of all demerits. Brahman is 'One without a second' and is unique in possessing excellent auspicious qualities. According to him evil qualities like sinfulness, aging, death, grief etc do not affect Him. God is the support and Adhara of

these qualities, as well as of the attributes of matter and souls. The imperfection of the soul is not due to its having a body but due to its karma (past work). He says that Brahman is not subject to karma. He is the Lord of Karma, and, as such, free from imperfections.

Generally we could say that the God of Ramanuja is an embodied being, but the body is not the stuff of Prakriti. Ramanuja accepted that there are in scripture texts which reject all predicates to Brahman, but they only deny finite and false attributes, and not all attributes. According to him when Upanishads delineate Brahman to be attributeless they only deny the evil qualities in it. When, for example, it is said that we cannot comprehend the nature of Brahman, it only means that the glory of Brahman is so vast that it eludes the grasp of the finite mind. There are also certainly texts which deny plurality to Brahman, but this only means that there is no real existence of things apart from Brahman. The supreme spirit subsists in all forms as the soul of all. This means there is no actual difference between the Saguna and the Nirguna Texts as such.²⁵

About the description of Brahman as Sat, Chit and Ananda, Ramanuja says that if they had the oneness of meaning, then only one term could have sufficed to apprehend the nature of Brahman. But they denote three attributes in the same substratum, i.e. the Brahman. So when Brahman is defined as “Existence, Knowledge, and Infinity” by the scriptures it does not mean that Brahman is free from all attributes. This only means that these three are qualities of Brahman which distinguish it from other beings and make him a perfect

personality that is dependent on nothing external. The Supreme Spirit is identified with Vishnu by Ramanuja, who lives with His consort in Vaikuntha made of pure Sattva. Though he is non-dual he manifests himself in various forms. He is the Antaryamin, the transcendent Lord that descends on earth as various incarnations or avatars. Ramanuja even approves God's appearance in the form of holy idols in the temples for the devotees to serve Him physically.²⁶

II-C-View of Madhva

For a clear understanding of philosophy of Madhva, it is better to compare it with the school of Shankara that accepts reality as Nirguna Brahman. Madhva says that reality consists of three beings namely, God, soul and matter. On these, soul and matter are in dependency while God is independent. Srutis say 'Ekam Evadvityam Brahman' which means that 'Brahman is one without a second'. In other words, Brahman is unsurpassed in excellence and without an equal. As to the relation between Chit, Achit and God, Madhva believes that all the three are real and eternal. The former two are however subordinate to God and thus dependent on him. The beings of Cit and Acit are dependent on God since they are of limited powers and not all-knowing. According to him God is the One who controls the Chit and Achit (sentient and insentient Reals) which are of a different nature from Him. He recognizes Ishvara as the Supreme Being who is the creator and sustainer of this universe.²⁷

God enters into Prakriti to energize and transform it in many ways. God enters into matter to render possible its modification at every stage. The souls also being dependent, cannot control one another without one ultimate and

independent principle connecting all of them. There would be an endless regress if one finite self (real) were accepted as endowed with an intrinsic right to control another. For, that again would be similarly liable to control by another finite being and so on. Madhva says that so long as both are finite, such control would be inconceivable. The difficulty can only be overcome by positing an Ishvara to regulate the inter-relations of the Jivas. Ishvara, according to Madhva, is the controller of the many Purushas and superior to them in so many ways. Thus, Prakrti, Purushas, Kaala, etc. have to be dependent on one independent principle, viz God or some ultimate reality that can be called Brahman. Here, Madhva's idea is similar to Ramanuja. The difference, however, lies in the fact that for Ramanuja God is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, matter and soul being the body of God. But for Madhva God is the efficient cause but not the material cause of the universe. God rules the souls and matter, though he does not create them from nothing, or reduce them to nothing. Madhva believes that independent being in his nature is indefinable. When the Supreme is said to be indefinable, all that is meant is that a complete knowledge of Him is difficult to acquire. This independent being is infinite in His attributes, for, an independent being cannot possibly be finite and limited in any case. He is possessed of all adequate and unrestricted powers and is all-knowing. The cosmic powers of the Supreme consists of eight in number: creation, preservation, dissolution, control, enlightenment, obscuration, bondage, and release.²⁸

According to Madhva the conception of God has two divine aspects: the perfection of being (sarvagunapuratvam) and freedom from all limitations (sarvadosagandhavidhuratvam). These two aspects cover and exhaust all that is great and good. The perfection of the divine is understood to mean that it is all-pervasive, covering time, space and fullness of attributes. It is impossible that we accept God as devoid of attributes. God must possess attributes, for no enquiry is possible about anything that is essentially Nirvishesa. Thus as a necessary precondition of philosophical inquiry, it must be agreed that God or Brahman is with attributes or Savishesa. Even being devoid of all empirical attributes (neti-neti) is also a form of characterization.²⁹

The attributes and actions of Brahman are however the same as itself. They are not different from each other at the highest levels. Whatever forms we conceive for him, whether Prakritic or Bhautika, they are influenced by Brahman because it transcends Prakrti and others and controls them all. When we say Brahman is 'formless' it signifies that its form is trans-empirical. When the Srutis speak of the forms of Brahman, we use common parlance to have a faint and inadequate idea of the trans-empirical forms, for there is no other way in which we can form any conception of the infinite. The form of God is nothing but existence, consciousness and bliss unlimited. Man cannot prove the existence of God with the help of his reason though it can help to form idea of God in his mind. Men can conceive of an ascending order of power, goodness, knowledge, beauty, etc. and the being in which highest perfection is realized is God. According to Madhva it is possible to know God's nature through the

study of the Vedas. Madhva says that Brahman is identified with Vishnu who manifests himself in various forms, in various incarnations, and is also present in the various sacred images and Lakshmi is the personification of his creative energy.³⁰

III- Theory of Creation

According to Upanishads universe has come out of Brahman and it gets its essence from Brahman and will return back to Brahman. Upanishads also speak about two aspects of world: organic and inorganic. All the organic things such as animals, plants and humans possess souls while the inorganic matter is without soul. (Chan. Up., VI. 2) The Brahman entered into three elements namely, fire (Tejas), water (Ap) and earth (Ksiti) and all the rest of bodies were formed by their combination. All things are made by the transforming of these three basic elements and permeated by Brahman. Although in the Taittiriya Upanishad some more elements such as air and ether are added they are still considered to proceed from the one Brahman. Rig Veda speaks of a cosmic-soul or universal soul (Purusha/ Hiranyagarbha) which is responsible for the creation of world from primeval waters. The same idea is also mentioned twice in Svetasvatara Upanishad. (III. 4 and IV. 12)

“He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts.” (Svet. Up., III. 4)

The above passage speaks about one of the earliest products in the process of creation but here Upanishad does not say anything about Brahman or Atman.

Purusha also does not find any mention in it. The idea however that a single subjective reality inheres the material plurality is found in both Vedas and Upanishads. Deussen says:

“We know (and the Indians knew also as early as Birh 2.4.5) that the entire objective universe is possible only in so far as it is sustained by a knowing subject. This subject as sustainer of the objective universe is manifested in all individual objects but is by no means identical with them. For the individual subjects pass away, but the objective universe continues to exist without them; there exists therefore the eternal knowing subject also (Hiranyagarbha) by whom it is sustained. Space and time are derived from this subject. It is itself accordingly not in space and does not belong to time, and therefore from an empirical point of view it is in general nonexistence; it has no empirical but only a metaphysical reality.”³¹

Upanishads rejected the materialistic theories of evolution because materialists believe the creation of the world to be based on matter. But for the Upanishads Brahman is different from matter. Matter by itself cannot be the origin and essence of world unless it had the potential cause in itself. Ananda or bliss cannot be the end of evolution unless it was also the beginning. Every creature like material things, animals and humans possess the characteristics of their ultimate source and end. According to Upanishads:

“Whatever there is belonging to the son belongs to the father; whatever there is belonging to the father belongs to the son.” (Aitareya Up., II. I. 8.1)

Not only humans but every creature has eternal essence in itself. The manifestation of things from potential to actual causes evolution to take place. Radhakrishnan says:

“Development means the manifestation of potential of things by the removal of the obstructing energies.”³²

With regard to the theory of evolution there is of course a distinction between the scientific and the philosophical views of it. In the philosophical method the common ground of unity is envisaged while the scientific method is interested in different levels of development in the things which exist in objective world. According to Upanishads the origin of the world is a unity; it means that the plurality of universe is based on the One that is eternal. Taitiriya Upanishad says:

“Who indeed could live, who breathe, and should not this Ananda be in Akasa.” (Tait. Up., II)

Mundaka Upanishad, similarly, says:

“The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, and much less this fire. When he shines, everything shines after him; by his light all this is lighted.” (Mundaka Up., 2. 2. 10)

According to Upanishads Ananda is the lord of world, its final cause and efficient cause. It is the beginning and end of universe. The matter that exists in objective world, having gone through the process of evolution, is a different entity compared to what it originally was as based on Ananda. Generally the evolution means the transforming of potential into actual. In this view of evolution the matter has more potential in itself than life. Also, what comes before has more potentiality than what comes later and whatever has come later has more form and more actuality. Aristotle says that what is earlier is matter and what comes later is called form. Matter is the passive thing that needs to be

in some way formed. God, according to him, is the perfect form that initially causes to set the progress of matter into form. In the Upanishads this God is known as active self-consciousness. All changes in the world happen because of Prajnana from God. He is responsible for the process of evolution in universe. Even if we separate God from matter, we cannot run away from dualism where God is opposed to matter. We can see a dualism in Aristotle when he makes the distinction between the first mover and first matter. But according to Upanishads both of them, matter and form, active consciousness and non-active consciousness are rooted in one ultimate reality. Matter itself is in God. The first forms of three elements: water, fire and earth are regarded as divine as they are embedded in a single spirit. In this respect the system of Samkhya is opposed to the Upanishads. In the dualism of Samkhya the ultimate reality comprises of two opposite principles of matter and spirit, of Prakriti and Purusha. (Prasna Up., I. 3)

Universe is generally conceived as possessing an identity of purpose and a well-designed structure generated by the mind of a creative being called God. But Upanishads make the Brahman to be both cause and effect. He is the end point of evolution, and also its beginning. He is the root of evolution that starts with matter and ends in Ananda. Brahman is both the producer and produced.

“That created itself by itself.” (Brh. Up., II. 1. 20)

“He creates the world and then enters in it.” (Brh. Up., IV. 7)

Prajapati is the form of Brahman that lets the process of evolution to happen within himself. He divides himself in two parts of male and female. Half of

him becomes male and the other half female. Thus acting as both male and female the Brahman produces the substances of the world. And this substance of things manifests itself as created existence. (Chan. Up., III. 39)

This kind of generation or production is likened to the sun rays proceeding from the sun. The world coming out of Brahman, moreover, does not affect change into it. The two remain substantially united. The Atman entering in things is likened also to salt mixing into the water. The things are also said to have originated from Atman as sparks fly out from the fire or as sound emanates from the flute. (Chan. Up., VII. 21. 2- VI. 2. 1) Commenting upon these analogies Radhakrishnan writes:

“The metaphor of spinning of the web by the spider, the bearing of the child by the mother, the production of notes from musical instruments, attempts to bring out the intimate relationship between the cause and the effects. It is the Tadatamya or oneness between Brahman and the world that is conveyed in all this wealth of symbol and image.”³³

According to Upanishads the realm of multiplicity is not outside of Atman. It means that Atman- Brahman and empirical world are not separated from each other. The world of plurality can be explained by the oneness of Brahman. The Upanishads thus recognize oneness of Brahman as the root and source of all that exists. It tries to explain all the multiplicity in terms of a single unity.

In order to explain the co-existence of multiplicity and unity, the Upanishads are constrained to using the language of symbols, even though it doesn't really solve the problem. But when we don't have knowledge of Brahman, it isn't possible to dogmatize about the relation of world's multiplicity to the unity of

Brahman. The two however cannot be without relationship. There are for sure different views given by different scholars to unravel the difficulty. But whatever one's answer, the bottom line remains that the changeability and plurality of the world does not affect the non-changeability and unity of Brahman. As Radhakrishnan says:

“The presumption is that the world of relations doesn't in any way affect the nature of Brahman. The destruction of the world of experience does not in the least take away from the being of Brahman.”³⁴

Brahman can exist apart from the world of multiplicity. The existence of the physical world is not part of the existence of Brahman for in that case it will have the limitation of time and space. Brahman however comprehends the world and all things of past, future and present. It should be mentioned that Brahman is not the cause antecedent in time to the world as effect. According to Upanishads world is only an appearance and manifestation of absolute Brahman. The world evolves as a result of self-energizing of Brahman that is eternal and absolute. In this process of evolution, two factors are involved: first the self-consciousness or God and the second the potential matter that is passive. One cannot describe exactly how the absolute makes a unity with difference. All that can be said is that the self and the not-self make the emergence of the world possible. The self is the absolute and the activity belongs to the domain of appearance. Radhakrishnan elaborates:

“In the syllable AUM, ‘A’ represents the self, ‘U’ the not-self, and ‘M’ the negation of the two, but all these three are rolled into the ‘AUM’, the Pranava. The world is interpreted to be a negative reflection of the Aham. It is affirmed

by the self for its own realisation. Etat is the unreal shadow, while Aham is the reality. The interpretation is ingenious; but we have to remember that what is denied is not the Etat (not-self) as the reflection of Aham (self) but only the Etat (not-self) as cut off from Aham (self). The many as separate and apart from the One is denied. Brahman the reality causes, if such a term is legitimate, all difference. In Indian thought this symbol AUM stands for many things. Every kind of trinity is represented by AUM, Being, non-being and becoming; birth, life and death; Prakrti, Jivatman and Paramatman; Sattva, Rajas and Tamas; past, present and future; Brahma, Visnu and Siva. The conception of Brahma, Visnu and Siva emphasises the different aspects of the one supreme, which contains the three conditions. God by a free act of His will creates, or more philosophically posits, an eternal universe. This positing God is Brahma. He views it, contemplates it, sustains it, enjoys it as being distinct from himself. This God is Visnu. He receives it back into his own unity as an indissoluble element of his being, then he is Siva. Those who imagine that the three states are exclusive postulate three personal agencies embodying the three different functions.”³⁵

For the Upanishads the relation between subject and object cannot be explained because of the limitation of human mind. Due to this limitation, man experiences the world as divided into subject and object although the reality is one. According to Shankara's Vedanta this duality of subject and object is based on Maya. Maya makes us see the real as dual. If the veil of Maya is removed, the oneness of Brahman will be revealed.

According to Deussen there are four aspects to the theory of creation in Upanishads. These are as follows: the first is that matter gets its existence from God. He fashions the world but doesn't create it. The second, the universe is formed by God from nothing. The third, the universe is generated by way of God transforming himself into it. The fourth is that the reality is of God and

other than him there is no reality. According to Upanishads the universe that is limited in space and time, is a reflection of God. Deussen says:

“For the fundamental thought, that is held fast at least as a principle at all stages, even at the lowest which maintains the independent existence of matter, is the conviction of the sole reality of the atman; only that side by side with and in spite of this conviction more or less far-reaching concessions were made to the empirical consciousness of the reality of the universe, that could never be entirely cast off; and thus universe disowned by the fundamental idealistic view of the sole reality of the atman was yet again partially rehabilitated.”³⁶

The fact however that Upanishads repeatedly emphasize Brahman as the only reality often creates the impression that world is unreal. But when Upanishads say that Atman is the sole reality it means that there is no difference between subject and object, plurality and change, world and Brahman. Radhakrishnan wrote:

“This doctrine of the illusion of all appearance of reality follows naturally and logically from the repeated teachings in the Upanisads regarding the non-duality of the self of Atman or Brahman as the sole reality of the universe.”³⁷

This statement supported by Upanishad which also says:

“The infinite is in the finite. This Atman is the entire universe.” (Chan. Up., II. 4. 26) Radhakrishnan refers to the dialogue of Indra with Prajapati in the Upanishads. In this dialogue Atman is said to exclude everything definite and distinct, and is called barest abstraction.³⁸ The problem is we cannot develop the system of absolute by denial of relative. The universe that is limited in time and space hides the reality of things. Reality manifests itself through the world. The

process of manifestation and concealment is done at the same time. The ultimate reality being devoid of matter and multiplicity, however, comprehend the latter. We realize that beyond the multiplicity, there is a common consciousness. If we see the world as dualism, we move away from the truth.

In Chandogya Upanishad there is a discussion between father and son that makes this point in emphatic terms.

“Fetch me from thence a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree. ‘Here is one, Sir’. ‘Break it’. ‘It is broken, Sir’. ‘What do you see there?’ ‘These seeds, almost infinitesimal.’ ‘Break one of them.’ ‘It is broken, Sir’. ‘What do you see there?’ ‘Not anything, sir.’ The father said: ‘My son, that subtle essence which you don’t perceive there, of that very essence this great Nyagrodha tree exists. Believe it, my son, That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the true. It is the self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it’.” (Chan. Up., VI. 10)

It means that the nature has unity that is hidden by multiplicity. When Upanishads say that there is nothing real other than Atman it means universal consciousness consists of all. But again, when it says that the external world exists outside us, it refers to empirical individual that is comprised of mind and body. But finally the point is that Atman is entirely real and also consists of universe. According to empirical view there is a distinction between individual self and objective world but this duality dissolves into the oneness of the universe when the right insight is available. We look at the world as duality but this duality that makes distinction between object and subject isn’t ultimate.

When however it is said that duality of subject and object isn’t real it doesn’t mean that duality doesn’t exist at all. Upanishads give the examples of salt and

water, fire and spark, spider and web, flute and sound, to exemplify the relation of Brahman to universe. In Upanishads God is an eternal spirit that transcends and consists of subjective man and objective world. The unity of subject with object and the world is relative. Although Upanishads say that the multiplicity of the world, succession of time, co-existence in space, the relation of cause and effect, cannot be the highest reality, but they do not yet say that these are absolute non-existence. The concept of Maya has been brought in Upanishads only to say that there is an underlying reality that comprehends all elements from the personal God to telegraph post.³⁹

According to Shankara duality of object and subject disturbs the light of oneness of absolute. If we look at creatures as shadow of real then substance is real. The objective world is real but it is relative. It means that objective world needs Brahman for its existence but Brahman doesn't need anything for its existence. He is independent but others depend on him. World is not real because it is in the process of becoming; but real is absolute. Ultimate reality or absolute is not in time but time is in absolute. Process of time is found in absolute that is timeless. Unity of being works through the process of the evolution of the universe. The being and becoming are identical. The philosophy of Upanishads presents a necessary harmony between the two. Subject and object both are real although absolute is the sole reality and plurality of world is relatively real that depends on absolute.

Shankara accepted the view of Samkhya that says that there is a harmony or order in the world but he said this should be caused by a conscious reality

rather than a non-intelligent Prakriti. The harmony of universe is because of an intelligent Brahman. It is not possible to fully understand the universe without recognizing the intelligent design as part of it. We progress from the finite to infinite, from the limited to unlimited, from the multiplicity to unity etc. Some relation between consciousness of Brahman and its Maya Shakti should be there so that Maya can be known as creator, destroyer and preserver of plurality in the world. Such a relation gives power to Maya to interfere into the universe. Prakriti is too weak to be its cause. For example, we cannot say that a building designed itself without the help of some intelligent workman. For how is it possible for the unintelligent Pradhana to know the beauty and harmony of world. Shankara therefore believes that the cause of universe must be an intelligent agent i.e. the Brahman. The Samkhya system accepts the dualism of Purusha and Prakriti so non-dualism of Shankara must be opposed to it.

Samkhya and Shankara are also different in their respective theories of causality. Samkhya said that the effect must have pre-existence in the cause but Shankara says there is no difference between cause and effect. Cause is real and effect is the apparent manifestation of cause. Shankara also accepted the idea of Shunyavadins and the Svatantra-Vignanavadins in maintaining, against Samkhya, that if the effect has a pre-existence in the cause then it has been already an accomplished fact and its procession will be a repetition. Shankara generally doesn't believe the theory of causation in real sense. Effect is not independent. It can never exist without cause either before or after manifestation so it is not possible to say that effect doesn't have pre-existence

in cause. Effect is only the reflection of cause although ultimately there is no difference between cause and effect. Effect needs cause for its being but not vice versa. On the other hand, the existence of effect is not essentially in itself. It is the being that depends on cause that is known as Brahman. It is evident that curd can be made by milk and pots by clay but clay can never produce curd. But Asatkaryavada said that it could be possible. According to this theory, the relation of cause and effect is possible only between two beings that have real existence and not between existence and non-existence.

According to Ramanuja there are three types of Reals or what he calls Tattva-traya; they are Chit, Achit, and Ishvara. The first which is the concept of Achit or the unconscious substance, is also of three kinds: Shuddha Sattva or Nitya-Vibhuti, which is pure matter, Prakriti or Mishrasattva, which is ordinary matter and Kala i.e., time, or Sattva-shunya. Pure reality or Suddhasattva is matter without mutability. According to him the ideal world and the bodies of gods and the eternal and liberated souls are made up of this stuff. The Vaikuntha, the city of God, and the holy idols in sacred places like Shrirangam are also made up of it. The Mishrasattva or Prakriti is ordinary matter which makes samsara. The existence of Prakriti is not an object of inference. It is known by the authority of the scriptures. According to him it consists of three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. These qualities manifest themselves in the world of creation and remain in subtle state during Pralaya. In that state Prakriti is denied of any name and form. While Suddhasattva represents divine perfection, Prakriti stand for happiness and pleasure (Bhogya) and suffers

change. Prakriti depends on God for its existence instead of being self-existent as Samkhya said. According to him, at the time of creation, the process of world evolution began from Prakriti.⁴⁰

Ramanuja says that the non-conscious have to obey the will of God. They are not in themselves good or bad, but cause pleasure or pain to the individuals according to their karma. There is difference between matter and souls and the two are different from God. Matter and souls are attributes of God and thus dependent on Him. In order to be real a thing does not need to be independent. Matter and souls are neither created nor destroyed. They are co-eternal with Him. Then what does creation mean? According to Ramanuja creation is explicit manifestation of the effect which was already implicitly contained in the cause. Ramanuja thus believes in Satkaryavada as against Shankara who claimed that change from cause to effect is not a real but only an apparent change. But Ramanuja also says that the cause really changes into the effect, just as milk changes into curd. Shankara conceived the world to be only an appearance imposed on Brahman. His theory is accordingly called Brahma-vivarta vada. Ramanuja, on the other hand, believes in Brahma-Parinamavada according to which creation must be real, which means that the entire universe including the material world and the individual souls is a real modification of Brahman. Ramanuja accepted that Brahman and the world, though of different natures, can exist as the cause and the effect, for it is not necessary that all the qualities of the cause which distinguish it from others must be in the effect.⁴¹

Ramnuja said that Brahman has its body; the sentient and the insentient beings are in the Brahman in its causal and effected states. Causal state of Brahman means the souls and matter are in a subtle condition and are one with Brahman. Before the process of creation started they couldnot be designated otherwise than as Brahman itself. This state is called Brahman's Karanavastha. According to Upanishads:

“In the beginning,' my dear, 'there was that only which is (to on), one only, without a second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (to me on), one only, without a second; and from that which is not, that which is was born.'But how could it be thus, my dear?' the father continued. 'How could that which is be born of that which is not? No, my dear, only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second. 'It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. 'That fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. 'And therefore whenever anybody anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone. 'Water thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth earth (food).Therefore whenever it rains anywhere, most food is then produced. From water alone is eatable food produced.” (Chan. Up., VI. 2. 1-4)

Max Muller, explaining the above verses, says:

“In other Upanishads the Sat produces first akasa, ether, then vayu, air, and then only tegas, fire. Fire is a better rendering for tegas than light or heat. Really the Sat, in the form of fire. Fire is whatever burns, cooks, shines, and is red. By water is meant all that is fluid, and bright in colour. By anna, food, is here meant the earth, and all that is heavy, firm, dark in colour.”⁴²

Ramanuja explains Sat or being as the Karanavastha of both matter and souls. In creation both the sentient and insentient beings attain a gross state with names and forms and become Brahman in the effected state. The subtle matter is developed into gross elements, which are the objects of enjoyment, and the

immaterialized souls become housed in gross bodies according to their karmas. The subtle souls attain expansion of intelligence as a result of their taking to a gross body, which makes them fit for the enjoyment of the gross objects. Here it should be mentioned that when Brahman undergoes this change from the causal to the effected state, imperfections and sufferings are limited to the souls. But when Brahman tries to be the self and inner Ruler it is not affected by the imperfections such as childhood, youth etc. These do not affect a person but are limited to his body.

If the question is asked why at all creation takes place, the reply is that the law of Karma necessitates creation. Ramanuja says that the process of creation does not have a beginning because the state of creation begins in order to enable the souls to reap the fruits of their past deeds. Ramanuja also emphasized that the cause of creation and dissolution of the world are related to the sweet will of God that is termed as Lila or sport. The universe comes into being when Brahman in its causal state desires to be many and thus develops names and forms. However the two states are reconciled by claiming that the will of God is not averse to the law of Karma. The latter is the expression of His will itself. Here, it must be recalled that Ramanuja rejected Shankara's theory of Maya by raising seven important objections the most important of which was the question about seat of Maya. Maya must exist in Brahman, for otherwise unqualified monism of Brahman would break down. Radhakrishnan says:

“Ramanuja urged several objections against the Advaita doctrine of avidya. What is the seat (asraya) of avidya? It cannot be Brahman, who is full of perfections. It cannot be the individual, who is the product of avidya. Avidya

cannot conceal Brahman, whose nature is self-luminosity. If self-luminous consciousness, which is without object and without substrate, becomes through the influence of an imperfection residing within itself conscious of itself as connected with numberless objects, is that imperfection real or unreal? It is real, according to Advaita; it cannot be unreal, according to Ramanuja, since it is something permitted by God himself. In human knowledge, where something unmanifested becomes manifested, we may assume the existence of some entity which hindered the manifestation. But there is no need to attribute to Brahman any such defect. Again, if avidya involves Brahman also in its meshes, then universal falsehood will alone be the reality, and we cannot escape from it. The nature (svarupa) of avidya cannot be logically determined. It is neither real nor unreal.”⁴³

According to Ramanuja Knowledge is consciousness and Avidya means ignorance. He asked the question how can ignorance exist in knowledge? Again, Avidya cannot reside in the individual self, for the individuality of the self is said to be the creation of Avidya. How can the cause depend on the effect? The reply is that Avidya cannot exist either in Brahman or in Jiva. It is a figment of imagination of the Advaitin. Ramanuja also raises questions about the concealing nature of Avidya. If Brahman be the self-luminous pure consciousness, then how come it is concealed by Avidya. Further, whether this Avidya is positive or negative or both or neither? It cannot be positive since Avidya means ignorance that implies absence of knowledge. It cannot be negative either because a negative entity cannot give rise to the world-illusion of Brahman. Again, to say Avidya is both positive and negative is to embrace self-contradiction. If, moreover, the Advaitin explains Maya or Avidya as ‘indescribable’ or ‘indefinable’ that world mean that it cannot be described as either real or unreal. But this again leads to self-contradiction. A thing must be

either real or unreal, there is no third alternative. To accept such a description is to defy the canons of logic.⁴⁴

Another charge against Avidya is that it cannot be cognized by any Pramana or means of valid knowledge. Avidya cannot be perceived, for perception can give us either an entity or a non-entity. It cannot be inferred for inference proceeds through a valid mark or middle term which Avidya lacks. Nor can it be maintained on the authority of the scriptures for the latter declare Maya to be a real wonderful power for creating this wonderful world which really belongs to God. Even if we are convinced of such an Avidya, then also the problem remains because it cannot be removed. The Advaitins are of the view that knowledge of unqualified attributeless Brahman can remove such Avidya. But according to Ramanuja such knowledge is not possible. Knowledge is always of the differentiated. He believes that Brahman as Nirguna can never be known. As such, Avidya cannot be removed. Moreover, if Avidya is said to be positive in nature, how can a positive thing be removed? Thus, through all these arguments, Ramanuja purports to establish that Maya or Avidya cannot be proved. It may be said that some of the Upanishads mention God as a wielder of Maya. The Svetasvatara Upanishad for example says:

“That from which the maker (mayin) sends forth all this--the sacred verses, the offerings, the sacrifices, the panaceas, the past, the future, and all. Know then Prakriti (nature) is Maya (art), and the great Lord the Mayin (maker); the whole world is filled with what are his members. If a man has discerned him, who being one only, rules over every germ (cause), in whom all this comes together and comes asunder again, who is the lord, the bestower of blessing, the adorable god, then he passes for ever into that peace. He, the creator and

supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, who saw, Hiranyagarbha being born, may he endow us with good thoughts. He who is the sovereign of the gods, he in whom all the worlds rest, he who rules over all two-footed and four-footed beings, to that god let us sacrifice an oblation. He who has known him who is more subtle than subtle, in the midst of chaos, creating all things, having many forms, alone enveloping everything, the happy one (Siva), passes into peace forever.” (Svet. Up., 4. 9 -14)

However, Ramanuja says that here the word ‘Maya’ refers to Prakriti which is the cause of this wonderful creation. He possesses the power but not because of nescience on His part. Again, when Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says ‘The Lord becomes many by His Maya’, it means God has the power of creating manifold objects. Here again ‘Maya’ refers to Prakriti consisting of three gunas. Thus neither Sruti, nor Smriti, nor even the Puranas teach Maya to be nescience.

IV-Doctrine of Maya

Maya is one of the most important principles in the philosophy of Vedanta. In its common meaning, the Maya is the cosmic illusion that all human beings suffer with regard to the ultimate reality of Brahman and phenomenal world and about their own self. The concept of Maya is found in Vedas as well as in Upanishads. But it is Shankara who developed it and made wide use of it. All other philosophers who came after him have had to deal with this concept forcing them to take their respective affirmative or negative positions on it. With the passage of time the word and concept of Maya became so embedded in the philosophical vocabulary that it became the feature not only of Indian philosophy and mysticism but of Hindu religion itself. About the meaning and use of this idea in Vedas, Radhakrishnan has written the following:

“In the Rig Veda the word Maya occurs frequently, and is used generally to indicate the supernatural power attributed to the Gods, especially to Varuna, Mitra and Indra. In many ancient hymns Maya is praised as a world-sustaining power.”⁴⁵

Isha Upanishad (15) tells us that the veil that covers the truth is golden, so rich, gaudy and dazzling that it takes away the mind of the observer. Katha Upanishad (I. 2. 4-5) says how people live in ignorance and, thinking themselves wise, move about wandering like blind men following the blind. Mundaka (II. I. 10) compares ignorance to a knot which a man has to untie before he gets possession of the self in the recess of his own heart. Chandogya (I. I. 10), too, tells us that knowledge is power and ignorance is impotence. Brihadaranyaka (I, 3, 28) likewise compares unreality to not-being, to darkness, and to death.

Prashna (I. 16) tells us that we cannot reach the world of Brahman unless we have shaken off the crookedness in us, and have removed the falsehood, and the illusion.

Brihadaranyaka (II. 4.14) talks of there being an apparent duality implying thereby that there is really no duality. Maya is a semblance and, as it were, an appearance. Chandogya Upanishad (VI. I. 4) tells us that Atman is the only reality; everything else is merely a word, a mode and a name. Svetasvatara (IV, 9) describes God as a Mayin who creates this world by his power.⁴⁶

Maya known generally as illusion or false appearance is associated, both conceptually and functionally, with Avidya or ignorance. Maya is illusion because it is neither real nor unreal; its characteristics are in that sense no

different from Brahman. Maya is not real because Brahman alone is real, but it is also not unreal like sky-lotus. It is indescribable (Anirvachaniya) and indefinable just like Brahman because it is neither existence nor non-existence. It is, as Deussen calls it, “The innate obscuration of our knowledge”.⁴⁷

In the supreme state Jivas are identified with the Brahman but in the empirical realm they are separated from each other. This separation is made by Avidya. Jivas cannot be the cause of Avidya because they are themselves made by Avidya. This means Avidya is produced neither by Brahman nor by the Jivas. Now if Brahman is not the cause of Avidya and is yet limited by Avidya then the freedom of soul is nonsense. If Brahman has bound himself and after that he will be released from this limitation then the liberation of one means the freedom of all.⁴⁸ Brahman thus can never co-exist with Avidya.

Avidya can be removed by true knowledge. Avidya is the fall from intuition; it is the mental deformity of the finite self that divided the divine into a thousand different fragments. According to Vedanta the true knowledge can be attained with the help of right thinking, doing meditation and self-control etc. In Isha Upanishad Mandana says that when ignorance is removed then pure knowledge remains and this pure knowledge is just pure consciousness.

We have two kinds of Avidya: first is the absence of knowledge (Agrahana) and the second what can be called the wrong knowledge (Anyathagrahana). The first is a kind of psychological ignorance and the second refers to an objective situation. The first one is, moreover, a series of beginningless false

impressions and the second the objective entity forming the material cause of the mind as well as of the material world outside.⁴⁹ Radhakrishnan says:

“Avidya in Upanishads is only ignorance as distinct from knowledge possessed by the individual subject. In Samkara it becomes the logical way of thinking, which constitutes the finiteness of the human mind. It is not a nonentity like the son of a barren woman, since it appears and is experienced by all of us; nor is it an entity, real and absolute, since it is destroyed by intuitional knowledge. If it were non-being it could no produce anything; if it were being, what it produces must also be real and not phenomenal. It is neither real nor phenomenal, nor is it both.”⁵⁰

He further says:

“We admit that Brahman is not the product of Avidya or is itself deluded, but we don't admit that there is another deluded conscious being (beside Brahman) which could be the producer of ignorance.”⁵¹

Avidya can stay in Jiva and Jiva himself is made by Avidya. The relation between them is not real. When Jiva is related to false illusion that itself is related to another false illusion; then this beginningless relation must be a psychological process that is not real.

World is neither being nor non-being, neither real nor unreal. The world isn't real because real is Brahman, but it is also not unreal like horns of a hare. It is not real because it is the product of Maya. Maya as ignorance is a positive power, and the material cause of world; it is removed by true knowledge.

Shankara says that we can never explain the relation between Brahman and world with the help of logic. The real is never known to have any relation with the unreal. Cause and effect are not related to Brahman. It means that it is not right to say that Brahman is the cause of world because the infinite cannot

come to a finite state. Shankara here followed the idea of non-evolution of Gaudapada which said that the world is not produced. If we say that Brahman manifests itself in finite world that would also be wrong because according to Shankara it is contradiction to say that the infinite manifests itself in the finite. The relation between world and Brahman is also not like the relation of substance to its attributes or like wave to the sea. The relation between world and Brahman can be known in the mystic state and cannot be understood by logic. Actually Maya cannot be different from Brahman. Nothing can be added to Brahman from outside. Maya has creative force to bring the formless into form; it is the energy of Ishvara. As to the problem that if Maya exists then it will make some limitation on Brahman, Shankara explains that it doesn't exist in the objective world and is for that matter not real enough. It is real to create multiplicity but at the same time too unreal to put limitations on Brahman.⁵²

Whether Maya is real or illusion, its presence is essential to create multiplicity in world. In this state, it can be called as the eternal power of God. Brahman is the material cause of universe through the intervention of Maya, which is the essential operating condition of world.

Maya has two functions. First is to hide reality and second to project unreal as real. Avidya first makes individuals think that they are separate from Brahman and secondly it makes them to mistake Brahman as this world of multiplicity. It is like a rope falsely perceived as snake. It is the Avidya that creates in our mind the impression of Brahman being different from Jiva or individual self and world as a creation of Brahman. Shankara however makes a distinction

between two aspects of Maya or Avidya (Avarana). These two aspects are its positive and negative aspects. Positive aspect is based on the projection and negative aspect is based on concealment. In positive aspect Maya projects world as real and in negative aspect Brahman is hidden by the creative power of Maya. The words such as Maya, Avidya, Ajnana, Adhyasa, Adhyaropa, Anirvachaniya, Vivarta, Bhranti, Bhrama, Nama-rupa, Avyakta, Aksara etc are synonymous. Maya, Avidya and Adhyasa are however more commonly used.

Shankara says that Maya is material and unconscious and it is different from Brahman that is pure consciousness. Secondly, Maya is the potential power of Brahman, and it is co-existent with Brahman. It depends on Brahman. There is a unique relation between Brahman and Maya and this relation is called Tadatmya i.e. complete identity with each other. Thirdly, Maya is indescribable and indefinable. Fourthly, Maya has relative and practical features (Vyavaharikasatta). Fifthly, it is false cognition which can be removed by right knowledge. For example, when rope is known in its true light then the wrong perception of rope-snake will be gone.⁵³

According to Shankara Maya is the superimposition (Adhyasa) of one thing on another due to Avidya. The goal of Vedanta is to make us free from the false notion that causes superimposition. Maya is not only absence of knowledge; it is also positive wrong knowledge. It is both non-apprehension and misapprehension. Maya makes what is unreal into real; it projects false as true and finite as infinite. It makes unlimited Atman appear as limited Jiva. It generates multiplicity and difference. It cannot be said that Maya is a real

feature of Brahman or Atman because it is removed by true knowledge. Brahman appears with names and forms through the Avidya. It is like the wave that appears as unclean foam. Avidya shows itself as absence of knowledge (Agrahanatmika), as positive wrong knowledge (Viparitagrahika) and also as doubt (Samshayopasthapika).⁵⁴ According to Shankara world has the same relation with Brahman as is found between shell and silver, rope and snake and mirage and water.

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Chapter - 3

Metaphysics in Mulla Sadra

Chapter 3

METAPHYSICS IN MULLA SADRA

I- Existence and Essence

Mulla Sadra's metaphysics, as we have seen, is the knowledge about ultimate realities of things. The rational faculty in human being makes him aware of the existence of absolute and relative and the categories of essence and existence and the beginning and end of creature's life. Sadra's metaphysics is based on the fundamental notion of Existence (Wujud). In his view Existence is the most obvious and most clear subject for any philosophical discussion of truth followed by the idea of quiddity or Essence (Mahiyya) that always accompanies the existence except in the case of necessary existence or God where the two get merged.

“The Reality of being is the most obvious thing in appearance and presence; and its quiddity is most secret or veil in realizing and knowing the depth of its truth.”¹

Existence by itself is whole and universal truth. Everything is surrounded by existence and nothing is outside of it. Existence is the ultimate truth which is indefinable and self-defined, because if we define existence it would be limited although it is by nature unlimited.

Absolute cannot be defined for the risk that it would lose its reality in definition. It is virtually unfathomable.

“We could never comprehend the truth of Existence and its depth, neither by an explanation that includes of genus and differentia nor by description that

comprises of genus and special accident nor by any of synonym because the conception of the reality of external truth of all things lies in the apprehension of that thing in the mind and the passage of that concept from the external world to the mind. This truth holds for all things except Existence because the passage of being from the external world to the mind would neutralize its truth, and what is known by the mind is a replica of the reality of being not its reality. Thus we can have the access to the reality of Existence not through definition or demonstration or by knowing by words and terms but only through the intuition.”²

Mulla Sadra believed that it is a big mistake to try defining the existence as that would impose limitation upon what is unlimited. Existence cannot be defined by something which is non-existence, and outside of existence nothing exists. Existence is absolute and whole truth which manifests in all divisions of creation. The one existence is present in all things though the level or intensity of its presence varies. There is a hierarchy of being in which is found a progression from less perfect to more perfect. For example: the man, the animal, the tree and the stone make a unity in terms of existence as such but are different in having less or more degree of it. The existence of man is more perfect than tree and the existence of tree is more perfect than the existence of stone, and so on.

“Beware, the truth of existence is found in degrees, one beyond the other and the higher keeping all others that are lower to it. What is more potent and greater in intensity in its comprehension and grade covers more beings. And what is less powerful tends to follow thing which is more powerful than it. All degrees of existence are hidden and this fact prevents one from knowing the most perfect, the highest existence that knows all things. All existence is light but just that one existent is distinguished from the other in the degree of possesses-physical in its luminous forms, which are dark when compared

with the spiritual intellect and souls, because they are polluted with privation.”³

According to Mulla Sadra, the idea of existence has two meanings which are as follows:

- 1- The existence as a concept that is united with external reality. In this sense ‘existent’ refers to what is externally existent.
- 2- Existence as a reality which comprehends the entire external world.

According to the first meaning existence is to be understood as conceptual thingness.⁴ This means that we are able to conceive in our minds the existence of a thing which has a corresponding external presence. So if a concept corresponds to an external reality, then that concept of existence can be said to have conceptual thingness.⁵ For example the concept of man corresponds to an external reality Zaid so it must be said that ‘man’ exists as a concept. Obviously if a number of different concepts can be applied to a single external reality, all of those concepts can be said to have conceptual thingness. For example the concepts of mankind, essentiality, contingency and being a single unit (wāḥid) can be applied to an external reality Zaid and so it would be true to say that those concepts exist. We could even say that every concept that corresponds to an actual external entity – not just a hypothetical or metaphorical entity – can be said to have an actual existence.

“All the concepts come from the phenomenal world and are fully comprehended by the mind, although the mode of their being keeps changing. But given the fact that the existence, by its very nature, is external to mind and all that exists outside of the mind can enter into mind (or, else, its nature will

be perfectly transformed), hence being can never be comprehended by any mind.”⁶

According to the second meaning the whole external world is pervaded by existence. The point is when we say a thing exists it means it is the same as external reality, an existence out there that is precisely the opposite of non-existence. Such a thing cannot be conceptual but must also be external and existential. In philosophical terms it can be said to have an external and existential thingness.

Mulla Sadra believes that making a distinction between the two meanings of existence leads us to realize two fundamental categories of ontology namely, the essence or quiddity (Mahiyya) and existence (Wujud). To explain the distinction between the two we can take the help of following analogy: When we see some unknown creature is coming towards us from afar, at the first instance, we recognize its existence but its identity is still unknown to us. Gradually, however, as it comes closer to us, we are able to know its identity that may be of animal or human or anything else. This shows that an existence can remain existence independently of whether or not we have full recognition of it. But its conceptual identification depends on our having mental access to it. Existential thingness, therefore, must be distinguished from the conceptual or mental thingness that is the quiddity or essence of it as different from the existence that refers to former. As Fazlur Rahman says:

“Although essence possesses no ultimate reality like existence, nevertheless it is real in a sense, because it occurs in the mind and, further because there is something in external reality which causes it to arise in the mind, even though

it is secondary to existence. Now, essence is sometimes defined as that which is an answer to the question with reference to something, “what is it?” In this sense, essence is only a general notion existing in the mind and need not refer to something existent which can be known only through sense-perception. When, however, essence is defined as that “which makes or renders a thing what it is,” it covers both the mental and the existential.”⁷

But the above definition applies more to the idea of quiddity as it is traditionally understood by other Muslim philosophers where it may be existing in external world or in mind, and even when it existed in both no contradiction followed. But we can never say the same about existence for to say that existence doesn't exist is a blatant contradiction. Each reality in fact has some features of existence, objectivity and personification. It means that without them no reality is possible. If some reality doesn't have these features, it cannot exist. For each thing that is existent, existence is essential for it. The thing which is opposite of non-existence must be existence. When, for example, we say that “man exists” it means that the concept of existence should come along with it otherwise the man would not exist.

According to essentialists, quiddity is placed both in mind and external world. But Mulla Sadra says it is not possible to find the quiddity in external world. The place of quiddity is only in mind. Quiddity is essentially a kind of concept and the place of its truth is in our mind. It is not possible that this truth is known directly by thought. When man's mind tries to realize this truth the concept of quiddity is mistaken as truth. Quiddity is to be regarded as boundary of being in mind. In other words, it refers to what we understand of a thing when we affirm its presence. Ibn Sina divided quiddity in three types: Non-

conditioned quiddity (La bi shart), negatively conditioned quiddity (Bi-shart la) and conditioned by something (Bi-shart al-shay). But in opposition to him and other Islamic philosophers like him, Mulla Sadra applied these three notions to existence or Wujud. He said that the first notion or 'non-conditioned' refers to the necessary being that is beyond all manifestations. The second notion or 'negatively conditioned' refers to the extended existence (al-wujud al-munbasit) that is the first manifestation of the ultimate reality and is the creative principle. The third notion of 'conditioned by something' refers to all relative beings that are the manifestations of existence.⁸

II- Priority of Existence

The priority of existence over essence or quiddity was rejected not only by the Greek philosophers but also the Islamic philosophers who came before Mulla Sadra such as Ibn Sina and Farabi. Suhrawardi also accepted the priority of quiddity over existence. After him this question was discussed by many other Muslim philosophers and it played a central role in the realm of Muslim philosophy. For example, Ibn Sina and his followers believed the existence to be out of mind and advocated the primacy of quiddity. Suhrawardi or Shaikh Ishraq is also known as a philosopher of essentialist position. He believed that the essence alone is real and existence is conceived only by mind. Mulla Sadra is thus the first one to have rejected this idea as he, on the contrary, said that nothing is real except existence and that it isn't grasped by mind. He called Existence to be primary and real and quiddity to be relative and contingent.⁹

Interestingly, Mulla Sadra himself was earlier a believer in the priority of essence over existence but changed his position later as he says:

“Initially I was defender of the principle that essences exist externally (Asil) and being exists in the mental state (Itibari), till I got intuition from God who let me witness His manifestation. After that, suddenly, my divine eyes opened and I realized that the reality was just the opposite. Adoration be to God that guided me to come out of darkness and remove the (idea of) primacy of essence and establish in me the (idea of) principality of being. This is now unchanged in this world and the next. The upshot is that the beings are primary realities and essences are the immutable entities (A’yan Thabithah) that never smelt the perfume of being. The beings are the rays of light, shined by necessary properties and intelligible essences. It is the latter that is considered as essences.”¹⁰

Mulla Sadra says when we ask the question what a thing is it means that an idea of that thing must have existed a priori and this applies to all things of the world. All such things, therefore, such as tree, stone etc. are common in terms of existence but different in quiddity and possibility. Existence is ultimate and unlimited which makes all things a unity and their quiddity makes distinction between things.¹¹

He further says that existence is pure and primary and this indicates that existence is in external world and it is the generator of all activities. Quiddity is related to existence, because quiddity cannot exist without existence; quiddity appears with existence and in existence and along with existence.¹²

In conclusion it can be said that quiddity of things is different and secondary to the existence. Existence is hidden by quiddities which are manifested in the world of manyness. Existence is the original reality that makes the external

world real. It is the origin of all powers and acts; on the other hand, quiddity is accident occurring to existence because it cannot exist without existence. Existence and quiddity happen at the same time in world and they cannot be separated. According to Sadra, the truth of unity is hidden behind the multiplicity of the world.

“In Mulla Sadra’s view although human language gives the impression that it is quiddity that is real or ontologically fundamental and existence is an accident which is added to quiddity, in reality, it is existence which is fundamental or real. According to Mulla Sadra, existence or wujud makes a quiddity existent or it is by the act of existence that a quiddity becomes real or is actualized. Thus, existence is ontologically fundamental (asil). Quiddity is nothing more than the ontological limitation or modality of Being which the human mind abstracts and separates from the being of an existent. Quiddity without existence does not exist in the external or objective world. Quiddities particularise existents but it is existence which makes quiddities become existents.”¹³

Since the quiddity is connected to limitation and since God is absolute and unlimited reality, God cannot have quiddity. It means that quiddity is present only in phenomena. It represents limitation and is relative. It is accident occurring to existence because manifest world is not the origin but only the effect of original. Effect is different from cause; it is where the pure existence is reduced by the composition of possibility and accident. Things in objective world are recognized by likenesses and opposite features. Opposition and conflict are manifested in the realm of quiddity whereas existence is the realm of unity. According to Sadra, God is pure absolute and the existence of external world is the reflection and manifestation of God.¹⁴

“They (i.e, essences), so long as they remain unilluminated by the light of existence, are not something to which the mind can point by saying whether they exist or not. They eternally remain in their native concealment (of non-being) and their original state of non-existence. They cannot be said to be or not to be, neither do they create, nor are they objects of creation (the objects of creation being the contingent existences, not essences). (Contingent) existences, on the other hand, are pure relations (to absolute existence); the mind cannot point to them either as they are considered out of relation with their sustaining Creator, since these have no existence independently (of God). However, in themselves, (unlike essences), these existences are concrete realities, uninfected by the indeterminacy (of essences), pure existences without (the admixture) of essences and simple lights without any darkness.”¹⁵

Mulla Sadra believed that existence doesn't have any cause and it doesn't change in time. It also doesn't have place where it can be located. Further, it doesn't have form to be confused with another form. It is the pure truth of every form and gives forms to God's creation. It is the cause of all causes and the form of all forms. Existence doesn't need any proof because it is the self-evident reality.

Existence is present everywhere and it has an ultimate realm that is the centre of every place but is not itself located in space and time. It is a secret reality which is in all the places but in no place at the same time. According to Sadra:

“The origin of being of all things which exists is pure truth of existence that is unmixed with anything other than existence. This truth is not limited by any conception, imperfection or essence. It is not blended with any generality that consists of genus, species or differentia, nor with any accident whether specific or general. For existence is before the essences and being does not have essence other than existence and it is not limited by any generality or specificity. Existence does not have any specific difference and no

particularity apart from its own quiddity; there is no form and agent or end for it.”¹⁶

Existence is hidden from us because its nature is metaphysical. We cannot see it because existence is beyond vision. It is the truth of vision and vision is not able to see its reality. We cannot realize existence by sense and mind because quiddity put a veil between us and existence. We cannot recognize it by quiddity, although the existence of quiddity is dependent upon existence. Quiddity is manifested by existence and limits existence in its different divisions. Quiddity is therefore a veil between God and us.

A thorough discussion of the issue of priority of existence over essence was made by Mulla Sadra in his book *Asfar* and he developed it further in works like *al-Masha'ir* and *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*. Generally his ontological position is based on eight arguments which he presents as evidences.

The First Evidence:

This argument is written in *Al-Masha'ir* as follows:

“The reality of everything is its existence that ranks with effects and implications. Thus existence should be known as the reality of everything for it is in possession of existence, since whatever has the reality has it only because of it.”¹⁷

According to this argument existence is regarded as an a priori ontological condition for the existence of all things. Each thing finds its way into the light of being or the objective reality only through existence and by relying on Being rather than its essence.

The Second Evidence:

In this argument, Mulla Sadra says that when the priority or the truth of essence is affirmed there will be no difference between external and mental realities, but this is absurd. If something exists in the external world or in mind, it does not signify that these two domains (external and mental) act as containers in which the existence of that thing is established. It simply means that it has an existence from which some effects and consequences are derived.¹⁸

The Third Evidence:

Mulla Sadra says that if we accept that the truth of things is based on quiddities, then it is not possible to predicate quiddities one to another. Predication is the union of two concepts. Accordingly when one thing is predicated of another, the two will be united in existence but will be different from one another in their quiddities. Sadra says:

“It is clear that if a thing exists with the help of its quiddity and not by the agency of something else, it becomes impossible to qualify them with each other. For example: ‘Zaid is an animal’ or ‘Man walks’. It is so, because the use and the reality of predication is union between different meanings in being. Therefore when something is predicated on some other thing, the proposition expresses their unity in being, while they are different in terms of their conceptions and quiddities.”¹⁹

In other words, if the truth of a thing is its quiddity, then there will be no distinction between a subject and its predicate on the bases of unity and diversity.

The Fourth Evidence:

Mulla Sadra further states that if existence could be non-existent then nothing would exist. When the non-existence of things is false, the non-existence of existence is necessarily false. If we realize essence as not in union with existence, then it is non-existent in any mode. Again if there is no existence, then the predication of an essence to it is impossible, as affirming a predicate presupposes the existence of the subject. The adjunction of a non-existent thing to another non-existing thing cannot have validity.²⁰

The Fifth Evidence:

Mulla Sadra further argues that if the existence has no external actualization, then nothing (such as species) can have particulars.

“If being is not comprehended in the individual of species, none of the species is known in the external world.”²¹

For the actualization of an individual a species is required, that also relies on being to be, and nothing (as instance, another universal concept) other than being can qualify as a necessary condition for this purpose.

The Sixth Evidence:

The priority of existence over essence is also realized when we see that there are two types of accidents: accidents of existence like ‘whiteness’ for a body, and accidents of essence such as differentia for a genus. Here some thinkers have objected that the qualification of essences by existence, and the presentation of existence to the essences, is not a case of an external kind of

qualification or an occurrence of an accident to its subject, because this shows that the object of qualification enjoys a certain degree of reality. Then the occurrence of accidents of quiddity (differentia to genus) does not contradict their unity in the real world. This can be held true for the relation holding between being and quiddity. Being as an accident of quiddity should be united with it, and this shows that being as an objective reality must be known. Sadra says:

“Being, thus, serves as the agency through which a quiddity exists and with which it is united in the external world.”²²

The Seventh Evidence:

Sadra further argues that the truth of being is studied in the relation of an accident with its subject. The being of an accident is nothing in itself but is something for its subject; that is, the being of an accident is equal with its incarnation in its subject.²³ This incarnation of an accident in its subject takes place in the real world. We also realize obviously that the subject of an accident is not included in its essence or its definition but in its existence. This means that accident's categories depend on something other than itself. Thus if being (the subject) is not real, then the accident is a mental concept. For example, the being of blackness would be only a concept rather than an incarnation in a body, which is the actual base for the meaning of blackness. It also implies the rejection of the separation of being from quiddity or essence in the realm of accident, whereas the reality of this separation has already been accepted upon.²⁴

The Eighth Evidence:

Mulla Sadra criticized Ishraqis like Suhrawardi who recognized the existence as mental concept rather than an external presence. He claimed that he could solve many philosophical problems that other thinkers weren't able to solve by his doctrine of primacy and externality of existence. So he emphasizes on the doctrine that the structure of all essences stands on the foundation of a single unity (i.e. Existence) and one incessant form. In this incessant form, the unity of being is known as actual and its plurality would be in the potential mode without opposing or negating one another.²⁵

III- One and Many

There are two levels of existence: first is the existence that is real and second is the existence that is something between real and not-real. Real existence means the existence which is free from any attributes such as quiddity and its categories like parts, whole, time, space, and accidents. Quiddity and its categories are not included into existence because they are not independent. So God does not have quiddity because He is infinite and all finitude is comprehended by God. God is called ultimate reality for being necessity in itself.

According to Mulla Sadra:

“There are several arguments to prove that God is pure existence without an additional essence, but the most important is the following. If God had an essence beside existence, His nature would be characterized by a duality. His existence, being an accident, would then be caused either by an outside factor or by His essence. It cannot be caused from the outside because God would

then become contingent, and would cease to be necessary. But if His existence is caused by His essence, then two fatal difficulties follow. First, His existence would become an effect and hence would become contingent. Secondly, His essence would have to be assumed to exist (being cause) prior to its existence. Therefore, God must be simple and absolute existence without an essence.”²⁶

Being possible means the thing which is either existent or non-existent at the same time. All creatures are included into the possible being.²⁷ Possible beings are weak in regard to existence. They are perishable and are multiple. The unity of existence is hidden in the veil of multiplicity. The existence and unity can never be separated from each other but this unity is very progressively weakened in the downward movement of possibilities. These latter consist of unity and multiplicity, matter and forms, accident and body, potential and actual etc. We can call them a reflection of unity, too. Ultimate reality cannot be potential. God alone is perfect and highest. He is most powerful and pure existence. He is absolute existence and other existences are the reflection of his being. As God knows the existence of every creature, he knows the creatures in becoming. He knows their substance and their attributes. He knows unity and multiplicity. It is wrong to think that knowledge of God is changing because the world is changing.

Mulla Sadra says that we are in touch with the multiplex world but cannot connect to the realm of unity and existence through that multiplex reality. We can perceive the material world without being directly in touch of the realm of unity. We see the manyness but not unity. It is so because the mankind, Adam and Eve, have fallen (habut) in objective world. Before falling in this world,

they were in the perfect condition of transcendence and spirituality. They were not aware of conflicts or oppositions. They used to observe the world as a unity because they were themselves eternal and didn't know anything about time, space and death. But they lost their eternality and the awareness of it through their own conscious choice of negating it.²⁸

The state of fallen humanity in world is to be interpreted as the step of transference from existence to possibility, from transcendent to empirical, from unity to multiplicity, from inside to outside. The fall or *Habut* means cutting of the direct relation between God and man and his being entangled into the phenomenal world of opposition and multiplicity. Man is entangled in the external world by the rules of events, possibility and accidental matters and not with their underlying existence. After the descent, Adam and Eve understood the reality in separation from its origin. The realization of this separation is analogous to the previous awareness of unity of existence. The fall is a penalty that man has to suffer because of his evil. Because of this fall, the truth is reversed. Mulla Sadra says that there is a subtle reality beyond the material forms and each phenomenon is sustained by hidden power. Just as there is a hidden idea behind the written text and just as a soul is concealed behind the body, so there is a secret reality hidden in the multiplicity of world. The world indeed cannot exist without the secret of metaphysics.

Mulla Sadra believes that the five senses are created for the sake of multiplicity of world while the powers of thought such as imagination, memory and intellect are connected to the secret realm. The five senses are determined by

time and space whereas memory, intellect etc are independent in being related to transcendental world. The power of thought makes imagination transfer it to memory and memory sends it to intellect and finally all this process ends up into one power. All these processes are based on soul where the multiplicity finally returns to unity.²⁹

According to Mulla Sadra, human world is the microcosm (Alam Saghir) while the world of creation is the macrocosm (Alam Kabir). The truth of both is same. The process of creation and manifestation started from the appearance of first intellect and ended into material intellect which is the weakest state of intellect. Each thing is the symbol of a secret that is immaterial and this world as visible world points to a secret reality that hides behind it. Although man has fallen in multiplicity, he has intellect to grasp the secret through the symbols caused by unity. For Mulla Sadra man has pure intellect because according to him the perfection of body is soul and the perfection of soul is intellect. The intellect itself, in being based on first intellect, has come from God. Adam represents pure intellect and Eve the individual soul. Man is born two times: first when he comes from mother's body to material world and second when he makes his journey from material to divine world.

Let it be mentioned that when Mulla Sadra uses the word 'intellect' what he means by it is not the individual intellect but the spiritual intellect that has a pervasive presence. According to him, creation is done in two stages of which the first is the *Ibda* or origination that is creation from nothing. The second is the formation stage that is called by him *Takvin*. The stage of origination is

manifestation or appearance which is caused by God and it is reduced to different levels of intellect, soul and nature and finally ends into primal matter. This stage can also be named as supra-formal creation.³⁰

Formation stage (Takvin) means the material creation which started from primal matter and through the successive stages of vegetative and animal worlds reaches in the end to the human world. In this stage, matter is likely to get its form. This stage can also be called formal creation.³¹

The stage of supra-formal creation (Ibda) can be described as separation from God because as soon as the intellect created by God appears, it leads to the emergence of individual soul and finally this process ends in the generation of primal matter. After this, the other process starts in which the primal matter leads to the generation of human world. The human soul then yearns to unite with its original source that is God. In this way, the manifestation of existence happens in circle of which the one side is the descending order of existence and the other side the ascending order. In other words, the manifestation of God comes down in material world and again it climbs upwards to divine realm. The manifestation of existence through the order of descent from the intellect till primal matter means that the degree of possibility is increasing. As the distance increases from the centre of the circle, the existence becomes weaker and increasingly more divided and limited. This process finally ends up in the multiplicity of world. Material world is the lowest creation because it is farthest from the centre. Its existence represents imperfection almost to the same level as non-existence. It should be noted that the natural world cannot be a direct

emergence from the world of intellect. Its emergence is mediated through the individual soul because the realm of intellect is fixed but the realm of nature is mortal and limited in time and space.

The perfection of soul is effected by intellect and the perfection of nature is effected by individual self - such that the first sign of life is seen in vegetable world. The plants are composed of various elements and have better structure than the lifeless things. In the vegetable kingdom the natural structure of bodies has the attributes of nutrition, growth etc. Next higher level is animal world that has more perfection in comparison to plant world. The animal world has a structure of body that has voluntary movements, sensory perception etc. The animals perceive but do not have intellect. It should be mentioned again that the realm of existence comes down to material world, as the formal creation (takvin) mixed with supra-formal creation (ibda stage) operates in the objective world. But the realm of animals and plants cannot connect to spiritual realm because they do not have intellect which alone can directly connect with spiritual realm. Therefore each level is placed in such a way as to reach its perfected state. As for the humans the intellect is given to them for connecting with the divine by liberating themselves from the bonds of material world and developing to its perfection.

God has given the man the intellect, the self, the senses and the natural elements, and these make him the highest in the hierarchy of creation. On the other hand, matter occupies the lowest level in fallen creation. This is because it has been deprived of intellect, life and sensory perception. The matter is the

state of unconsciousness beyond which is the sense perception that is the first level of awareness and that leads intellect to universal knowledge.³¹

Someone who acquires 'knowledge' is able to release himself from ignorance. The perfect man is a person who is most conscious. Man's journey in the world starts from God and ends in God. The future life is returning toward origin and, because intellect is first created, so returning to God is possible with the help of intellect. Soul is the perfection of body and perfection of soul is intellect. The intellect of the soul has two aspects: the conceptual intellect and practical intellect. The practical intellect has four steps: i. acting according to religious rules; ii. self-purification; iii. righteousness; iv. annihilation in God (Fana). Conceptual intellect also has four steps: i. potential intellect or material intellect which has potential state of existence and is like primal matter which is only a receptacle to accept different forms; ii. habitual intellect wherein the soul starts to perceive the a priori truth of life and indivisible order; iii. actual intellect which works in the soul rising to divine world and getting intuition; iv. the acquired intellect which is one perfected state of human soul. The soul in this state can watch all universals with the help of this intellect.³²

Man can realize God only with the help of intellect. Each soul must therefore know its intellect or otherwise reaching to God is impossible. Soul was in the perfected state before descent which means the soul was connected to intellect perfectly. According to Mulla Sadra our existence is real because it is related to ultimate reality and our finitude and incomplete state are accidents. These latter are not inherent. Our intellect and existence are related to God and are spiritual,

because intellect is the indirect effect that has come from God and each effect is the manifestation of its cause. Intellect is a spiritual thing that raises humans up to the top end and enables them to acquire the knowledge about God.

Mulla Sadra divides knowledge in two types of simple knowledge (Ilme Basit) and compound knowledge (Ilme Morakkab).³³ Simple knowledge is created for cognition. Not every man is aware of it although everyone has it so that he can realize ultimate reality. Simple knowledge is inherent in human being. This is a kind of direct perception. For example, when we look at the possible being, we can realize directly that it is the reflection of pure existence. This simple perception can be obtained by intuition and metaphysical intellect. But this type of knowledge can go wrong. It means that whatever knowledge we get with simple perception cannot be perfect or absolute. No one can know ultimate reality with the help of experiential or acquired knowledge. Each possible existence can know God in accordance with its level, but the perfect ultimate reality cannot be known to it.

There are two aspects of God's simple knowledge: the first is that God knows himself and as the source of all things. It is however not because he knows himself but because he is the cause of all things. Secondly, according to Mulla Sadra, God is present in all things and he comprehends all things. It is like body which is comprehended by soul, not because the soul is inside body or outside body but because it is present with body in some mysterious way.³⁴

Indeed, it is because of the presence of soul with the body of man that he is able to connect with the divine realm while the other creatures cannot. The

human beings alone can connect with the realm of spirit because plants are condemned to being unmoving and animal is condemned to being only animated. Such limitations for animals and plants show the inability of them to connect with the spirit.³⁵

As said before, according to Mulla Sadra, the creation of world happened in two steps of generation (Ibda) and formation (Takvin). The step of generation is called non-external step, too. It started from intellect and soul and reached finally to the prime matter. The formation step can be called external step because in this step world is created by prime matter and goes through the different higher beings such as the levels of plants, animal and man. Existences (at different levels) belong to the realm of generation because they are independent of matter and form.³⁶

“Like the Sufis, Mulla Sadra views the two processes involved in creation: the descent of Being in successive stages of intensity or perfection and ascent of being in cosmic existence are often represented by one side of the circle and the ascending arc by the corresponding side. The terminal point of the descending arc is the beginning point of the ascending arc. In the two processes of descent and ascent of being in cosmic existence, man plays a central role. This is due to the fact of his creation as the qualitative synthesis of the various levels of cosmic reality.”³⁷

Whatever is independent of matter and form, it is not possible to divide it. It means that it is simple. And if the invisible is simple then the realm of invisible is not related to perishable. The realm of matter has four causes (material, formal, efficient and final cause) but simple beings have only two causes namely, the formal and final cause.³⁸

To sum up, the creation as a whole starts with Intellect and ends in the material beings and then a reverse cycle makes the creation to start from matter to finally end in the Intellect. In other words, creation is a travel from God to God. Man's place in this journey is that of being in the middle of generation and formation because man has all the perfect qualities of the creation such as intellect, soul, matter, etc. Although he is limited by matter he can yet get free of them. Further, even though created by matter, he is infinite and imperishable. It is because of ignorance that he often doesn't realize his reality.

According to Quran human beings have three organs of eye, ear and intellect (sama, basar and fuwad) whereby they are able to get free of the barriers or veils. Only human beings can remove these veils and can connect to ultimate reality. Only human beings can be aware of their secret existence and get free of their weakness. If we are aware of our reality, then we can achieve the separation. According to Mulla Sadra, human beings have two faces. The first is material face which is perishable and finite and second is the spiritual face that is eternal. The world has a material character which is related to spiritual realm. If the connection of the material world with the spiritual realm is severed the material form of human world will be destroyed. Man is created from sperm and he passes through five stages of prime matter, natural body, plant, animal, and human realms. The man must therefore have all the characters of five stages together. The descent of man starts with the creation of germ in the mother's body. This step is known as unknown primal matter and it is called pure nature (Tabiat Sirf). Soul starts developing its level from prime

matter to its final perfect form. It receives a new name in each step such as vegetable soul, animal soul and the human soul. Now when the soul achieves the step where it can be aware of itself and get intuition, then it can have experience of spiritual realm. At this level the soul is known as acquired intellect (Aql Mostafad). This is the most perfect level of soul. The connection between matter and spirit would end at this level and body and soul will go through the same identity. Man possesses an immaculate intellect and it has the power to go beyond the time and space. But the step of formation is limited by space and time.

The concept of descent in Mulla Sadra being based on Quran is different from Christian idea of 'fall'. According to Mulla Sadra the descent, whether universal or individual, it is the manifestation of evil and ignorance. But it is yet essential. The descent is the surface reflection of existence and the secret of life and death. It is the meaning of creation. It leads to the conclusion that man alone had intellect but because of the descent he lost his spirituality and became a composite of two parts of body and soul.³⁹

Soul has place in the human body because man has to attain perfection. In fact soul is a traveller that follows God and it has to pass through many difficulties and many hindrances at lower levels to reach the ideal position. At primary stage, soul is not able to do anything except performing the animal-like functions of production of child, getting food and having sensory knowledge etc. At this stage the soul gradually receives the powers of memory, imagination, and perception etc. After that it rises to higher levels where it is

separated from matter and is not limited by it. This finally enables it to reach the stage of perfect intellect which marks the end of its journey.⁴⁰

Soul comes to possess more power at the human level. Here it can release itself from matter while being still limited in matter, multiplicity, time and space. Therefore Mulla Sadra explains that when man has descent, he loses his peace and unity of existence.

Soul is the original power of man and it is the reality behind the instinct and powers of imagination and intellect. Soul uses body as tool because it comprehends all parts of body.

The soul is a unity under the veil of multiplicity. It is active even under the pressure of multiplicity. Individual soul is the shadow of God's unity. The relation of soul to God is like the relation between the sunrays and sun. The soul and its consciousness remain even when the body is dead. Fazlur Rahman explains:

“According to Sadra, just as the soul comes into existence as an individual as a power in matter-although not as a power of matter – so it retains its individual character even when it is severed from the body and becomes a member of the Divine Realm.... he rejects the transmigration of souls as well as the view that, after death, the individual souls dissolve themselves in the ocean of Eternal Being.”⁴¹

The soul is the form of body though it is immaterial. Five senses are based on soul not body. The sense which is related to soul is always active because man can be conscious in sleep too. The perception of man is not destroyed after death because it is based on soul which is immortal.⁴²

IV- Proofs for the Existence of God

Among the important discussions in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra, one is about the proofs for the existence of God. As a philosopher of religion, naturally, God is at the center of his philosophy and the foremost question he tries to grapple with is whether God exists or not. According to Mulla Sadra, knowledge or understanding of God is the noblest and most valuable of sciences in the world and it is not possible to reach perfection without it. The goal of philosophy is to know God, and everyone has a duty to know God according to his ability. He believed that man can prove God by logic and also can know him by intuition. He brought several arguments to prove God in his philosophical works. But his final view was that God does not need any proof for his existence and that his existence is self-proved.

“Sadra states that proofs given traditionally for God’s existence are many, since “ways to God are multiple”; yet all these proofs are limited in their value, for they seek to prove God by something other than God. Now God, being the ground of all else, cannot strictly be “proved” by all else, but is Himself the proof for all else. God has to be His own proof, or else He cannot be literally “proved.””⁴³

Sadra’s position on this question was as follows: All things in the world are the creature of God and they all need him for their existence. All things in world are in the state of pure dependency and only God is the being that is independent. It is not possible to imagine dependency in his case while independence cannot be imagined in case of things other than God. This argument is not meant so much to prove that God exists but to demonstrate that

the truth of existence refers to God and that he comprehends all worlds as pure existence. In mystical philosophy of Mulla Sadra, the existence of things are considered not real in comparison with the existence of God but are taken as signs or demonstrations to show the existence of God. This system accepts existence for both God and things but admits at the same time substantial difference between them. The existence of God is essentially independent, eternal and immaterial whereas the existence of things needs him and they are limited by time and space. The dependency is essential for them.

Before Ibn Sina, Farabi was the first philosopher who used the term 'Seddiqin' for this type of reasoning about God. According to him, the 'first' or 'one' (Ahad) means God who is 'necessary being' and therefore does not require any other being for his existence. He is the prime cause of all things. He is perfect, unchangeable, and immaterial. God is aware of his own self and of external world. He is an intellect that is aware of itself. This type of argument which Farabi gave to prove God is called demonstration by necessity and possibility. According to him each thing which is existence is separated from essence, and such a thing receives its existence from another thing and this process continues like a chain that ends into the first being in which the existence and its essence are not distinguished. This first being is the necessary being otherwise called God. It is necessary in the sense that it must exist and exist by itself.

The issue of cause and effect Mulla Sadra often focused on in his writings. The cause is the thing which gives being to effect. We cannot say that it is only a

psychological process because it is a process which is known to happen in the external world. Effect is the thing that a cause brings into existence. We thus cannot find anything in external world except the existence of cause that is independent and the existence of effect which is dependent. Mulla Sadra says that except the highest level of existence which is independent, all the levels of existence are in dependency and this dependency is essential for them. If the highest and most perfect existence doesn't exist, then the other levels of existence also cannot exist because it is required for the highest level to exist if the other levels are to exist. If we assume the different levels of existence without highest level, it would mean that without highest existence, the different levels of existence must be independent themselves. But that would be a contradiction.⁴⁴

This argument about the existence of a highest and most perfect being to be called God as the ultimate cause of all beings is based on the idea of logical impossibility of the chain of causation to go on indefinitely. And it has some advantage on the argument of Ibn Sina about the proof of God. It is so for following reasons:

1. This argument doesn't need to disprove the system of endless chain.
2. With the help of this argument, we can prove not only the existence of God but the attributes of God such as perfection, independence and unity of him.

Mulla Sadra himself talked about it in his *Asfar*. He also compares his argument with the argument used by Illuminationists or *Ishraqiyyun*. He tried

to show the advantage of his argument by answering two questions raised by them. These two questions were about the ontological intensity of being and the opposition between existence and essence.⁴⁵ He writes:

“While the truth of being is a simple matter devoid of any essence and nothing else makes it firm or makes it limited it is only the necessary being that needs the most complete perfection... it is so because all other levels of beings are not complete truths. Accordingly, the shortcomings of all things are essentially something other than it. The being with deficiency cannot be the real being itself but it is the lack of being that is with beings in the next levels and thereafter. So the weakness or deficiencies are necessary to the secondary beings in so far as they are secondary. But the first one is in the state of perfection; there is no limitation for it and nothing is then more perfect than it.”⁴⁶

It means that the truth of existence is simple and without quiddity. Nothing can capture it. The pure existence needs perfection which doesn't have intensity or level. The existences which are in need of intensity are not pure existence but are existences which have weakness. But such weakness does not belong to existence. This means there are two types of existence. The first is pure existence that does not have limitation and there is nothing higher than it. Of the second type are beings with weakness that is caused by effusion and createdness so that the weakness of it will be completed in pure existence. When we have a conception of existence that is perfect and pure, it is possible to conceive of non-existence. The truth of existence can never be non-existence just as non-existence can never be existence as that will be a contradiction. When we imagine non-existence for an actual existent, it doesn't mean that its existence receives non-existence. Such a transition happens in the domain of

quiddity not existence, because non-existence is on the opposite side of existence and it is not real.

Now the question is what is the pure existence? Logically if we separate the idea of dependency and relation from it, the existence will be the same as perfection and absolute ultimate reality. The weakness and deficiency and limitation are not related to existence. They relate to non-existence that are in the being of effect. The perfect existence receives existence from itself; its existence is essentially in itself. It is truth because it just exists and is existent. The pure existence doesn't admit any limitation or relativity. The existence unencumbered of the limitations caused by non-existence is synonymous with the pure existence and is same as the ultimate reality. The truth of existence leads us directly toward ultimate reality or God. The above analysis doesn't prove the existence of God; it only says that, the perfect and pure existence which is free from any restriction and limitation is the same as God.⁴⁷

According to Mesbah Yazdi:

“The criterion of the need of the caused for the cause is just the dependency and copulation of its existence due to the cause namely to the weakness of its existence. As long as there is any weakness in a being, it will be necessarily caused and will need essentially a more complete being without any independence on a cause. Different degrees of existence, with the exception of the highest degree that has infinite completeness and absolutely no need and is independent, are just dependency and relation, if that highest degree was not a real existent and did not have truth, then the other degrees would not exist at all: because if it is supposed that they exist without existence of highest degree, it would imply that those degrees are independent and have no need; whereas their existential character is just copulation, dependency and need.”⁴⁸

Motahary, another commentator of Mulla Sadra, says:

“The truth and reality of existence does not accept non-existence. An existent being in so far as it is an existent being will never be non-existence. Likewise non-existence in so far as it is non-existence will never be existence. The truth of becoming non-existence in existent beings is the limitation of special existences. It does not mean that existence accepts non-existence which is its contradiction. Non-existence is not a real thing; we comprehend the meaning of non-existence by comparing one degree of existence or its limitations with another degree and its limitation. This is relative matter.”⁴⁹

Thus the reality which is truth and simple is known as existence. Existence is one and there is no distinction between existences except in respect to their varying intensity. The perfect existence is the thing which doesn't need anything else for becoming perfect. It doesn't belong to anything else. It was realized in advance since perfection anticipates imperfection, actuality anticipates potentiality and existence anticipates non-existence. The existence that doesn't need anything else is pure, is more complete than other existences, and weakness and non-existence cannot go with it. There is no weakness in pure existence; weakness comes to it because of being effect so the effect can never be the perfect existence.

In the Seddiqin argument, Mulla Sadra arrives at the notion of a necessary being with the help of the truth of existence. He argues that the reality outside mind is simple while the multiplicity is based on intensity of truth. Each incomplete existence needs another but pure existence needs only its essence and nothing else. The different levels of existence except pure existence have dependency essentially. The dependency is essential for them. But if the pure

existence doesn't exist then other levels of existence will also not exist. The assumption of incomplete existence without pure existence leads us to contradiction because, as said before, the dependency for them is essential and if there is no pure existence, it means they are independent from perfect existence and it is contradiction.⁵⁰

Another commentator, the famous Tabatabai, has the following to say while explaining the Seddiqin argument:

“This truth of reality cannot decline and does not accept any kind of disappearing; and rejects essentially annulment. Because, if this reality in every condition or stipulation or time or state decline, then there must be really a time or state or condition that this reality has declined in that situation. So we must accept some other realities by rejection of reality. Even if we do not state those conditions and say that reality may decline and become non-reality, we also affirm the reality, because if it declines really and truly then there is a reality and its declination is a reality; and if it does not decline really and we imagine that it declines then the truth of reality will remain and will not disappear. Therefore, it is not possible that the truth of reality declines or accepts nihility even in supposition. Everything that supposition of its declination requests its existence, its nihility must be essentially absurd. If its nihility is absurd then its existence and truth must be essentially necessary. This essential necessity is a philosophical one (not a logical one), and is just eternal necessity. Therefore, there is an essential necessary being which is real in eternal necessity. In studying every being, we understand that neither one of them nor all of them are the truth of reality, because they can be supposed as non-existence while it is not possible to suppose necessary being in this argument as non-real. Those aren't the absolute reality but they have reality by that truth of reality. (The reality may not also be the matter of the universe, because it is possible to suppose it as non-real in a special situation. The truth of reality is what is real even in case of supposing all other beings as non-

existence). All beings that have reality need it essentially for their reality. They need it to be real and their realities or existences depend on it.”⁵¹

As said before, Farabi was the first person to use the Seddiqin argument but his argument is not exactly Seddiqin reasoning because it is based on the concept of existence while the Seddiqin argument is based on the truth of existence.

Ibn Sina, who followed Farabi, started with the concept of existence and then rejected the system of endless chain which occurs in relation to cause and effect. Finally, he concluded that the existence of necessary being in itself is essential for creation. Ibn Sina spoke of four kinds of causes following Aristotle and said that a final cause must be there. After that he introduced the concept of existence which he divided into the possibility and necessity. Lastly he rejected the endless chain of causation to prove God as a necessary being.⁵²

According to Ibn Sina:

“A necessary being must exist because possible beings, if they exist and their existence is conserved, must have a cause for the conservation of their existence. The cause for coming-into-being of that being can be either the cause for conserving it in existence or another one. But all of them must end, undoubtedly, to a necessary being, because... the causes cannot continue ad infinitum and cannot make a circle.”⁵³

Mulla Sadra’s argument to prove God as necessary being in itself has had the advantage over the argument given by Ibn Sina in so far as he is able to not only prove the existence to God but also his unity and attributes. Ibn Sina himself used two separate arguments to prove God and the unity of his being. Mulla Sadra, on the other hand, emphasized the unity to be inherent in the idea of existence for existence is synonymous with perfection which, in turn,

implies the absence of multiplicity which operates at the level of effects rather than the first cause.

After Mulla Sadra, some other philosophers such as Sabzevari and Tabatabai further developed the Seddiqin argument. Sabzevari wrote that all the proofs that Mulla Sadra brought forth to prove God are not required though they are not useless either. Some of them, he said, may even be useful to prove the attributes of God. Each existence can be assumed to be either complete or incomplete and the incomplete existence needs complete existence for its being. Thus when we say that incomplete beings exist we conclude that one complete being must exist, too. The pure existence being logically prior and the reality outside mind being the truth of existence, it follows that the truth of existence is existent and if so the absolutely perfect or ultimate reality must exist too. Truth cannot accept deficiency; the deficiency is in the intensity of existence that is issued in the form of effects. Mulla Sadra also said in *Asfar* that there is no deficiency in truth and deficiencies are caused by the descent of existence to lower levels.⁵⁴

It is not possible that an effect would be more complete than cause; it means that in terms of intensity of existence all effects cannot be of the same degree. An incomplete being for the truth of its existence has other beings that are before and next to it. According to the principle of intensity, if the truth of an existence is incomplete, one being which is more perfect than what comes next to it must exist. Thus the assumption of incompleteness for the truth of beings guides us to the chain from lower to higher beings and such a chain finally

leads us in the end to a being that is absolutely perfect or ultimate reality. This is so because the chain of beings cannot be endless and it would have to end in the being which is most perfect. For the absolutely perfect which is placed at the end of this chain cannot admit of being incomplete.

After proving God by Seddiqin argument, Mulla Sadra proceeds to discuss the issue of monotheism in a theological context. In theology, monotheism or oneness of God is synonymous with the rejection of multiplicity of gods. But in philosophy the monotheism is changed into monism where the multiplicity of beings is denied. Multiplicity itself may be of two types: the first one is that which is internal and which makes a thing composite. The second one is that which is external and which is caused by giving partner to unity. In theology, monotheism based on the refutation of internal multiplicity is called monistic monotheism (Tawhid Ahadi) and that based on the outside refutation of multiplicity is called Unitarian monotheism (Tawhid Vahedi).⁵⁵

The next question is whether God has quiddity or not. On this Mulla Sadra says:

“There are several arguments to prove that God is pure existence without an additional essence, but the most important is following. If God had an essence beside existence, His nature would be characterized by a duality. His existence, being an accident, would then be caused either by an outside factor or by His essence. It cannot be caused from the outside because God would then become contingent, and would cease to be necessary. But if His existence is caused by His essence, then two fatal difficulties follow. First His existence would become an effect and hence would become contingent. Secondly, His essence would have to be assumed to exist (being cause) prior to his existence. Therefore, God must be simple and absolute existence without an essence.”⁵⁶

According to Mulla Sadra God doesn't have quiddity; in other words, God cannot be a composite of both existence and quiddity. When God doesn't have quiddity then he doesn't have genus (Jens) and specific difference (Fasl) too, because the genus and specific difference are parts of quiddity. The refutation of quiddity leads to rejection of the genus and specific difference as well as the refutation of matter and form. If a thing consists of matter and form, then it must have some quiddity which is included in genus and difference. On the other hand, if something doesn't have quiddity, then it cannot consist of matter and form. Thus with the refutation of quiddity in God, the attributes of genus, difference, form and matter are conceded automatically.⁵⁷

According to Mulla Sadra, the simplicity of God can lead us to some significant results. One such result is that, God is the existence of all things but he does not need the existence of anything. From this it follows that God is pure, simple and an indivisible entity (Basitatal Haqiqah). It also means that as an indivisible entity he is the existence of all things. Mulla Sadra gives three arguments to prove that the necessity in itself or God is the highest existence of all things and quiddities. The first argument is that, according to the intensity of existence, each higher level of existence is superior and more perfect than the existence which is lower to it. Then God who it is not possible to imagine higher than him, is the eternal and highest existence. The second point is that if something is simple, it cannot accept any quiddity and it is most perfect of all perfections which other things have. Generally, according to the intensity of existence, each higher level of existence in comparison with lower one has

three features. These are as follows: i. It is more perfect than the perfection of lower level. ii. It is the cause of latter. iii. It is closer to most simple existence which is ultimate reality. With the help of such features, it can be proved that God is the highest existence of all essences. It follows that there is no any partner for God; he is absolute oneness and unity. The necessity in itself thus doesn't have any partner or likeness according to the very definition of it.

Mulla Sadra explains in Asfar:

“The first one is necessary and pure being and there is no one more perfect than it. It does not suffer with any deficiency or absences. The secondary beings are acts and effects. Things are grounded not for what is other than it but by it. As said before there is no deficiency for truth of being. Deficiencies come to things because of their being caused. So the effect cannot have the same excellence of as its cause. If the being is not generated by a force that brings it into being and matches it acquired, it is not possible to think that it has deficiency because the reality of being, as told, is simple and free of finitude and does not have determination except that of pure actuality...It is made clear than that the being is either perfect in its truth and necessity or needful in its quiddity.”⁵⁸

V- Soul and Body

Greek and Muslim philosophers discussed about the nature of soul and its relation with body. Before we come to discuss the views of Mulla Sadra on this issue it may be relevant to briefly introduce the ideas of two great philosophers, Aristotle and Plato, on this question. According to Plato, soul is a simple substance that is unlimited and immortal while body is compound and limited in space and time. Plato also believed that the soul and body are distinct from each other and this made his position dualistic in an ordinary sense. The body

consists of four elements of fire, water, earth, and air but soul is indivisible. The soul, moreover, is of three kinds namely, spirit, appetite, and intellect. Intellect is close to soul and appetite is close to body. When Plato spoke about the intellect or wisdom, he took wisdom to mean remembering rather than learning. Wisdom was exact opposite of ignorance and as such was close to the intellect of soul.

The idea of Aristotle about soul, on the other hand, is based on the concept of form which can be called as soul of body. According to him soul is the perfected state of natural body. Soul and body are related to each other. Soul is the form of body and body is the matter of soul. Soul is also the function of body. It is like the knife and its function of slicing something. The knife in this case is the matter and the function of slicing its form. Aristotle opposed the idea of Plato who said that the soul and body can be separated from each other. According to Aristotle, soul is the cumulative action of body and cannot be separate from body. The soul also represented actuality while matter was potentiality. Potentiality meant matter which has not yet become actuality. Actuality was the form of matter. There could not be separation between form and matter just as the wax could not be separated from the impression imprinted in it. Aristotle thus rejected Plato's theory of dualism. He believed that body and soul are made at the same time and there is no priority of one over the other.

Mulla Sadra's position is close to the above idea of Aristotle. But while Aristotle doesn't believe in the eternality and immortality of soul on the ground

that the soul is not able to exist without body, Mulla Sadra and Ibn Sina rejected this position though they accepted the co-existence of soul and body as held by Aristotle. Ibn Sina says that the intellectual part of soul will not die after body's death. Sadra held the same view of the immortality of soul following the doctrine of Quran.⁵⁹

Another philosopher who is concerned with this subject is Plotinus who approached it from the perspective of mysticism. He says that soul is sent from a spiritual realm to body. Body is the recipient and confinement of soul in this world. In opposition of Aristotle, he believed that soul and body are two different beings that are integrated into a whole.

Plotinus divided soul into three kinds: the intellectual soul, the animal soul, and the plant soul. He accepted the existence of souls in world and recognized them as individual souls that admit modifications. The Muslim philosophers like Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra who followed Plotinus held more or less similar views. Ibn Sina being also the follower of Aristotle prefers to call soul as perfection that takes into account both the material and spiritual view. It is perfection because matter doesn't have the ability to become perfect without soul. The concept of perfection is preferred over actuality for the definition of soul, because latter concept cannot define soul perfectly. Perfection itself is of two types. First type of perfection is where the soul is integrated with its matter and shows latter in its completed form. It is like in the case of bed which is made of wood. The wood is the matter of which the bed is the completed form. The second type of perfection is seen for example in the case of knife slicing an

object. In this case, knife is the matter while slicing is the form and the function. The soul represents the first kind of perfection because the soul is not a function of the body but is its perfected state and is integrated with it. Mulla Sadra says:

“The soul is not the entelechy for all bodies as for example fire or earth does not have it. It is however first entelechy for natural body in the universe that can cause second entelechies through ways that facilitate to generate actions like feeling and voluntary movements.”⁶⁰

Since Mulla Sadra believes motion in substance, he talks of movement of soul starting from material soul to eternal soul. The body grows from childhood to become old but the truth and reality of a person remain stable. Man has awareness of his being and such awareness shows the separation of soul from matter which is not eternal. Mulla Sadra is in the category of philosophers who believe the spirituality and eternity of soul.

Soul remains after death and the destinations of soul and body are different. But when the soul is still in the generative stage it needs matter and as long as it needs matter its destination is same as matter. When however soul gets free of matter it finds its own destination which is different from the destiny of matter. Thus the motion which is in substance is a process of growing from lower stages to the stage of perfection. Soul and body are created at the same time and at that time they are of same level. But after some time soul develops itself toward intellect and then it becomes simple and eternal.

“Indeed, when the soul achieves its highest form as true unity, it contains all the lower faculties and forms within its simple nature. The commonly held

view that when the soul becomes fully developed and separate, it negates and excludes the lower forms, is a cardinal error; many philosophers misconstrue the meaning of “abstraction” as “removal” or “negation” of something. True unity and simplicity does not negate but comprehends everything. That is why the soul, at the highest levels of its development, resembles God, for God, in His absolute simplicity, comprehends everything. Such a soul begins to function like God and creates forms from within itself...’⁶¹

As to the question whether soul existed from eternity or originated in time, different Islamic philosophers gave different answers. Some of them believed soul to be originated in time while others had the contrary idea. Mulla Sadra himself believed that the soul originated in time and was created along with matter. Before him Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali also believed in the originated soul. The critical question was what was the time of creation of soul? Some philosophers believed that the soul was created before the creation of body while others said it is created after body. But Mulla Sadra says that the soul is created simultaneously with the creation of body. The soul of man didn’t exist before body but came into existence alongside the body so that it reaches to perfection and become simple with the help of substance in motion.⁶²

In line with other Greek and Muslim thinkers, Sadra also spoke of three types of soul i.e. the plant soul, the animal soul and human soul. The plant soul is related to liver, animal soul is related to heart and the soul of man relates to brain (Intellect). These three types of soul are together in creation. The plant soul is created first while the animal soul came next. Finally the human soul that is highest is created. There is no life for the souls of plants and animals after death. When the bodies of plants and animals are annihilated, their souls

are destroyed, too. But the soul of man remains after death because it is connected to intellect which is eternal.

Further, Mulla Sadra says the soul of plant consists of faculty of feeding, growing and reproduction. The soul of animal consists of two parts of motive power and perceptual faculty. The soul of human being, on the other hand, is also divided into two parts of theoretical faculty and practical faculty or practical intellect. Theoretical faculty of intellect has four parts of material intellect, habitual intellect, actual intellect, and acquired intellect.

Against the general view that the soul is spiritual and eternal and mortality belongs to the realm of matter, Mulla Sadra says that it is not reasonable to say that soul is immaterial or completely different from matter or that the soul as intellect in itself is added to a body. Basically, indeed, there is no difference between soul and body. Originally, the soul wasn't immaterial but as substance in motion, it moves itself to the state of perfection. It is a contradiction to think that man can be made from a corporeal matter with an intellectual form added to it unless some intermediary would be there to connect the two. The humans have two parts of body and soul and these represent the existence of him at two different levels. But, ultimately, they are one entity which is both changeable and stable. Mulla Sadra says:

“...their saying that ‘the soul moves because it is known as the first mover’ is fully acceptable and is proved by arguments. From this, however, it does not follow that the soul is also a body. The movement of and by its essence in accordance with the intensity of existence is also logically proved. The soul, as made clear by us, has constant motion of substance and it constantly grows

from the stage of sensation to stage of intellection. When it unites with external sense, that is the (time of) the start of its creation and generation. After that it reaches the stage of imagination and that is the time when it unites with the faculty of imagination. When it arrives to the stage where it has the direct presentation of intelligent forms and where it encounters them, it changes into an immaterial intellect, purified in its quiddity from the bodies and materiality.”⁶³

The connection of soul with body is necessary and soul is not accidental to the body.⁶⁴ The soul and body are not independent of each other. They are interdependent and the relations between them are essential. They are one reality or one being which is seen as two from two different perspectives. But this position is also at same places reversed by Mulla Sadra, as for example in the following passage where he speaks of pre-existence of soul vis-à-vis the body.

“We know that the soul of man existed before the body was created, without requiring the transmigration or the eternality of the soul as believed by Plato. No difficulty is involved in thinking of a single soul splitting into many or saying that the soul was at rest before its creation. (The belief) in the existence of souls before the appearances of bodies is a necessary requirement of the Imamite Shi’as’.”⁶⁵

Mulla Sadra separated soul from the realm of spirit although according to Quran soul is spirit which is created before the matter and body. According to him the soul of man consists of three kinds: material, ideal and intellectual. The material soul pertains to potential state like seed before growing into a tree. The ideal soul of man is also potentiality but in the animal mode. The intellectual soul of man represents his complete actuality where the intellectual human soul

stays with body and has movement. But after getting free of body it ceases to have any motion and becomes static. The consciousness or awareness which humans have is because of this intellectual soul. In the self-awareness knowledge is the same as knower and when knowledge is acquired the substance of soul starts moving. While the soul is in body it has such a motion but as already said, after getting free of body, it doesn't have motion.

Mulla Sadra believed in the materiality of soul. He brought arguments in Asfar to prove materiality of soul. He said there is movement in material or external world and in soul, too. This argument obviously follows the theory of substance in motion which is an exclusive theory of Mulla Sadra. As said before, soul can find its own way and can get free of material body with the help of motion which is essential in substance. The soul has motion, too, because soul will reach perfection with the help of body. According to him:

“The soul of man is certainly material in its nature and disposition but spiritual in substance and intellection. Thus, while its physical disposition is material, its gnosis of its own essence and of the essence of its creator is divine. The spiritual intellects on the other hand are both divine in quiddity or essence and in act...So both substances have their respective stations. This though doesn't apply to the case with the soul of man. It is for this reason that we notice a progress stage by stage.”⁶⁶

In conclusion, the philosophers who followed Aristotle (such as Ibn Sina) believed that soul is immovable and there is no motion in it, but Mulla Sadra believed that since soul needs body it has motion though when it gets free of body and reaches perfection, it becomes stable and without motion. In other words, Mulla Sadra accepts the motion of soul in this world and also accepts

the immovability of soul after life in this world. According to him soul is one part of material body and it is the form of body at the level of plant soul and it develops to become rational soul that is free of matter.

“Mulla Sadra, who is highly neo-Platonic in his theory of knowledge..., nevertheless accepts Aristotle’s definition of the soul as entelechy of the body. According to him, since the soul is not eternal but originated (a proposition in whose acceptance he is at one with the entire Aristotelian tradition), it cannot be separate and independent of matter, for to say that the soul is separate and independent of matter is only compatible with belief in the pre-existence of the soul, as Platonists and Neo-Platonists believe.”⁶⁷

Mulla Sadra tries to justify his intuition that the soul did not exist before body and that it existed only with body. In this context he also quoted the following verse from Quran:

“When the God drew forth from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves (saying) am I not your lord (who cherishes and sustain you)? They said: yes we do testify (this lest ye should say on the day of judgment of this we were never mindful.” (7: 172)

This verse of Quran makes clear that man did not exist before he came to have his body. The soul didn’t exist before body. If the soul was created before material world then the separation of soul and body should be there but Sadra did not believe this Platonic idea because if the soul is something apart from body, then how could the soul move itself to perfection. Thus if we accept the progress of the soul to perfection then we have to accept the creation of it at the time as of the body; otherwise there will be contradiction in it.⁶⁸ The Islamic philosophers like Ibn Sina also believed that there is only one soul for one man

and it is the origin of action. Mulla Sadra on the other hand says that, soul has all the powers in its unity. All the actions which are caused by a soul are done by itself.

According to Mulla Sadra the soul or self is simple intellectual existence which is one of the forms in divine knowledge. The important question here is if the soul is the intellectual form in divine knowledge how can it connect to body? Before discussing this question, we must first clear the idea of Mulla Sadra about matter. According to him matter is the lowest level of existence and because of this low existence it has low consciousness, too. We cannot say matter is nothing. Matter is potentiality ever striving to become the actual form. The relation between soul and body is the relation between form and matter. It means both of them need each other and such a dependency is necessary. The soul is not simple and eternal at first but it has ability to become immaterial and simple after getting perfection. Therefore Mulla Sadra says that body or matter is the lowest level and intellect is the highest level of existence. Body is in soul and soul is in intellect. It means the existence of man comprises of three steps: first, the bodily existence, the second the soul with body and the third, the intellectual being. As body and body with soul, human being has organic existence and is not stable but as intellectual being he is spiritual and stable.⁶⁹

“However, the relationship of the soul to the body is not like that of any ordinary physical form to its matter. All physical forms inhere in their matters in such a way that the two do not constitute a composite (murakkab) of two existentially distinguishable elements, but are totally fused together to form a complete unity (ittihad) in existence, and as a result, the form works simply and directly in matter. As opposed to purely material forms, however, the soul

works on its matter through the intermediacy of other lower forms or powers. This phenomenon, viz, where one power or form works on matter not directly but through other forms, is called “soul”. Sadra, therefore, says that the soul is the entelechy of a material body insofar as it operates through faculties, and he insists that the word “organs” as it appears in the Stagirite’s definition of the soul cannot mean “physical organs” like hands, liver or stomach, for example, but faculties or powers through which the soul works, as, for example, appetite, nutrition, and digestion.”⁷⁰

VI- Theory of Change and Movement

Philosophers before the rise of the theory of motion in substance believed that such a motion is impossible. The pre-Socratics focused on the relation between permanence and change. Some of them accepted permanence while others rejected permanence and accepted change as the fundamental truth of cosmos. For example, Heraclitus believed that all things that are in world are changing and we do not have anything that is stable or permanent. According to him the nature is like the flow of river where the water that is entered into at one time does not exist anymore for the same person to enter into it again. But here the philosophers faced the problem that, if all-things are changing then how can we know the identity of them insofar as they lose their identity in their movement.

On the other hand, the problem was if everything is stable, there cannot be any change. Parmenides said that reality of the world is permanence and our seeing of things as changing is nothing but an illusion. Aristotle described change as being of two different kinds: first is the change that is known as instantaneous change (Harekate Ani). In this change, the change doesn’t let the thing be stable, because thing doesn’t have time to keep its identity. Such a change is

called generation and annihilation (Koon o Fesad). The second kind of change is that in which a thing can have both change and stability while being in motion. Aristotle had also said that motion means the process of gradual change from potential to actual.

Aristotle introduced God as first or prime mover who is permanent and unmoved. To summarize his ideas on the issue of change and motion, it can be said that for him: i. The motion is present in the external world. ii. Each motion needs a mover which is outside of the thing moving. iii. The mover and the moved are always together. iv. The sequence of change is from potential to actual. v. The chain of causation isn't infinite, but ends up to first mover who is ultimate reality.⁷¹

Mulla Sadra rejected much of the above ideas of Aristotle. He based his philosophy on the priority of existence and said that change in substance isn't in the mode of generation (Kon) and destruction (Fesad). Change in substance is a of kind of motion which is essential and temporal. We think that the external world is static but in reality it is changing every moment. Mulla Sadra followed the idea of Heraclitus and developed it further. But he also partly accepted the idea of Parmenides. He thus accepted both constancy and change in world.⁷²

In Islamic philosophy immaterial things or things that are not temporal are the things which are not limited by time and space as well as not related to any instant. The immaterial or abstract concepts such as God are included in this category. That is why God is considered as indefinable and eternal. Now what

are the things that are related to time? Ibn Sina says that, there are two types of things which are related to time. The first are things which happen in an instant. For example, when we touch something with our finger, the contact is for an instant. The second is temporal or material things that are either adjusted to time or not adjusted to time. According to him:

“[The word] “motion” is employed to describe (1) a gradual change of a stable state in the body, in such a manner that through this change the body directs itself towards something and (2) the arrival through this change at this thing.”⁷³

Among the objects which experience motion Ibn Sīnā names whiteness and blackness, heat and cold, length and shortness, nearness and distance, greatness and smallness in volume. Following Aristotle, he describes motion as act (fi‘l) and the first perfection of the thing in potentiality.

“Motion is what is conceived from the state of the body, due to its gradual coming out of stable form (hay’a), and it is coming out of potentiality into actuality in a continuous manner, not instantaneously.”⁷⁴

Mulla Sadra quoted the following from Ibn Arabi about motion in his book *Asfar*:

“The changing state is that which falls between pure potentiality and pure actuality accompanied with continuity. Its existence and comprehension is experienced only in our imaginative faculty.”⁷⁵

Sadra himself describes motion as ‘an existential affair’

“That happens in the external world and occupies a middle place between the point of starting and point of end such that at any given point what happens

before and what happens after are excluded from it. This continues for as long as the thing is moving.”⁷⁶

According to the philosophy of Mulla Sadra the movement that is adapted to time is called gradual change or (Harekate Tadriji or Ghatee) and the movement that isn't adapted to time is called continued movement (Harekate Mostamar or Tavasotie).⁷⁷

Now the movements that don't occur in the instant obviously require time and they are, as just said, either adjusted to time or not adjusted to time. The things that aren't adjusted to time are ascribed to time and they consist of past, present and future. They are attributed to time and they have duration. Whatever we recognize in the world are in this category. The temporal or continual thing is not adapted to time and is gradual. It keeps its life in time. Thus the whole of temporal thing is understood in each instant. Such an instant is perishable but the thing will never become non-existence as it would exist again in the next instant.

The temporal things being adjusted to time means they can adapt their attributes to time one by one. It means when a thing is destroyed, there follows other things with similar attributes in the next instant. The first appearance is adapted to first instance and second appearance adapted to second instance and this process goes on continuously. This can be called the things adapted to time.

Now if we want to know the concept of substance in motion, it is first necessary to know the concepts of generation and annihilation. Generation and

annihilation are the same as instantaneous changes, but only with regard to substance. The philosophers who believed the concept of generation and annihilation were Aristotle and Mir Damad but Mulla Sadra said that, change and movement can never happen in material things. In other words, he rejected the medial motion or temporal change which isn't adjusted to time. He said we cannot find any movement in external world.⁷⁸

“According to Mulla Sadra, motion is limited to the corporeal (hissi) and subtle (mithali) domains or levels of reality only. Both the spiritual and archetypal worlds are changeless since there are no matter – gross or subtle – present in these levels of existence. Thus, while the corporeal and subtle domains are constantly in motion, the world of the spirits or pure intelligences and the archetypes which are separated from matter and potentiality are immutably fixed and unchanging. Therefore, every form possesses two aspects: a permanent and an ever-changing aspect.”⁷⁹

It means that movement belongs only to sensual and ideal realms or to the (lower) levels of reality or being only. The divine and archetypal realms are immutable since there is no matter present in these levels of being. For Mulla Sadra movement involves the factors such as: starting, ending, mover, subject and distance. When a thing moves from the point X to point Y, the X is the point of starting (Mabda) and Y is the end point (Montaha). The moving object is the subject of motion and the factors which make the thing move are the mover. The distance between X and Y is called distance and the time of moving between two points is called time.

What is important here is to see that, when we say one thing moves from the point X to point Y, we believe that the movement is confined to the points of

beginning and end, but this is wrong. The starting point of motion is the potential point and the end is the final or actual point of motion. When, for example, we say the table has moved from the place X to Y, it means the place X is the potential point of motion and place Y is the actual point. This means that the motion is the gradual proceeding from potential to actual. But if the process of change happens in an instant then it isn't moving; it is called generation and annihilation. Now the next question is what is the subject of motion (Mozue Harekat)? To understand this idea we must first know that motion is a kind of quality. It means motion needs a subject and it needs locus of quality (Mosuf), too.⁸⁰

For example, the color white needs a material to show itself. The white then is called an accident to the white thing. It is not innate to the thing. Another example can be found in the relation between quiddity and existence. Existence is ascribed to quiddity as accident; it means existence is an accident for quiddity and it isn't innate to quiddity. The existence can therefore be without quiddity but quiddity cannot exist without existence. Now the existence as locus is a recipient of motion, just as the thing is the recipient of color. The locus of the qualities is therefore the subject of motion. This subject has two important roles in the process of motion. The first is that the subject of motion can move and second, it can keep the identity of itself through motion. The thing therefore which is moving, although it is changing each moment, remains a fixed subject during the motion. The fixed subject of motion is needed in motion along with changing features of the motion.⁸¹ Motion moreover,

according to Sadra, is neither accident nor substance. He says that according to some philosophers, motion is accident and an accident needs a stable locus for its being. But Mulla Sadra denied it. He said that, accidents (Araz) are with quiddity and each quiddity is different from the other quiddity. But since motion is a process of existence of quiddity in distance, it cannot be related to quiddity. Motion is neither accident nor substance.⁸²

We can say that each attribute (Sefat) requires a subject (Mosuf). Attributes themselves are of two kinds: first is the kind of attributes that are accidents or are additional attributes of the quiddity. The second is the process of being like a temporal attribute of being. But while some philosophers thought that motion was accident which is in the category of additional attribute of essence, Mulla Sadra didn't accept it. He believed that motion is included into the temporal attributes of essence but it needs a subject of motion. According to Mulla Sadra, there is no difference between motion in thing and thing in itself, since motion is an attribute and its reality is the reality of thing. He further says that each thing that is creatable in time needs a prior presence of matter, otherwise it cannot be created. Now it is obvious that the motion is creatable, and for that reason it was nothing before and after it came into existence. If we look at the process of motion deeply, we can realize that the motion is an originated process (Hudus Tadriji). But as said before, originated (Hadis) needs potentiality and matter too, and that means that the thing which is originated needs matter and potentiality both. Thus when we know that motion is the

process which is originated, we also know then that it needs a prior matter to make its appearance; we can call such prior matter as subject of motion.⁸³

Mulla Sadra further argues that the nature of relation between substances and accidents is different from what Aristotle and Ibn Sina said. According to him the being of accident is a subordinate existence, in the sense that its existence-in-itself is the very existence-in-something-else. It means that the accidents in any substance are the subordinates of the existence of that substance and are existent by its existence. So, accidents have no existential independence. Thus, accepting motion in an accident is accepting motion in an existent such that accident is that existent's manifestation. Motion in this existence means motion in substance and accident.⁸⁴

According to Sadra:

“What is permanent in existence is identical with what is changing into it; and it is also absolutely identical with its instant-demonstration. Thus if it is said that it (i.e, black being) is one, it will be correct and if it is said that it is many, that will also be correct. If, moreover, it is said that it remains same from the very starting of change to the last, it will be true too. And if it is said that each moment it is a new emergence, it is identically right.”⁸⁵

Mulla Sadra understands accidents and characteristics of a thing in existence to be among the ranks of the existence of a substance. According to him every corporeal being has an existence that is specified, determined and individuated by itself and that the accidents of every being are the signs of its individuation (tashakhkhus). He accepted that the accidents and features of a thing are the cause of its individuation and that things in their specification and

individuation require their features and accidents. However, from the perspective of the fundamentality of being these features and accidents are not causes of individuation but rather signs of individuation.⁸⁶

According to Mulla Sadra:

“There is one type of existence for each material substance that needs some essential accidents which cannot be separated from that existence. The majority of thinkers accept these essential accidents as the cause of the identity of the being of that thing, although these are the indicators of its instead of being its cause.”⁸⁷

Mulla Sadra says that even those who deny the motion in substance believe that material substances change, although they discuss this change to be instantaneous rather than gradual and as belonging to the category of generation and corruption rather than motion. But substantial transformation and change cannot be categorized as generation and corruption, because such a change necessitates that matter remain formless for at least an instant. For ‘generation and corruption’ means that a matter loses one form and obtains another; as a result, in the interval between losing the previous form and gaining the next one, that matter remains formless, while actualization of matter is through form and it cannot exist separately or without form. When the impossibility of instantaneous change of substantial forms or generation and corruption is proven, the change in substance must necessarily be gradual, and this is motion.⁸⁸

Another argument to prove motion in substance given by Sadra relates to what he calls ‘the reality of time’. Time, he says, is the fourth dimension of the body.

This means temporality of bodies is a kind of extension in their existence, and time is the extension and quantity of corporeal nature, considering its renewing and flux. This corporeal nature consists of two extensions, first of which is based on gradual temporal extension and the other is instantaneous spatial extension. If corporeal nature has no spatial extension in its essence, it will not find quantitative determination with respect to mathematical body; in the same way if it does not have temporal extension in its essence, it will not find temporal determination. So, since corporeal nature, i.e. material substance is temporal it must be moving and flowing essentially.⁸⁹

“Undoubtedly, the time and the temporal category in which a thing happens to exist by accident implicates the way of the being of that thing, the space and the special category of that thing whether by quiddity or by accident also implicates the way of the being of that thing. Then, it is inconceivable that a thing placed in spacio-temporal context and in its externality and individuality is recognized in a way that the time and place do not matter to it.”⁹⁰

Here the fact of distance in motion and the relation between past and future is to be taken into account. The question is whether the motion can keep its unity in distance or not? For example, in the case of wood and fire, when the wood is burned, the ash remains, and the question arises what is the different between ashes and wood. Are these different or same? If wood is different from the ashes then there could be no relation between them. But it cannot be true because any motion or change needs a unity between its past and future.⁹¹

Any motion therefore needs two significant points of identity and differentiation. When, for example, hydrogen is converted to element of helium

the change requires two points of identity and differentiation. Identity is needed in change because it will prove that past and future in motion are connected and differentiation is needed, too, to explain the permanence and consistency behind the change. In motion, thus, the identity from past to future is preserved although some differentiating elements are also there.

Mulla Sadra further says that motion and time aren't separated from each other. Motion and time have unity of existence. It isn't like that we have two external realities of motion and time which is accident to motion.⁹²

According to him, time and motion are same in external world. It is wrong to think that motion is separate from time. It is our mind that creates this kind of illusion. According to Mulla Sadra, motion and distance and time are same: only the words are different. The differentiation happens only in mind not in the external world.⁹³

Mulla Sadra here was also influenced by Ibn Arabi, because Ibn Arabi has also written on the subject in his books *Fusus Al-Hikam* and *Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiya*. Ibn Arabi said that it is very strange that man is developing each moment but there is veil that hides such developing and this veil is something like forms. In other words, he says all existents are changing in nature, and such a creation without creator is impossible. The Essence of Truth continuously owns finite words and attentions and God's words that 'what is with God shall endure' points to the eternity of God's wise words which are eternal because of His eternity, although their bodily idols are finite and perishable.⁹⁴ Agreeing with him, Sadra writes:

“Ibn Arabi in *Fusus al-Hikam* confirms our view about the motion in substance as he says that one of the amazing things of this world is that man is constantly growing and yet due to subtle veiling and the resemblance of forms he remains ignorant of it....He also says in *Futuh* that all existent beings are constantly moving in this world and in the next and that is why it is not possible for there to be creation without any creator. The truth’s essence comprises of infinite names and attention and the verse ‘what is with God shall endure’ (16:96) suggests the eternity of God’s words that are themselves eternal due to God’s eternity, although their physical images have an end.”⁹⁵

Ibn Sina discussed motion in the context of physics because for him the motion is an accident of natural body. But Mulla Sadra believed that this issue is a metaphysical subject. He discussed about motion under the title of “levels of existence are in to the stable and flowing position”. The flowing of existence is based on the concept of substance in motion. Mulla Sadra says that motion is basically an internal accident of the renewing existence rather than its external accident; i.e., motion is not added to the renewing existence from the outside.⁹⁶ In opposition to Ibn Sina who believed in the accidental motion, Mulla Sadra said that there is no difference between moved and motion. The thing which is changing every moment is other than itself in the preceding and following moments. Therefore we can say that motion and moved are same. Existences are both stable and changing. The stable part is not based on the dimension of time but the flowing part has its dimension in time.⁹⁷

Mulla Sadra further says that substance has four dimensions. Three of them are stable and permanent dimensions while the fourth one is based on time and it is flowing dimension.⁹⁸ Normally, the bodies are supposed to have three, not four, dimensions. But the reality of time, according to Sadra, makes the fourth

dimension of body. Just as the spatial position of above and below adds up as the third dimension to a flat reality the temporal dimension becomes necessary to explain the change in the body. When we see a table in time, it is changing every second and it is a new table every second, because it consists of flowing dimension. All these tables are connected to each other and all of them exist in time. Sadra says that we have necessarily four dimensions for each object although we are able to realize one of them at one time when they make their appearance. Mulla Sadra tries to pass from the three stable dimensions to the flowing dimension afterwards and thereby proves the theory of substance in motion. He says that in external world there is nothing permanent and everything is changing in its substance keeping the accidents to be also in its motion. It is a contradiction to say that the substance of a thing has changed but its features are same. As said before, there are two types of beings, the first being the fixed or stable beings and second the flowing beings. The flowing beings are of the natural world and fixed beings are of spiritual world.⁹⁹

The natural world cannot come from the immaterial or spiritual world since all the things that we think are flowing, belong to former category while the immaterial world is stable. The flowing world does not come from stable world because in that case the flowing world should be stable, too. In sum, Sadra gave five arguments to prove the theory of substance in motion. Three of these are concerned with the relation between substance and accidents and two are concerned with the reality of time. According to Sadra a substance should be flowing in itself, since the motion is a necessary attribute of its existence. The

cause of change thing is then something in itself and the chain of cause and effect which makes the changeable cannot be infinite. He says that the chain of causes and caused leads us to the final cause that is changeable by essence. It is called the necessary flowing and renewing.¹⁰⁰

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Chapter - 4

‘Ultimate Reality’ in Mulla Sadra and Upanishads

Chapter 4

‘ULTIMATE REALITY’ IN MULLA SADRA AND UPANISHADS

I-Reality as One, Absolute and Simple

Having gone through a succinct description of the ideas of Mulla Sadra and Upanishads on the metaphysical issues of God, world, and soul and substance, accidents and causality etc we may now attempt to give a comparative account of the topics covered in the preceding chapters. A number of commonalities can be seen but the dissimilarities are also evident though they cannot be overemphasised. For both Mulla Sadra and Upanishads, their rationally constructed philosophies were of secondary importance in relation to what would be attained by mystical intuitions and experiences. The philosophical ideas served as aids in the attainment of intuitive realizations. Both insist that we should not mistake the end (realization) for the means (the philosophies being articulated). The subjective mystical experiences that lie at the heart of both philosophies are however, unanalysable in so far as they cannot be objectively grasped.

The mingling of theoretical constructions and intuitive experiences are characteristic of all mystical philosophies including those of Mulla Sadra and Upanishads. Our task however is to examine and compare the philosophical constructions that Upanishads and Mulla Sadra use to help explain what they have experienced through intuition and expressed through the philosophical vocabulary they inherited from their respective backgrounds – Indian in the case

of Upanishads and Greek and Islamic in the case of Mulla Sadra. The similarities between Upanishads and Mulla Sadra will be first examined because it is particularly important that we take note of how these two conceptual systems function in similar manner. Investigating these similarities will also allow us to properly understand the philosophical divergences and how each system has its own special mechanisms that are adapted to perform within a specific set of suppositions. Understanding similarities will better enable us to decide what issues are matters of diverging emphasis and what constitutes true difference.

According to Upanishads Brahman is pure existence, pure bliss and pure consciousness. He is the one reality that is without second. Mulla Sadra also recognizes absolute as one that is without second and that is what he calls necessary existence. He described the oneness and simplicity of necessary existence in Asfar as follows:

“The truth of existence, by the advantage of its being a simple affair, that does not have an essence and also not have a delimiter, is the essential itself, having a need to become perfect, infinite in its power. And shortage and exclusion afflict the seconds in their capacity as seconds, and the First is the perfection without limits; in respect to that, it is not possible to imagine of anything more perfect than itself...”¹

Upanishads give a similar description of oneness of Brahman as in the following:

“‘In the beginning,’ my dear, ‘there was that only which is (to on), one only, without a second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (to me on), one only, without a second; and from that which is not, that which

is was born'. 'But how could it be thus, my dear?' the father continued. 'How could that which is, be born of that which is not? No, my dear, only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second.'" (Chan. Up., 6. 2. 1-2)

Assuming a pure and absolute existence is concomitant with oneness, unity, simplicity, eternity, infinity, absoluteness, and perfection of that existence. Accordingly, one of the exclusive characteristics of this absolute being is its being non-composite, since 'pure existence' is the same as needlessness while composition necessitates need. Thus absolute existence is simple. In Mulla Sadra's school of thought, this principle is stated as follows: 'Anything' whose 'truth' (the essence of that existence) is simple (non-composite) is 'everything' (it is not separate from other objects).²

This principle is based on the law that existence is a simple and absolute 'truth', and every absolute simple being possesses all existential perfections, and each and every existence is contained in it. Therefore, firstly, the external reality of 'existence' (not its mental concept) cannot be more than one thing (it is single and one). Secondly, there is no sense in its not being eternal, and having come into existence from non-existence (every existence requires a maker). Thirdly, the existence of all existents is not separate from that very origin of existents, is in need of it, and depends on it. Fourthly, it is absolute, for it is impossible for something that is called the origin, essence, and reality of existence to have limits and boundaries, and not to be absolute and all-inclusive. The reason is that limits and boundaries are signs of need while the absolute and perfect is not needy. Consequently, an existence in the light of which all existents come into being is absolute and devoid of non-existence and

imperfection, and we cannot, even in our mind, view it as being a composite (of its own existence and non-existence of others). Here, Mulla Sadra wishes to demonstrate that all things are a compound of existence and quiddity and are therefore not simple (basit) in their nature except the necessary existence.³

So Mulla Sadra concludes that:

“It is evident that all things of which existence may (possibly) be negated is not perfectly simple in their necessary truth. Conversely, whatever is simple in necessary truth can have nothing that has existence negated of it. Otherwise, it is not possible to be known as simple being in its essential truth, but rather combined of two aspects. In the first aspect it is such as ‘A’ while in the other it is some other way which is not ‘B’, not ‘C’ etc. It is then clear that the simple existence is what the existent things have in regards to their existence and complete state, but not according to their deficiency and imperfection.”⁴

From the above it follows that:

1. According to Mulla Sadra all objects can be regarded in two independent ways; in one way they possess existence and are ‘themselves’, and in the other they are ‘not other than themselves’. These two considerations are independent, and have their own respective logical place. Therefore, every possible thing is composed of two conceptual and logical parts, and ‘composition’ is the sign of need and imperfection, since each of its components is in need of its other component, and need is the sign of ‘possibility,’ or lack of necessity.
2. The Necessary existence is simple due to its existence as the Absolute Existence and being needless of everything else (even in man’s

imagination). Then it cannot be mentally divided into two things, namely, 'self' and 'not other than self'. As a result:

3. Truth of simple Being consists of all the perfections and positive aspects of all existents, although it is not identical with them.

The issue can also be formulated thus:

- 1) All existents are the effects and creations of the Necessary Being; that is, they have taken whatever degree of existence they possess from the Necessary Being and Absolute Truth.
- 2) Since it is impossible for the Giver of perfection to lack it Himself, the Necessary Being possesses all perfections of its effects, of course not in a scattered form, but in a simple, focused, and single form.

We could see in Upanishad also that all things are Brahman in so far as it comprehends everything. According to Chandogya Upanishad:

“All this is Brahman (n.) Let a man meditate on that (visible world) as beginning, ending, and breathing in it (the Brahman). Now man is a creature of will. According to what his will is in this world, so will he be when he has departed this life. Let him therefore have this will and belief: The intelligent, whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like ether (omnipresent and invisible), from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed; he who embraces all this, who never speaks, and is never surprised, He is myself within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds.” (Chan. Up., 3. 14. 1-3)

Mulla Sadra says that if we assume an infinite line which has existence, it will be superior to all other short and long lines because, while enjoying unity, it contains all their aspects of existence without suffering from their limitations (imperfections). This principle by no means indicates that the essence of the Necessary existence is the same as the essence of all things and existents, and that all existents can be referred back to its essence. Rather, it means that since there exists in all existents some existential perfection, as well as some negative and defective ones, all perfection aspects of existents which have been obtained from the theophany of the principal essence and existence of the Necessary Being exist in His Essence in a simple and single form, without there being any trace of their negative aspects and imperfections. And since the thingness and truth of a thing are due to its existential aspect, and since imperfection is the same as negation and non-existence, all things are present in the essence of the simple thing, and the simple truth and pure existence is everything by itself, without being identical with their quiddity.

One of the consequences of this principle is the demonstration of the Necessary Being's 'Absolute Beauty' and 'Simple Truth', since beauty is nothing but lack of imperfection, and lack of imperfection, which means perfection, is a characteristic of Absolute Existence or the Necessary Being. The other consequence is that absolute and pre-eternal knowledge is God, since according to this principle, the Necessary Being, Who is all things, logically, has 'existential dominance' over all existence, and exists in every part of them, without becoming a part of their quiddity. This is so because existence, due to

being existence and considering its positive (rather than negative) aspects, is not separate from other existences. Existence is 'existence' at all times and in all its forms, exactly in the same way that sunlight is not separate from daylight. Absolute Existence, logically, is Omnipotent and dominates everything in its ontological nature, and God's Power and other Attributes originate from His Absolute and Simple Existence.⁵

Moreover, for both Upanishads and Mulla Sadra, the one ultimate reality is hidden by a veil and is unknowable by our normal sources of perceptual and rational faculties. The reality, both Sadra and Upanishadic seers say, is neither perceived by the external sense organs nor grasped by the mind and intellect. Kena Upanishad (I. 3), for example, says that it is different from the 'known' and is also above the 'unknown'. It is different from the known because an object is known when it is perceived. Brahman cannot be seen by the eyes, cannot be heard by the ears, cannot be smelt nor can it be felt by touch. We cannot perceive Brahman as we perceive an object for it has no shape, no form. Neither can it be grasped by mind nor by intellect for it is beyond space and time, and the other categories of mind which are the products of mind themselves.

“The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor mind. We do not know that. We do not know how to instruct one about it (na tatra caksurgacchati na vaggacchati no manah).” (Kena Up., I. 3)

Thus being beyond the realm of sense perception and the grasp of human mind it is different from the 'known'. But for this reason it cannot be said that it is

‘unknown’, for the words ‘known’ and ‘unknown’ have significance with regard to the world of objects. If an object is perceived through sense perception and inference etc. then it is said to be known, otherwise unknown. Brahman is beyond objectification; and that is why it is said to be beyond unknown. But though it is unknown or unknowable by sense and intellect, it cannot be said to be unknowable, for the Srutis say:

“Indeed, he attains immortality who intuits It in and through every modification of the mind. (Pratibodha-viditam matam amrtatvam hi vindyate).” (Kena Up., II. 4)

If the Absolute Eternal Truth is beyond the known and the unknown, what else can it be but the knower himself? Being the eternal knower He knows the known and also the unknown. Thus the seers say:

“It is the Ear of the Ear, the Mind of the Mind, the Tongue of the Tongue (speech of the speech) and also the life of the life and the Eye of the Eye. Having abandoned the sense of self or I-ness in these and rising above sense-life, the wise become immortal (Srotrasya Srotram manaso mano yadVaco ha vacam sa u pranasya pranah Caksusascak suratimucya dhirah Pretyasmalokad- amrta –bhavanti).” (Kena Up., I. 2)

Brahman, being the unfathomable and the unspeakable first cause, the seers sometimes try to describe it by saying what it is not, “neti, neti”, it is not this, not that. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad has tried to explain the negative nature of Brahman by comparing it with the positive description of Purusha which is rather a personal kind of God.

“The beauty of that person (Purusha) is like a yellow coloured robe, like the flame of fire, like the white lotus, like the flashes of lightning. Now the

instruction about Brahman is in the form of “Neti neti,”—not this, not this. There cannot be any instruction better than this.”

(Brh. Up., II. 3- 6)

However for this reason it cannot be said that there is an element of nothingness in the concept of Brahman. The incapacity of the human senses, mind and intellect to give an account of the highest reality does not render it to be a blank. Though we cannot give an account of the highest reality, intellectual necessities require us to give some description. An electric current in the wire is imperceptible by the eyes. However it can be understood by its manifestations as the light in the bulb, heat in the stove, or cold in the refrigerators. Finite words can never successfully define the infinite. However the only way to explain Brahman is to give some indication of its manifestations. Kena Upanishad indicates it by saying:

“What speech cannot reveal, but what reveals speech (‘yad vacanabhyuditam yena vagabhyudyate’).

“What one cannot feel with the mind, but because of which they say that the mind feels’ (yan-manasa na manute yenahur mano matam).

“What cannot be seen by the eye, but by which the eyes are able to see (Yaccaksusa na pasyati yena caksumsi pasyati).” (Kena. Up., I. 4-6)

Like Upanishads Mulla Sadra also believes that the reality of existence is unknowable and indescribable. The existence is undefinable because ontologically being, as the principle of unity beneath the multiplicity of the phenomenal objects, is beyond the domain of the applicability of these categories. Existence is not a genus, differentia, species or a common and

specific accident. For this very reason, understanding the meaning of existence cannot be based on anything other than itself:

“There is no description for existence, because description is based either on definition or some signifier. Existence cannot be described by definition because it is neither genus nor differentia... It cannot be described by any distinctive mark and therefore its realization is not possible by anything more manifest than itself. It is wrong to try to describe being, for it is required to be described by something more hidden than itself.”⁶

Absolute being is not an existing quality or object of thought. It transcends all attempts to grasp it, as it is the source of all manifestation. It can only be described negatively, as the formless, nameless, etc. In relation to concrete beings, it is non-being, but in itself it is the fullness of being. But we must still not ascribe any positive determination to the unlimited, and undetermined. Brahman is without form and is beyond sight and the world of objectivity.

As in Mulla Sadra’s thought, the absolute transcendence of Brahman demands that it be beyond intellect. Mind and sense, which operate through subject–object distinction, are misleading, are Avidya or ignorance. Mind is blind to the intuitive level of Vidya or wisdom which characterizes knowledge of Brahman. If the real is seen as an object of knowledge, it is not yet known. True knowledge or Vidya is an integral creative activity of spirit knowing nothing external to it. Truth is not an expression or reflection of reality, it is reality itself. Knowledge and being are the same thing, i.e. the inseparable aspects of the same reality, indistinguishable in a realm admitting of no duality. Duality is an otherness, an estrangement, a fallen-ness. Intellect moves within this sphere

of duality. The intuitive level of Vidya stems from a unity. The Mundaka Upanishad (I. I. 4) distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, higher and lower, Para Vidya and Apara Vidya. This distinction seems to correspond to the Mulla Sadra's distinction between knowledge or vision of unity (para or transcendental) and knowledge of perishable beings (apara or non-transcendental). The latter is however not false as one can seek Brahman in particulars though the result would be still bondage and ignorance.

“Two kinds of knowledge must be known, this is what all who know Brahman tell us, the higher and the lower knowledge. The lower knowledge is the Rig-veda, Yagur-veda, Sama-veda, Atharva-veda, Siksha (phonetics), Kalpa (ceremonial), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Khandas (metre), Gytisha (astronomy) but the higher knowledge is that by which the Indestructible (Brahman) is apprehended.” (Mundaka Up., I. I. 4)

It seems that apara vidya culminates in intellect and para vidya manifests as vision, an intuitive experience. Again this corresponds to difference between knowledge and the vision of the One. One can understand the Vedas and the teaching on Brahman, but this understanding will always be insufficient without the actual experience of one's ground, the vision, the clarity of illumination. One can know God only by becoming godlike, not by thinking about God. The Kena Upanishads states that Brahman is the basis of mind, life, and sense but it is not an object subject to these states (I.1-2). Brahman is beyond the thought, life, and sensation (I. 3), and therefore beyond the possibility of communication and description. Brahman is above the known yet also above the unknown (I. 4), meaning we can know Brahman, but not through the mind.

“He by whom Brahman is not known, knows It; he by whom It is known, knows It not. It is not known by those who know It; It is known by those who do not know It. Brahman is known when It is realized in every state of mind, for by such Knowledge one attains Immortality. By Atman one obtains strength, by Knowledge, Immortality.” (Kena Up., II. 3-4)

For Mulla Sadra, too, the existence is not conditioned by any sort of determination and limitation. If it is defined it is limited and conditioned by its determinations, for every affirmation implies a negation. According to him the concept of existence becomes a prior condition and the foundation of all kinds of scientific discourse and knowledge:

“At the base of the wisdom principle is the question of being; it is the foundation of theology, of the science of unity, of the resurrection of bodies and souls, and other issues that we have discussed and articulated. It vouchsafes them a unity in its description. If someone is unwise or ignorant of the mystery of being, he is also ignorant of major topics and most important quests and he loses the purifications of mystic subtleties, the spiritual science of prophets, the mystery of the soul...”⁷

According to Sadra existence is an external being that cannot be the object of our experience in so far it lies outside our mind. What the mind keeps within it is quiddity or essence and that rather hides the existence so that the latter remains beyond mind’s reach.

“All the concepts that are abstracted from our experience of phenomenal world are done so by the mind, even though their modes keep changing. So because the very nature of being is that it is external to mind and each thing whose very nature it is to be external to mind may come through the mind or, else, its nature will be converted, being is not able to be realized by any mind.”⁸

Upanishads say the same about the unknowability of Brahman:

“His father said to him: ‘Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?’ ‘What is that instruction, Sir?’ he asked. The father replied: ‘My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay; And as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold? And as, my dear, by one pair of nail-scissors all that is made of iron (karshnayasaṃ) is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is iron, thus, my dear, is that instruction.’”(Chan. Up., 6. 1. 4)

Mulla Sadra also says:

“No one can define (ma’ruf) Him (God or the Necessary Being) or reveal (ashfa) Him but He Himself, and there is no demonstration (burhan) of Him except His own Essence (al-Dhat). Therefore, He gave witness (shahada) through His Self to Himself and to the Unity (wahdaniyyah) of His Self when He said: ‘God (Allah) gives witness that there is no god but He’ (Quran, 3: 18).”⁹

Necessary existence and Brahman are both free from all limitations of time, place etc. so it is not possible to define it by human intellect that is limited in time and space.

According to Mulla Sadra:

“The origin of being of all things that exist is pure truth of existence, untainted by anything other than existence. Such a truth is not limited by any description, limitation, imperfection, essence and any generality, whether of genus, species, nor with any accident whether specific. For existence is prior to all definitions which apply to essence rather than existence which is not

limited by any specificity. It does not have generality and particularity apart from its essence. There is also no form or agent for it.”¹⁰

Explaining the above idea, one of his interpreters says:

“It is not possible to conceive the reality of existence and its depth of truth, neither by a definition that consists of genus and differentia nor by a definition that consists of genus and special accident nor by a meaning equal to existence. Because, the conception of the truth of external truth of everything is acquisition of that thing in the mind and the transition of that meaning from the external to the mind. This action is obtainable about everything other than existence (i.e. quiddities), but it is not possible about existence (because the transition of existence from the external to the mind, would annul its truth, and what is grasped from of by the mind is a phantom of the truth of existence not its reality). Therefore, it is not possible to have a way to the truth of existence, unless via intuition by inner insight not by way of definition and limiting, by demonstration and reasoning, as by understanding by words and terms...”¹¹

II-Personal and impersonal God

As already seen, the Upanishads describe Brahman to be of two kinds: Para and Apara that refer to a higher and a lower Brahman. The former is a-cosmic, quality-less, indeterminate, and indescribable (Nisrapanacha, Nirguna, Nirvishesha and Anirvachaniya). The lower Brahman, on the other hand, is cosmic, all comprehensive and full of all good qualities (Saprapanacha, Saguna and Savishesha). The first is the Absolute being and the second is what may be called the Ishvara or the theistic God.

The absolute Brahman, moreover, is the real existence while the Ishvara is either conceived as an imagined being or a descent from the higher Brahman.

This is as Maitrayana (6.3-6) says:

“There are two forms of Brahman, the material (effect) and the immaterial (cause). The material is false, the immaterial is true. That which is true is Brahman, that which is Brahman is light, and that which is light is the Sun. and this Sun become the Self of that Om. He divided himself threefold, for Om consists of three letters, a+u+m. Through them all this is contained in him as warp and woof. For thus it is said: ‘O Satyakama, the syllable Om is the high and the low Brahman’.” (Maitrayana Up., 6. 3-6)

We could see also in the Svetasvatara Upanishad (I.1) that Brahman is the cause of all things. But Brahman in its unmanifested nature cannot be viewed as cause. So Brahman as cause is Brahman and as Ishvara is the creator working through the power of Maya. Here Brahman in relation to the word is known as Ishvara; but Brahman’s absolute nature transcends Ishvara. This corresponds to but is not exactly same as what Mulla Sadra thinks about absolute or necessary existence in relation to the God as creator of universe. The ‘nous’ or first intellect is not the creator God with personal attributes but the first emanation from his being (like Purusha). Sadra knows it as first effect of God. This first effect is identical with God that is the pure existence but as being the result of God’s self-reflection, it is something different as well. But it is not to be known as existence that is apart from him. It cannot be said that it is a real emanation, but rather an act or one act of self-reflection so far as God is concerned. It can be said that:

“It is nothing but real existence, the stuff of which all existents are made. It is called the self-unfolding existence (al-wujud al-munbasit) and, in a sense, behaves vis-à-vis all existents as matter behaves vis-à-vis all material objects except that while matter is pure potentiality, it is pure actuality.”¹²

Sadra, following his Greek teachers, espouses not a creationist cosmogony but a cosmology that is through and through emanationistic in which the nous is both identical and separate from necessary being, is both eternal and non-eternal, both necessary and contingent.

“Taken in itself, it is absolute and modeless but exists in all modes – with the eternal it is eternal, with the temporal, temporal; with the necessary, it is necessary; with the contingent, contingent; with the stable it is stable, with the transient, transient.”¹³

The nous as the witness of God is in all things. It is the shadow of God in everything. Mulla Sadra calls it a hypostasis.

“It is a relation between God and the world of contingency as a whole and, finally, it is an act of self-reflection on the part of God as well as a pure relation to Him in His mind.”¹⁴

The idea of hypostasis is very important in the cosmology of Sadra. It stands for a state of being where God and its first emanant are separated without being separate from each other. In relation to the emanants that follow, the first one is separate but in itself it is not other than the God’s being itself.

“The truth is that the first Intelligence is the first emanant only in comparison with the rest of particular beings which exist in separation or quasi-separation from God, and is itself the result of the conjunction of this self-unfolding existence with an essence and is the former’s first determination, as all particular beings are, in turn, its incessant determinations. But the self-unfolding existence is not separate from God...”¹⁵

Thus every particular determination of the self-unfolding existence needs the attachment to it of a quiddity in the mind of man. It is described as contingent being. While the self-unfolding existence comes to the state of contingency and

into the self-determination, beings with quiddities or essences arise, and this is to be known as 'The breath of the merciful (Nafs al-Rahman)'. This breath of merciful comes to contingent existences and manifests essences to give them form and reality.

“The factor that generates this change in the self-unfolding being and brings it down from the level of pure existence is again in the mind of God.”¹⁶

According to Mulla Sadra, God who as pure being had generated the self-unfolding existence, acquires by a second reflection upon himself, plurality of attributes such as will, knowledge, power, life, etc.

“In other words, what the first stage of Divine Consciousness had adumbrated as a unity and contained in an implicit manner, now becomes explicit at the second stage of self-consciousness. These detailed contents of the second level consciousness are at once the attributes of God and the Ideal Essence of the created world. There is, however, a vital difference in the results of the two self-reflections. The first reflection – of existence – had reflected or irradiated the ‘outward’ of God, which is pure existence; the second reflection remains the ‘inward’ of God. This is because of the principle that existence is the reality while essence, as concepts, are confined to mental existence.”¹⁷

The idea of a quasi-creator God thus emerges in Mulla Sadra within his emanationist scheme. This is more or less similar to the scheme of descent found in Upanishads. Brahman in relation to the world is Ishvara but between these two we come across the notion of a world-soul, called Brahma or Hiranyagarbha, which seems to represent the nous of Mulla Sadra. This world-soul is not sharply distinguished from Ishvara in the Upanishads, but is rather intimately grounded in Ishvara and Brahman. These three principles, Brahman, Ishvara, and Hiranyagarbha (as intermediate being) are continually referred to,

in various contexts, as the basis of the manifested world. But each is subtly distinct in meaning, and we must therefore rank them in their proper place.

“He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as Hiranyagarbha), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere. The god who is in the fire, the god who is in the water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration!” (Svet. Up., II-16)

Brahman is the unity of all, while the world-soul is subject to the changes of the world and is therefore its effect. Brahman is distinct from Ishvara or cause-Brahman. Brahman is eternally transcendent and is not subject to world changes. The world-soul arises at the beginning of the world and dissolves at the end. Mandukya Upanishad says Brahman to have four quarters which can be regarded as four levels of being: a transcendence prior to any concrete reality, i.e. the absolute Brahman, a causal foundation of all differentiation, Ishvara or cause Brahman and Ishvara as Prajna, a supreme intelligence which holds all things in an undifferentiated condition, a divine wisdom that sees all things as a primordial whole, unlike human reason which sees things in parts and relations. An interior essence of the world, a world-soul emanates from Ishvara the creator:

“He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts.” (Svet. Up., III. 4)

Plurality in the manifestation of the world is called Viraj. These are four coexistent sides of one reality. The absolute is not the sum of these, or an

elimination of any. It means that there is some distinction between Brahman and the other three. Brahman has strict distinctions but only phenomenally.

Now if we go back over these four aspects of reality and compare them with the Mulla Sadra's four stages of descent, we find the two schemes not essentially very different from each other. In Sadra the four levels of reality are as follows:

1. One reality that is called necessary existence, absolute, undifferentiated, formless source.
2. Nous, the divines names, principle of creation.
3. World-soul, the agent of creation.
4. The sense-world where we find a remarkable similarity of structure and intensity of being.¹⁸

These levels can further be seen to correspond in reverse to the following scheme of Mulla Sadra:

1. Sense world and the individual soul immersed in its externality;
2. World-soul or unity of beings creating the world from within itself;
3. Nous, the creative principle, unity of divine ideals;
4. Absolute, undifferentiated source of all.¹⁹

The Upanishads also tell that to reach the absolute, one must penetrate to the formless Brahman. This is accomplished by the self journeying within its innermost depths where it is one with the absolute. In the Upanishads there is a kinship between Brahman and that which seeks Brahman, the self of man. This

kinship is explained through the notion of Atman, the principle of grounding individual consciousness. In the early Upanishads, Atman was the ground of individuality as distinguished from Brahman, the supra-personal ground of the cosmos. Soon however this distinction diminished and the two were identified. Brahman is the transcendent other and also the spirit residing within man. This idea of absolute identity between Brahman and Atman was later developed by the great Vedantin thinker Shankara in his famous philosophy of Advaitavada or absolute non-dualism.

The ultimate reality in the philosophy of Shankara is called Nirguna Brahman while in Mulla Sadra it is called Necessary Existence. These two concepts of ultimate reality or absolute have similarities as well as dissimilarities. For both of them ultimate reality is simple as well as pure unity. Nirguna Brahman is the realm of unity and necessary existence in itself is without essence. According to Mulla Sadra also necessary existence is simple being because it is called being and being is a unique and simple reality. It is simplicity because it is devoid of composition. This existence is uncontaminated by multiplicity, privation, imperfection or any such negative property. God's existence is pure and unencumbered by complexity found in the essence that might raise questions of genera, division, composition and definition.

It should be mentioned that in the philosophy of Shankara, Nirguna Brahman is devoid of all qualifications such as positive or negative attributes. It acquires its first attribute of existence at the secondary level of descent and then from existence all other qualities and objective attributes are manifested. The

existence then is the first attribute followed by the appearance of other attributes. In this attributed stage of Saguna, Brahman is same as Ishvara or God. Thus Nirguna Brahman is Atman in small realm and it is Brahman in great realm. Saguna Brahman too appears as Jiva in small realm and as Ishvara in great realm. This transition from an absolute to personal God in Shankara is comparable to Mulla Sadra's views on the transcendent (Tanzih) and immanent (Tanzih) aspects of God.

Mulla Sadra, like Ibn Arabi, accepted both Tashbih and Tanzih but he said that it is not possible for both the Tashbih and Tanzih to co-exist in the same being at the same time because it would involve contradiction. So he believed that the Tashbih and Tanzih come together in a parallel way. He says Tanzih means considering Allah absolutely pure from any comparison whatsoever, and Tanzih means considering Allah like and similar to His creations. Tashbih comes with quality and Tanzih comes with purity and simplicity. Tashbih means that we can give the attributes of creatures to creator. In the state of Tanzih, on the other hand, beings are different from each other in degrees of intensity i.e. from weakest to highest levels of being. The necessary existence has Tanzih in this state.

In this way Mulla Sadra keeps both personal and impersonal God in the manner of Shankara though for the latter only impersonal God is truth the Ishvara being for him no more than a shadowy existence in the imagination of ignorant man. In Upanishads the personal God or Saguna Brahman is recognized in the realm of plurality and impersonal God or Nirguna Brahman

in the realm of unity. Similarly, Mulla Sadra accepts personal God in the state of Tashbih or immanence and impersonal God in the state of Tanzih or transcendence. It is obvious that it is the belief that Wajib Al-Wujud (God) consists of all things and nothing is out of His nature that leads to belief in Tashbih. Allah is considered to be everything and the composition of all things, thus similar to everything. According to Allama Tabatabai it is necessary for a cause and its effect to be of the same substance in essence. This means that Allah who is the cause and creations which are His effects must be of the same substance in essence; this is the way beyond Tashbih. The fundamental Unity of existence in the system of Shankara thus finds clear resonance in Mulla Sadra. The important difference however is that while Shankara removes multiplicity in order to achieve pure unity Sadra regards both unity and multiplicity to be real coming thus closer to Ramanuja. Radhakrishnan says:

“Isvara, according to Samkara, is the determinate (saguna) Brahman regarded as the supreme personality.”²⁰

Shankara believes that personal God or Saguna Brahman is the Concrete Universal. He is the object of devotion and worshiping, inspirer of moral life and is the final heaven of everything. He is the Lord of Maya. Saguna Brahman is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of this universe. He creates the universe out of himself, and at dissolution draws the entire universe towards Himself. He is the controller of both soul and matter. Shankara thus takes into consideration both the immanent and transcendent aspects of God as it was found in Upanishads.²¹

From a practical point of view, Ishvara or God is the highest point of reverence, but yet the description of God as creator etc rests on our ignorance or Avidya. Thought makes the distinction between subject and object. Brahman as Nirguna is free from all kinds of distinctions. In the state of Maya or Avidya, Brahman which is essentially a non-dual Reality appears as personal God that is called Ishvara. Shankara says that the essence of Brahman is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. They are his necessary characteristics, or Svarupa laksana, whereas description of Him as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, are merely accidental description. For example, if a shepherd plays the role of a king, then he is the king so long as he remains on the stage. Similarly, the explanation of God as the creator of the universe is true only from the practical point of view i.e. so long as the world-appearance is regarded as real. According to him creatorship of the universe does not touch his essence; just as the show of having a kingdom does not confer kingship to the actor who is playing the king on the stage, or as the rope itself cannot be affected by the illusory features of the snake.

The belief in a personal God or Saguna Brahman is also essential for it has its own importance. It is essential to explain the changeful world. Brahman himself is changeless. But we come across changes in the universe. This changing world cannot be traced to Prakriti that is unintelligent. By itself the unintelligent Prakriti cannot cause anything without the aid of an intelligent Spirit. It is only in the power of an intelligent subject, God, to let the object or Prakriti develop into the universe. It is, however, not to posit Prakriti by the

side of Brahman as an ultimate category as that would limit the nature of Brahman that is without a second. There is only one way and that is to posit a 'Saguna Brahman', an Isvara that mixes within himself the nature of two states; being and becoming, the unattached Brahman and unconscious Prakriti. Ishvara combines in himself the two principles of Brahman and Prakriti. The system of the Samkhya tries to make the unintelligent Prakriti to be the cause of the universe, but Shankara asks how can the immanent teleology of nature be proved by the unintelligent Prakriti? His own reply is that only the Intelligent Brahman that is endowed with the power of Maya can be the cause of the universe. The materials like stones, bricks, mortars, etc are not able to make themselves into well-designed buildings; they need the help of intelligent workmen. Even if we attribute activity to Pradhana, the unintelligent Prakriti can still have no aim to design this universe.

But though Prakriti cannot be shown to be the cause of universe, it is also not possible to show logically God as having brought the universe into existence. The existence of God cannot be proved by intellect. Shankara shows the futility of arguments such as cosmological, moral, and logical to prove God's existence. According to cosmological proof the being of God can be demonstrated by regarding Him as the 'First Cause' or the 'Uncaused cause'. But such a cause must be of the same order as the other causes of the universe. In other words, it should be associated with the same order as the other empirical objects, since the latter are said to be connected with it. He says that the chain of causes that follow from the phenomenal world should finish in this

phenomenal world. It is possible to admit within this world of phenomena an uncaused cause. But in this case the Ishvara will be empirical phenomena, bound to the space-time framework. A finite God is however no God. We could see here that Shankara does not believe Ishvara as pure God that is real, and therein lies the difference between Mulla Sadra and Shankara because Mulla Sadra accepts the personal God in the state of immanence as real.²²

Against the position taken by Shankara, Ramanuja, another great name in the Vedanta tradition propounded a doctrine according to which Brahman must be a Savishesa or a God qualified with attributes. God is absolute but at the same time he comprehends the whole universe. Matter and souls form his body, he being their soul. As the absolute and the ultimate unity, God may be viewed through two stages as cause and as effect.

Ramanuja says that in the state of dissolution (Pralaya), God remains as the cause with subtle matter the unembodied souls forming his body. The entire world lies latent in him. In the state of creation, the subtle matter becomes gross and the unembodied souls (except the nitya and mukta ones) become embodied according to their karmas. In this effect-state the universe becomes manifest.²³ Secondly, God is known as the immanent inner controller, the qualified substance who is in himself changeless but is the unmoved mover of the world-process. God is stable in his essence and does not suffer change that is said to fall to the lot of his attributes or modes only.²⁴

According to Ramanuja there is no difference between an attribute and a mode. Matter and souls may be either attributes or modes. They are related to God

and are inseparable from him. They are his body and he is their soul. Just as in the state of an ordinary individual only the body undergoes change while the soul remains changeless, similarly it is only the body of God, i.e. the matter and the individual souls, that undergoes changes and not the God himself. Thus God is the unchanging controller of all change and the limitations of matter as well as the miseries and the imperfections of the finite souls do not affect the essence of God. Thirdly, according to Ramanuja, God is also transcendent while being immanent at the same time. God is the perfect personality. He has a divine body. Embodiment in his case, however, is not the cause of bondage. The God, though embodied, is not bound by karma for he is the lord of karma.

The first two points about God in Ramanuja are derived from the interpretation of the Upanishads, while this last point which is theistic in character is the result of the Bhagvata theism. God, as the perfect personality, is devoid of all demerits and possesses all merits. He has infinite knowledge and bliss. He has divine body and is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. Ramanuja says that God has his consort Lakshmi, the symbol of power and mercy. He is known as Narayana or Vasudeva. He lives in his citadel Vaikuntha which is made of pure Sattva or Nityavibhuti. God consists of qualities like knowledge, power and mercy etc. Ramanuja knows God as eternal, infinite, numberless, unlimited and matchless. He is knowledge to the ignorant, power to powerless, mercy to guilty, grace to the afflicted, parental affection to the impure, perennial attachment to those who fear separation, nearness to those who pine to see him, and kindness to all. Though one in

himself, he manifests himself in multiple forms in order to help his devotees. As the immanent soul of the universe, he is first form. As the transcendent personal lord, he is para or supreme.²⁵

According to Ramanuja God as the creator, preserver and destroyer, reveals himself in four-fold Vyuha. The manifestation of God as the lord is called Vasudeva. His manifestation as the ruler of the cognitive aspect of the souls and as the destroyer of this universe is called Sankarsana. The manifestation of God as the ruler of the emotional aspect of the souls and as the creator of this universe is known as Pradyumna. His manifestation as the ruler of the volitional aspect of the souls and as the preserver of this universe is known Aniruddha. These four manifestations or Vyuha are however the partial and incomplete manifestations of the supreme lord (Para). According to Ramnauja, when God descends down on this earth in the human or the animal form, he is called Vibhava or Avatara that is incarnation (fourth form). He does so in order to protect the good, punish the wicked and restore the dharma, the law.²⁶

Ramanuja in his interpretation of the philosophy of the Upanishads, accepts the passages declaring non-distinction between Brahman, the world and the self, and those affirming Brahman to be the same in the causal as well as effected aspects. They, however, according to him, do not in any way contradict the other passages which declare that the individual selves and the world form the body of Brahman, and that the latter in their causal state do not admit the distinction of names and forms while in the effected state they possess distinct character. According to Ramanuja an internal distinction

between the individual soul and Brahman is necessary to sustain a theistic religion.

Ramanuja explains that matter, souls and God (Brahman) all exist in the world, but the first two are simply qualities of God.

“Soul and matter are comprehended within the unity of the Lord’s essence and are related to the Supreme as attributes to a substance, as parts to a whole, or as body to the soul.”²⁷

According to Ramanuja Jivatmas are real, the world is real; only that they have no separate existence apart from Brahman Sriman Narayanan (Narayana – He in whom all beings rest). Ramanuja takes recourse to the metaphor of ‘sarira sariri nexus’. The essential nature of Sarira (BrahmanNarayanan) is to be under the absolute control of the Sariri and subserve the purpose of the Sariri. The Sariri is the Master or Lord (Seshi) and Jivas and jagat are his servants (Seshan). The goal of Vishistadvaita philosophy is to understand and experience Brahman, the One Blissful Reality who is the all-pervasive ground and sustenance of the universe, the string in which all pearls are threaded. The pearls, individual beings and matter, are inseparable attributes of the Supreme person. This is certainly not dualism but nor exactly the same thing as a pure monism, which maintains that there is only one existence.²⁸

The idea of God manifesting himself through the world of matter and souls finds its echo in the Islamic philosophy of Mulla Sadra. God was, according to a saying of the prophet, a hidden treasure desiring to be known. Mulla Sadra explains that God’s names are manifested in the cosmos. But while all of

creation manifests the name of God, the perfect man, who is the only person to attain full humanity and is represented by a single person in every age, contains the totality of these names. The perfect man is therefore a microcosm and God's most perfect mirror. The individuals who are the perfect men are each exemplifications of an eternal spiritual essence which is the articulating and mediating principle through which the creation comes into existence. Here we have the idea of Purusha and Virata as found in the Rig Veda to be the equivalent of Sadra's idea of 'perfect man'.

Sadra further elaborates his mystical view of the divine names that has bearing upon the concepts of macrocosmic and microcosmic view of man as a synoptic universe. He explains the appearance of all levels of contingent existences, all the physical, corporeal, and angelic realities in terms of God's names. Here Speech is the matrix of creation. All the universe of contingency is due to the first word of God, namely, the word of Kun (Be, the creative command). Then the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet are the elements of the language. Mulla Sadra accepts twenty-eight stations (Maqamat) in which the breath of the compassionate is articulated and that represent the symbolic projections of God's consciousness. According to him the literary aspect of these utterances becomes the Quran while their existential manifestations appear in the form of the world. The macrocosmic text i.e. the universe itself is another symbolic form of the word of God. The Quran and the universe manifest the same reality. Both of them are expressions of the breath of compassionate, though both are manifested at different symbolic levels.²⁹

According to Mulla Sadra there are three levels of God's speech: the higher, the intermediate and the lower. 'Allah', as spoken word, is that speech which serves no purpose beyond itself. It has intrinsic value and, therefore, is in itself the ultimate objective of the speaker. According to him the word 'Kun' (Be) or his creative command, on the other hand, exemplifies this kind of speech. Mulla Sadra calls them as 'Allah's complete words' (Kalimatu'llah al-tammah). The intermediate level comprises those words which serve objectives beyond themselves. These speeches are essential and inevitable commands of God that are exactly obeyed by creatures. The laws governing the motion of the heavenly bodies and other physical phenomena are examples of this sort of commands. These speeches are essential and inevitable; and the subjects have no means of escape from them. Mulla Sadra believes that the lower sorts are of instrumental significance; they serve goals beyond themselves. But, unlike the intermediate ones, their subjects enjoy the possibility of disobedience. The duties and obligations prescribed by God and sent to man through prophets fall into this category.

According to Sadra we could find these three levels of the expression of God's command in the perfect man. It means that just as there are three sorts of expression for God's consciousness, there are also three corresponding stages for the consciousness of perfect man, since he is the best manifestation of God's image. The spiritual knowledge that is given to him corresponds to higher stage of God's speech. His bodily acts and his limbs are obedient to his decisions while the commands corresponding to the events of nature happen

according to the inevitable natural laws. It means, the microcosmic nature of man represents the intermediate level of God's speech and finally the proclamation of his ideas to others through verbal or literary symbols correspond to the lower stage of God's speech. Mulla Sadra says that if man raises the ladder of perfection and sets himself in the direction of God, he may reach a stage in his spiritual journey where God speaks to him directly through intuition. Here Sadra follows Ibn Arabi who said that man's consciousness becomes the very word of God and there does not remain a temporal gap between his knowing and his speech.³⁰

Mulla Sadra believes in God having attributes but his formulation of the problem lacks the simplicity of theologian. On the question of relation between essence and attributes of God he follows the footsteps of his predecessors i.e. Mu'tazilites and philosophers like Ibn Sina and Ibn Arabi. But before this he makes a difference between attributes of the essence and attributes of act. Mulla Sadra says that the attributes of God are his very essence. He explained in Shawahid:

“Necessary existence's attributes are not to be added to its quiddity, but the being of him that is its very quiddity, in its truth is a repository of all the attributes in the state of their perfection do not thereby imply plurality, passivity, acceptance and activity in his quiddity. The distinction between the quiddity of necessary being and its attributes is similar to the distinction between being and the quiddity of the entities which comprehends quiddity... Similarly, the spiritual attributes and divine names that in themselves and in their necessary concepts are non-existent, but rather exist in the state of simplicity...”³¹

Sadra recognizes seven attributes of God namely, life, knowledge, power, will, hearing, sight and speech. Of these, three attributes, viz. life, knowledge, and power are the positive attributes of the Essence, and the other three i.e. hearing, sight, and speech, are the attributes of act. In addition, he has propounded the attribute of God's will to love for his creation too, both in the *Asfar* and the *Shawahid*. According to him:

“The necessary being has the power to effect the emanation of the entities from his quiddity by sheer will. This will is his very quiddity, and not something added to quiddity.”³²

The above account of Mulla Sadra's views on the attributes of God shows that his views are similar to those of Ramanuja who, too, believes in God's attributes but only as part of Brahman's essence.

“Ramanuja supports his conception of reality from the scriptures. The Vedas declare that Brahman is full of auspicious qualities. Truth, knowledge and infinite is Brahman,’ says the Upanisad. These several terms refer to the one supreme reality and declare that the absolute Brahman is unchangeable perfection, and possesses intelligence which is ever uncontrolled, while the intelligence of released souls was for some time in a contracted condition.”³³

Further, Mulla Sadra wrote that Divine power is infinite and embraces every contingent entity. He says that the contingency of an entity does not necessitate its existence, and only those things come into existence which God intends. It means that being powerful does not mean that one can do anything. All that can be said is that God can do whatever he intends. The essential impossibilities (*muhalat-i dhati*) are outside the ambit of things that His power can bring about. The question then whether or not they can be created by God's power is

absurd. It means that not all contingent entities considered by God can come into being. It follows then that the existents and entities intended by God are fewer than the number of entities that can be made by Him. According to Mulla Sadra the knowledge of God includes the knowledge of his essence and it is necessary that God has the knowledge of all beings in the world. According to Ramanuja, too:

“Knowledge always belongs to and exists for the self. Hence it is called dharma-bhuta-jnana or attributive knowledge. It is also substantive and constitutes the essence of the selves and of God.”³⁴

Continuing his discussion on the knowledge of God, Sadra says:

“The proof is that the necessary existence is aware of his quiddity. It is also essential that ultimate reality is aware of all the existents of the world, for his quiddity is essential cause of all things and the source of every comprehension, and he is also the origin of the manifestation of all entities. All the above things are emanated directly from him; and the perfect knowledge of the essential cause necessitates the perfect knowledge of the effect of the said cause, and it is essential that the ultimate reality or necessary existence is aware of all existents, and according to Quran: ‘Doesn’t that who created know, while He is the All-Subtle and All-Aware. It means that the necessary being is the cause of all effects as well as one existence that is all-subtle i.e. non-corporeal, then he is aware of his quiddity or essence.’”³⁵

According to Mulla Sadra when the knowledge and power of God are proven the attribute of life is also established. For it is impossible for a cause that bestows being to lack the life that it bestows upon its creation. Mulla Sadra in his *Asfar* says the following concerning the life of the Almighty Necessary Being:

“We could call contingency as an instance of non-existence that stands in opposition to existence. It is like death that is in opposition to life, and annihilation is in opposition to survival. This entails that in a (permanently) living being no composition of faculties exist; and since it is already assured that the necessary existence is simple truth, in which quiddity and attributes combine and which alone enjoys complete power and strength..., he be considered universal intellect and the source of very entity. Thus he is more deserving to possess the attribute of life than any other living entity.”³⁶

Mulla Sadra also talks of positive and negative attributes:

“Generally attributes are either aspects of positive or negative attributes: In Quran God is considered as ‘the possessor of Majesty and Splendor’ which means that in comparison to other beings his essence is much higher in having the attributes of Beauty and Perfection...”³⁷

Quran (42:11) says “None is in his likeness” and that does not mean that he is not in possession of attributes. For Quran also (7: 130) says, “Allah’s are all the beautiful names”, which means his being embraces all the positive and beautiful attributes of God...”

About the negative attributes, Mulla Sadra says:

“(To say) that attributes are negative is to say that deficiency in the being of God is negated. Moreover, all negative attributes collectively signify one larger negation on which is the negation of contingency...”³⁸

Fazlur Rahman comments:

“The negative attributes are all reducible to the negation of contingency and, since contingency itself is negative, being privation of necessity, negative attributes come to mean negation of negation. As for relations, these are also reducible to one single relation – the relation of sustaining all existence (qayyumiya), of which creation, and giving life and sustenance, etc., are all parts. This qayyumiya manifests itself in the first instance in the rise of the Breath of the Merciful (Nafas al-Rahman)... But it is the substantive attributes

like knowledge and power which are the most important for God's nature in-itself and which form the subject of the present discussion".³⁹

Positive attributes, for Mulla Sadra, are 'real' and 'relational' attributes. The real attributes are defined as that in which a connection with 'other than the Divine Essence' is present such as creation, sustenance, and so on. Each of these cannot be proved from the essence alone; rather, in their deduction there is no option but to consider another entity together with the essence. According to him:

"Attributes in the second step are considered as real attributes like knowledge and life and the relational attributes such as sustenance, causality, creation and precedence. The origin of all the real attributes is in the necessary being, i.e. the emphasized being, while the origin of all the relational attributes is a relational attribute that is the attribute of preponderance."⁴⁰

The views of Mulla Sadra as described above can again be compared with Ramnuja who did not completely reject the Nirguna Brhman but said that when scripture speaks about the Nirguna Brahman it means only Brahman as being devoid of finite attributes and not attributes as such. There is no conflict between the Saguna and the Nirguna. Ramanuja, like Mulla Sadra, believed that if we had oneness of meaning, then only one term could have enough to apprehend the nature of Brahman. But he denotes three attributes in the same substratum, i.e. Brahman. So when Brahman is defined as "Existence, Knowledge, and Infinity" by the scriptures it does not mean that Brahman is free from all attributes. This only means that these three are qualities of Brahman which distinguish it from other beings. According to Ramanuja, these

qualities of Brahman make him a perfect personality, and make him dependent on nothing external.

“Brahman is the supreme reality, of which the world is the body or the attributes (visesana). This world may be manifest, as in creation, or unmanifest, as in pralaya. Even in the latter condition the attributes of soul and matter exist, though subtly. The condition of absolute liberation for all is the consummation of the world.”⁴¹

For Ramanuja matter and finite spirits are the two real attributes of the Absolute, but they form the two integral parts of this Absolute. Though Brahman is the Supreme spirit, it lives in the plurality of forms as souls and matter. The relationship between Acit (matter) and Cit (soul) on the one hand, and of world and Brahman on the other, is one of body and soul.

The attributes are real but are subservient to Brahman. It is evident that Ramanuja, like Mulla Sadra, accepts objective universe as contingent reality and reality of God as essential. He again, like Mulla Sadra, knows matter and finite souls as real aspects of God and accepts God with attributes. Here the Ramanuja has more similarity to Mulla Sadra than Shankara because for Ramanuja monism or non-dualism is qualified, meaning that the Absolute or Advaita is qualified (Vishista) by real parts (conscious and unconscious).

The concept of absolute for Ramanuja and Mulla Sadra is identical with God, but this Absolute for Ramanuja is Savishesa or determinate. These thinkers agree in saying that absolute or ultimate reality is eternal and uncreated, material as well as efficient cause of the world, but here Ramanuja like Mulla Sadra believes that this absolute cannot be attributeless or a bare identity.

Against Shankara, he says that Nirguna Brahman contradicts our experience, since all our experiences are of qualified objects. An object is distinguished from others by the presence of its invariable characteristics.

III- The Unity of God

Mulla Sadra's philosophical examination of the concept of the Unity of God is quite remarkable. He puts forth all the various possible conceptions of unity and removes them one by one. God's unity is not the unity of the individual (Shakhsiyyah) or the unity of the genus (jins) or of the species (naw) or of a general concept or of a quiddity. Furthermore, neither the logical concepts of conjunctive unity nor contingent unity nor the various kinds of unity which are based on the relations (nisbiyyah) of resemblance or homogeneity or analogy or correspondence apply to God's unity. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, since none of the human conceptions of unity apply to God's unity, his unity like his essence, is ultimately unknowable. But although the unity of God eludes human comprehension, it is still the source of all forms of unity which man can conceive. No unity will be conceivable if God's real unity does not exist. It is the unity of God which makes all forms of unity come into existence. Mulla Sadra however also affirms the uniqueness of his view of unity which he says bears no relation or resemblance to these various forms of unity. All the various conceptions of unity that man has relate to the world of relativity and, consequently, they do not pertain to the absolute.⁴²

In the philosophy of Mulla Sadra we have seen two types of formulations of unity of existence: the gradational unity of existence and the individual unity of

existence. According to the first formulation, existence i.e. the only entified and fundamental thing, is the one reality that maintains its presence in various degrees. Existence has multiple individuals. However, as these individuals are different from each other in the quantity of existence, they share the same existence with one another. In other words, what distinguishes the various existences is exactly what is common to them, and what makes them different is exactly what makes them one. They are differentiated by existence's intensity and weakness, completeness and incompleteness, priority and posteriority. Basically, intensity and weakness are only true concerning the degrees and levels of one truth. Philosophers have called this characteristic 'gradation'; and as one of the special properties of existence, it has no real equal.

However, to make it easier for the minds to understand, a few examples can be given. 1. The numbers have infinite multiplicity. At the same time, what differentiates them from each other is exactly what is common to them. 2. In both strong and weak kinds of light, what distinguishes them from each other is exactly what they share, that is, the light itself. 3. In fast and slow motions, the motion itself is the point of difference and communion at the same time. Similarly, the reality of existence has the same unity; i.e. the difference of the beings belongs to the intensity, weakness and the levels of the reality of existence itself. Thus, according to this theory, the entified and external reality of existence is one in its multiplicity, and at the same time is multiple in its unity.⁴³

The theory of individual existence is another version of the unity of existence dealt with by Mulla Sadra in some of his works, especially his encyclopaedic book *Asfar*. He has accepted it as his chosen and favorite theory and tried to explain and prove it in many places. The theory is the product of intuition of great mystics, such as Ibn Arabi and the followers of his school who have described, explained and defended it in their mystical works. According to this version, existence is only one thing, that is, the existence of the Exalted God. Nothing is the real instance of existence other than the sacred Divine Essence. All things but God are considered as His shadows, determinations, aspects, and manifestations. Thus real existence and existents make a whole whose unity is real, true, and not susceptible to multiplicity. The contingent beings are only metaphorically called existents or existences.

These mystics' claim has been put into the following couplet: 'Thou art the only real existent and the rest are relations and the mind-made'. Of course, it must be said that by 'relation' they mean 'illuminative' and not 'categorical' relation. The former, contrary to the latter, has only one side i.e. the related is the relation itself, such as the relation of a creating cause and its effect. The effect is nothing but manifestation and emanation of the cause. So the real existence is the existence of the cause; and the existence of the effect is only a ray radiated by it. In short, the unity of existence in this version means that the essential real existence is specific to the sacred Divine Essence, and all contingent beings, beginning from first intelligence to the primordial matter, are only manifestations and rays of that Unitary Real Existent. So, according to

this theory, the absolute multiplicity is not denied; rather, it is annihilated in the Real Existence, and attributed to His manifestations and appearances.

It is clear that by transferring the multiplicity from existence to manifestation, the gradation is also transferred from existence to the manifestation. The appearances of existence, then, are considered to have gradational levels. Accordingly, the nearer the manifestations are to the Real Existence, i.e. the sacred Divine Essence, the more intensive and powerful they are; and the farther they are from the Real Existent, the weaker they are. Of course, the intensity and weakness of these appearances do not cause any alteration in the unity, purity and simple-ness of the Real Essence.⁴⁴

Here Mulla Sadra, like Upanishads, accepted the pure unity of existence that captures the entire universe, the multiplicity being seen in dependence state. But the significant point here is that Mulla Sadra tries to justify multiplicity with the help of unity and says that both of them are in real state with one vital difference that the reality of unity is independent while the reality of multiplicity is in dependency. In other words, multiplicity is not able to exist without the presence of unity. Upanishads, on the other hand, seek to remove multiplicity by calling it Maya or cosmic illusion and achieve pure unity by making the Brahman identical with Atman. Both of them then accept there is one unity in the world that is hidden by veil that is called Maya in Upanishads and quiddity or essence in philosophy of Mulla Sadra. Mulla Sadra says that the existence of plurality in creation is an undeniable fact that cannot be simply

negated in order to uphold the view of the unity of being. The plurality must be accepted though explained in terms of and in relation to unity.

According to Mulla Sadra, being is the sole reality and every being or existent is a self-determination or mode of Being. The self-determination of being varies in degrees of intensity. Therefore, that which makes every mode of being an existent is being and that which distinguishes one mode of being from another is also being or, more specifically, depending on the degree of intensity of being present in that particular mode. In this view, being is both the principle of unity and of differentiation among relative beings.⁴⁵ Mulla Sadra and Upanishads, thus, accept the different levels of beings in the realm of multiplicity but these levels were explained in different ways in their systems. Mulla Sadra gets some help from this idea of intensity of beings to explain the reality of multiplicity that is absorbed in unity but these states of beings in Upanishads are known as four coexistent sides of one reality. The absolute is not sum of these, or an elimination of any. It is an ineffable unity in the midst of conceptual distinctions which are devised only to serve our understanding.

This unity is explained in Upanishads by the kinship between Brahman and that which seeks Brahman, the self of man, i.e. the Atman, the principle grounding individual consciousness. In the early prose Upanishads, Atman was the ground of individuality as distinguished from Brahman, the supra-personal ground of the cosmos. Soon however this distinction diminished and the two were identified. Brahman is the transcendent other and the spirit residing within

man. Brahman is known through Atman. This whole world is Brahman and this self within me is Brahman, too. We could see in Chandogya Upanishad:

“All this is Brahman. Let a man meditate on that (visible world) as beginning, ending, and breathing in it (the Brahman). He is myself within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. He from whom all works all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and who is never surprised, he, myself within the heart, is that Brahman. When I shall have departed from hence, I shall obtain him (that Self). He who has this faith has no doubt.” (III. 14.1. 4)

Atman and Brahman are two aspects of one reality. The Upanishads thus teach the intimate unity of the self of man and Brahman. The wise see God abiding in their self.

“He is the one ruler of many who (seem to act, but really do) not act; he makes the one seed manifold. The wise who perceive him within their self, to them belongs eternal happiness, not to others.” (Svet. Up., VI. 12)

Upanishads like Mulla Sadra believe the unity of known and knower. Upanishads say that the knower of Brahman becomes merged with Brahman.

“He who knows the Supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman.” (Mundaka Up., III. 2. 9)

"Those who know It (Brahman) become immortal." (Katha Up., II. 2)

According to Sadra also, God or necessary existence knows of his essence and since he is the necessary existence whose essence is identical with his being, knowledge in God implies a unity between the subject who knows, the object

that is known and the act of knowing.⁴⁶ In other words, God is at once the knower, the known and the knowledge. Creation or the existentiating of existents by the necessary being is the result of God's contemplation of his essence. It is God's contemplation or knowledge of his own essence that brings forth all things into existence. Since being and knowledge are identical in God, God's knowledge existentiates beings or existents. In God, to know of a thing is also to existentiate or confer existence to that thing which is known by him. Therefore, the beings of things are identified as God's very knowledge of them and God's knowledge constitutes the substance of cosmic manifestation. God's knowledge of the essence or form of a thing leads to the objective existence of that particular form. God's contemplation of his essence, moreover, is infinite and the manifestation of the universe constitutes God's eternal knowledge of himself.

The principle of the unity of the knower and the known is one of the most important principles underlying Mulla Sadra's philosophy. It is upon this principle that he bases his view of the possibility of knowledge transforming the being of the knower and conversely of the being of the knower determining his knowledge. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, an individual is what he knows and what the individual knows is determined by or dependent on his being. Therefore, there is a profound relation between knowledge and being. The unity between knowledge and being provides the metaphysical foundation of his views on spiritual development or transformation of being through knowledge and the eschatological doctrine of the possibility of the human soul

to existentiare beautiful and ugly and, consequently, to experience paradise and hell respectively.⁴⁷

Further, according to Upanishads, the individual self sees its true reality as the source of all. (Kaivalya Up., 20-23). It is the task of individual self to become the universal self, and this is not attainable through the Vedas, intellectual knowledge, discipline or brain power (Subala Up., IX. 15), but only through the union. Every individual self has the power to break the veil of separateness and achieve unity, become the Absolute self. Liberation, Moksa, is different from the life in paradise, Svarga, which is still a part of the manifest, is still an individual existence in time. Liberation is not a departure to another 'world', nor an expectation of a future state, but the experience of timeless, placeless presence of Brahman. This union is the transformation of the soul, the absorption in the divine, seeing one's self in all beings and all beings in one self (Isa Up., 6). One who realizes this is released from sorrow, as all sorrow results from duality (Ibid. 7). The self loses itself, casting off all name and form to enter into the unmanifest. (Mundaka Up., III. 2. 8) Such is release from the cycle of birth and death, the wheel of time and change, the achieving of the state of Kaivalya, aloneness. All of this of course corresponds to Mulla Sadra's flight of the alone to the alone. In its initial condition, sometimes the soul is depicted as wandering about, thinking itself different from Brahman, looking on multiplicity as its sole reality. Upanishads says:

“Having well ascertained the object of the knowledge of the Vedanta, and having purified their nature by the Yoga of renunciation, all anchorites,

enjoying the highest immortality, become free at the time of the great end (death) in the worlds of Brahma.” (Svet. Up., I. 6)

This is quite similar to Mulla Sadra’s image of the soul wandering through the sense world and achievement of soul to ideal level by the substance in motion.

“Man is constituted of an intellect, a soul and a body. Thus, all the possibilities of cosmic existence are contained in a synthetic manner in his being. It is through his unitive and ontologically synthetic being that the ascent of the lower level of being, namely matter, can ascend to the higher levels of being: soul and spirit to return to God. In Mulla Sadra’s perspective, it is by the process of transubstantial motion that the human soul can achieve separation and complete independence (tajrid) from matter. Through the being of man, material creation which is the lowest development or the most limited and weakest determination of Being can ascend or return (ma’ad) to its origin. Man is the crowning achievement of material creation and his being marks the beginning as well as the end of the process of ascent or return to Being.”⁴⁸

In Upanishads union with Brahman cures the soul of its ignorance, or the individuality seen in itself as independent of its ground; it brings about Vidya, or awareness of Brahman. This avidya-vidya scheme is somewhat comparable to Mulla Sadra’s fall-return imagery. In Upanishads sorrow is seen as the helplessness resulting from being lost in the objective world; salvation involves getting beyond object-thinking to the realm of pure being. (Svet. Up., IV. 7)

With the ecstasy of divine union, the world is looked upon as a troubled dream, an illusion or maya. The world is the untruth which hides or veils the truth. But it is a mistake to assume that an indifference to the world or a world-denial attitude necessarily results from this. Both the absolute and personal God are

real and the manifestation needs not be denied. One must negate the world to reach Brahman but only to return and redeem the world. (Isa Up., 18)

The meaning of Maya is that the world is not its own reality. Avidya is viewing the world as its own reality, as ultimate, as not grounded in Brahman. Maya is a cosmic creative principle, but also the result of Avidya. Avidya is the subjective phenomenon of ignorance arising from the mistaken attribution of ultimate reality to Maya, seeing the play as real, as real in itself. Hence the manifestation of primordial being is simultaneously a concealment of its original nature. This concealment is Avidya. Therefore the world is not unreal, it is merely not independent. Nothing exists without Brahman; the unreality of the world is the world seen in itself. On this point, at times Mull Sadra accounts for the existence of world through a fall of the soul, and its dependency on Existence. Mulla Sadra knows the descent of the soul as a metaphysical necessity, part of the emanation of absolute. According to him:

“The proof (Burhan) of this, emanating from God’s presence (‘indAllah), is that every form in perception (surah idrakiyyah) – even if it is sensible, for example – has some sort of separation (tajrid) from matter (maddah), so that its being in itself and its being sensible (mahsusah) are really only one thing and do not differ at all. Thus, one cannot suppose that the specific form might have a mode of being with respect to which it would not be sensible, because its very being is a being in sensation – quite different from the being of the heavens or earth or anything else which is in external material being. For the beings of those (material) things is not in sensation, and they are grasped by sense or by intellect only in an accidental manner and in consequence of a form in sensation corresponding to them.”⁴⁹

The existence of world cannot be denied if the existence is ever-present and immanent. Its presence is explained on the basis of the idea of the intensity of existence. Perhaps what Mulla Sadra intends here is what is suggested in Upanishads. An embodied soul is not evil, but a soul attached to a body is evil. So the descent into the world is good, is a metaphysical necessity; but this descent allows the possibility of soul becoming attached to the world concealing the true reality of the divine realm. It is this aspect of the world, this aspect of the descent which must be modified and which must be considered unreal and valueless. Blind absorption in the world, not the world itself, is that which Mulla Sadra seeks to overcome.

In the Upanishads also, overcoming Maya means overcoming worldliness, i.e. not valuing the world in itself. Maya does not mean being concerned with the existence of the world, with the factuality of the world, but the way we look upon the world. At times the Upanishads say the world is appearance, and only Brahman is real; but sometime it is also suggested that the world is real, though not independent of Brahman. Either way, the world is not false or evil, it is merely non-fundamental, not its own ground. This point concerning the status of the world is an important one, which is needed to counter the accusation of nihilism and world-denial thrown at both Mulla Sadra and Hinduism.

In both Mulla Sadra and Upanishads we find the soul initially trapped in a fallen awareness, attending to multiplicity and change as if they are real. The task of the soul is to purify and deepen its awareness to reveal the absolute, formless source behind these manifestations. And this awareness is not

external but internal, found at the depth of the soul. The soul is absolute at its depth level. Individuality as an ultimate principle, in other words, is transcended. The world is an emanation (Immanence) of a formless ground (Transcendence); form is not the ultimate reality, it must ultimately deny itself, transcend itself, and return to its ground. This is the procession of reality, with both emanation and return, that is reflected in the thought systems of both Mulla Sadra and the Upanishads.

IV-Doctrine of Causation

The Upanishads do not give a systematic theory of causation. The later commentators however formulated their views on the question of causation which they thought were based upon Upanishads. Shankara, for example, looked upon the cause or Brahman as mere ground of change which though unchanged in itself, had only an appearance of suffering change. To prove his position he referred to the verse of Chandogya Upanishads (VI. I) in which the material cause, e.g. the clay, is described as the only reality in all its transformations such as the pot, the jug or the plate. The diversities are the diversities of appearance: one is named the plate, the other the pot, and yet another jug. But these are only empty distinctions of name and form, for the only thing real in them is the earth which in its essence remains ever the same whether you call it the pot, the plate, or the jug.

According to Chandogya Upanishad:

“What is that instruction, Sir?’ he asked. The father replied: ‘My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a

name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay; And as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold? And as, my dear, by one pair of nail-scissors all that is made of iron (karshnayasam) is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is iron,--thus, my dear, is that instruction.' The son said: 'Surely those venerable men (my teachers) did not know that. For if they had known it, why should they not have told it me? Do you, Sir, therefore tell me that'. 'Be it so, said the father'." (Chand. Up., VI. 4-7)

The ultimate cause, the unchangeable Brahman, remains ever constant, though it may appear to suffer change as the manifold world outside. Thus, in opposition of Sadra, Shankara says that the universe is only an unsubstantial appearance, illusion or a mirage imposed upon Brahman, the reality par excellence. It looks however that though such a view may be respected as having been expounded in the Upanishads in an imperfect manner, there is also side by side the other view which looks upon the effect as the product of change wrought in the cause itself through the action and mixing of the three elements namely, fire, water and earth. The caused signifies a real change produced by their getting compounded. This is in germ (as we shall see hereafter) the Parinama theory of causation accepted by the Samkhya system.⁵⁰

This position gets its support from the following Upanishad text:

"It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. And therefore whenever anybody anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone. Water thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth earth (food). Therefore whenever it rains anywhere, most food is then

produced. From water alone is eatable food produced.” (Chand. Up., VI. 2. 3-4)

But Shankara’s argument against causality is following:

“If by *atisaya* you understand the antecedent condition of the effect, you abandon the doctrine that the effect does not exist in the cause. If by it you mean a certain power of the cause assumed with the object of accounting for the fact, that only one determined effect springs from the cause, you must admit that the power can determine the particular effect only if it is neither other (than cause and effect) nor non-existent; for if it were neither, it would not be different from anything else which is either non-existent or other than cause and effect (and then it will not be able to produce the particular effect). It follows that that power is identical with the self of the cause and the effect is identical with the self of that power.”⁵¹

Shankara again says that the cause does not merely precede the effect but produces its occurrence. Unless the cause persists in the caused, the latter cannot be perceived. Clay continues in the vessel and the threads in the cloth. Here Shankara, like Mulla Sadra, says that there is no distinction between cause and effect. The distinction between the caused before manifestation and after it is a relative one. The cause and the caused represent two aspects of one thing and are really of one nature. It must however be said that we cannot find two different things that would be of same nature while their forms are altered by manifestation and dissolution. According to Radhakrishnan:

“Samkara says that this contention is absurd. ‘Manifestation’, like the springing of plants from seeds, is only a becoming visible of what was already existent, conditioned by the accumulation of like particles; and in the same way dissolution is a becoming invisible, caused by the disappearance of these same particles. If we were to recognize a transition from non-existence to

existence in them and from existence to non-existence, then the embryo would be other than the subsequently born man, the youth would be other than the greybeard he becomes, and the father of the one would not be the father of the other.”⁵²

Radhakrishnan further says:

“Substances themselves persist, e.g. milk through its existence as sour milk, etc. They take the name of effect, and we cannot think of the effect as different from the cause even if we tried for a hundred years. As it is the original cause which, up to the last effect, appears in the form of this or that effect like an actor in all possible parts, it is thereby logically proved that the effect exists before its manifestation and is identical with the cause.”⁵³

Shankara gives the examples of cloth: so long as the cloth is rolled up, we are not able to know whether it is a cloth or something else. And even if it is known to be a cloth its length and breadth are unknown. Further, when it is unrolled it is not different from the cloth when it was rolled up. Similarly, the cause and caused are not different. According to him one substance cannot forfeit its nature and become another substance by appearing under a different situation. All change is change of and in something. A mere succession of disconnected contents held together by no common nature is no change at all. All that occurs are a change of form. For example, to see the continuity of the substance of milk in the curds, of the seed in the tree, is to see the thing as it is visible as in the former instance or invisible as in the latter case.

He says that the cause is the reality and the effects are only appearances. Essentially there is no difference between cause and effect. He reduces transition from causes to effects which underlie the entire dynamic evolution of

reality to a static relation of sequence characteristic of creation. Every event points back to the condition out of which it has arisen. To say that A is the cause of B is not to explain B. To postulate the first cause is arbitrary, since it would mean assuming a beginning for the causal series, a beginning in time. Either the first cause has a previous cause or else the whole causal scheme is illogical. But if there is no first cause, the causal explanation is inadequate. For in that case we will be obliged to break up the continuity of nature into past, present and future. Here we start with one event A as being followed by another event B, and draw the conclusion that there is a causal connection between A and B. Causality can explain phenomena only so long as we look upon them as completely determined by their relation to each other, without reference to the ultimate principle which is not itself one of the phenomena determined.⁵⁴

The similarity between Shankara and Sadra is that both of them used the theory of causation to prove unity of existence. More importantly, both of them deny causality where the relation between the ultimate being and the being of world is concerned. According to Shankara the relation of causation cannot be real because cause and effect are one. There is no difference between cause and effect because effect doesn't have something more than cause. It is like jug that is not more than the clay that is its cause. The effect is the manifestation of cause. Mulla Sadra also believes that effect is not different from cause in so far as it keeps the existence within itself. Effect is the quiddity which is a psychological event having no reality of its own. It is one and same reality one

side of which is real (cause) and another side unreal (effect). The relation, therefore, between the two cannot be recognized as real relation. According to Sadra all contingent beings need a cause that puts their balance between existence and non-existence in favor of the former. Nothing can come into existence without a cause. The world is certainly contingent upon the first act for causation. But the cause in this act of causation cannot remove itself from what it produces. It remains in the effect; the effect is, in fact, nothing but the cause itself.

According to Mulla Sadra:

“The effect in itself is as simple as the cause in itself so the attention is bound to them. It is made clear then that which is named as effect does not have truth except the truth of its originating cause. It is for this reason that the intellect cannot take recourse to the effect’s entity without referring to the entity of its originator. Thus, we can accept effect as real not in its causedness but in the state of its dependency only...”⁵⁵

Shankara’s position as explained by Radhakrishnan is similar:

“Samkara adopts the theory that cause and effect are not different. He reduces the transitions from causes to effects, which underlie the entire dynamic evolution of reality to a static relation of sequence characteristic of certain types of logical and theoretic connection.”⁵⁶

On causality Ramanuja’s position is even more like Mulla Sadra as he, too, believes in the prior existence of the effect in its material cause. He says that if we work out the real implication of the Upanishadic argument such as “by knowing one all will be known” we cannot reject the identity between the cause and its effect so far as Brahman as the material cause is concerned. Here

both Ramanuja and Mulla Sadra try to prove the oneness of absolute by showing the identity between cause and effect. The effect gets its existence from cause and this dependence shows that effect is nothing without cause. Ramanuja says that if we recognize cause and effect as two different things that consist of two different substances then by knowing the cause, we could not have known the effect. For example, the pot is regarded as the effect of the clay because in the production of the pot, the substance of the clay is not changed; only different states, characteristics and features have arisen in the pot, thereby differentiating it from the clay in general. Since the earthen jar and the earthen plates are nothing but different objects with different characteristics of the same substance, by realizing the earth, one can know all earthen modifications.

Radhakrishnan says:

“Ramanuja adopts the theory of Satkaryavada. Every effect implies a pre-existent material cause. Alteration of state is the meaning of causation. Threads are the cause of cloth, for cloth is only a cross arrangement of threads. Existence and non-existence are different states of a substance. Non-existence is only relative and not absolute. Whatever has qualities is a substance or dravya. The basis (adhara) is the substance, and what depends on it (adheya) is the non-substance (adravya). While things are dravyas, attributes and relations are adravyas. The lamp is substance, so also the light (prabha), though the latter is also a guna or a quality. Buddhi is a substance, as it has the quality of being subject to expansion and contraction; it is also a quality of the self.”⁵⁷

The point is that the whole universe as the visesana (attribute) of God is non-substantial from the standpoint of Ishvara though it contains dravya and adravya as elements and qualities. While substances serve as the material cause, non-substances cannot do so. The substances are known as Prakriti or

matter, Kala or time, Suddhasattva or pure matter, Dharma bhutajnana or attributive consciousness, Jiva or individual soul, and Ishvara or God. The first three are unconscious, God and the soul are conscious, and jnana has the characteristic of both. It is unlike unconscious substances since it can manifest itself as objective or external object.⁵⁸

Sadra also says that it is impossible to regress the causal principle indefinitely because the causal chain could only work in the matter that had a beginning, middle, and end i.e. a pure cause at the beginning, then a pure effect at the end the connectivity or nexus of cause and effect in the middle. Mulla Sadra like Shankara believes that the nexus of cause and effect can be realized by intuition and it is a priory process that is not a real relation. According to him:

“Human beings first find this relation in themselves by intuition. Man considers that his psychological activities and decisions and the production of some imaginations to be the results of his acts or acts of his will, and the existence of them is dependent to his existence while his existence is not dependent to those; so, he abstracts the notion of cause and caused from these. Then he generalizes these notions to other beings...”⁵⁹

Man realizes the principle of causality in the inner recesses of his self and that makes it a psychological process. The causality can also be called analytic. For when a cause is mentioned it is already implied that it will be followed by an effect. The idea of world, in other worlds, is already present is the idea of God. This thought does not prove the effect in external world. It can only show that when we have effect in the objective world, a cause must be there of that effect in the objective world. This general rule leads us to another principle which

says that, if effect exists then cause must be there, too. In other words, effect cannot be without cause. With the help of this proposition, we can realize that, there is the reality of effect in the world and it needs cause. If we put aside the understanding of cause and effect with the help of intuition, then this principle cannot be upheld only on the basis of sensory experience.

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Chapter - 5

Conclusion

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present project was to study the Upanishads and Mulla Sadra as expounders of mystical philosophy dealing with the question of the nature of ultimate reality and its concomitant issues. In comparing these two mystic systems we were able to identify a number of principles, concepts, and ideas that these two systems respectively dealt with in their respective historico-geographical contexts. This examination used an approach that relied on comparison to provide further clarifications to the two systems of philosophical thought. The study also sought to analyze various descriptive and prescriptive statements that characterized the two gnostic systems. Keeping in view the contextualist nature of this study it is important to notice that from beginning to end no effort has been made to be judgemental about the expounders' subjective mystical experiences. There was in fact no intention even to affirm or deny the cognitive validity of the subjective mystical experience as such. The focus was rather on demonstrating that while the gnostic principles are implicit in the system of Upanishads much of Sadra's philosophy too aimed at making these experiences the basis of formulating critical theories about the ultimate reality called by him as the Necessary Existence or simply as Existence.

Upanishads consider the Vedas as being functional guides that derive value from the truths they convey. Mulla Sadra also situated himself firmly within

orthodoxy. A good part of his intellectual endeavor was to defend and interpret the classical tenets of Islam in the light of his philosophical theories. He made a critical philosophy that melted peripatetic, illuminationist and gnostic ideas in one whole and brought it in consonance with the theology of Islam specially in its Shiite version. References to the Islamic cycle of prophesy, and the importance of Muhammad as the Prophetic Seal characterized his hermeneutic ventures. The Quran even served as the foundation for Mulla Sadra's rational speculation.

The two systems further agree that intellect alone is not able to realize absolute. One can realize absolute with the help of revelation and intuition. For Sadra, as for Upanishads, philosophy was a way of life or the light of life rather than mere speculation. Both, however, gave priority to contemplation as against action. In fact we are told that Sadra used to experience ecstasy or Samadhi as it is called in India. Both believe that spiritual teaching is something secret and sacred and is therefore to be imparted to the chosen few, i.e. those who had the necessary cathartic virtues. They put philosophy in the secondary position while giving primary importance to mystical realization.

The two systems, evidently, while they come from two very diverse philosophical-theological backgrounds, have their meeting ground in mysticism and gnosticism. There is common endeavor to transcend the boundaries of rationality and ontological positivity. The intellect as a source of knowledge is replaced with intuition and the ultimate reality is seen to belong to a realm beyond and beyond. The ultimate reality is a contentless and attributeless

absolute which however is imperfectly cognized as a being with the character of intelligence and bliss and which becomes later the basis for the emergence of the phenomenal world including the human world of soul and spirit.

The first and the most significant point in this comparative enterprise is that in both systems the ultimate reality is described as one and indefinable. According to Mulla Sadra, we can define something which consists of genes and differentia but absolute is free from them. He is indefinable because definition causes limitation but ultimate reality is unlimited. Ultimate reality or absolute is simple. The Brahman, too, is simple because it is described as existence that is unique and non-composite. It is also simple because it is pure oneness. Absolute does not have essence, because essence needs qualification and attributes but absolute is devoid of qualification, attributes, limitation, imperfection and multiplicity.

The above explanation leads us to put these two systems in the category of absolutism. Now it is necessary for absolutism to show the dependence of the relative on the absolute in a manner that the absoluteness of the absolute is not affected in the least. The relative is related to absolute but the absolute is independent. In other words, the relative does not really come out of the relative, or the absolute is only epistemic and not ontological. The relative only appears to be there, though really it is not there. The relative is spoken of only because of the ignorance about the absolute. If so, it is necessary for every absolutism to have a view of ignorance which makes the appearance of the relative possible, otherwise the relative will remain an enigma.

It is also necessary for every absolutism to accept two levels of knowledge and reality, the empirical and the ultimate (the vyavaharika and the paramarthika). This means that we accept the presence of physical world at practical level while denying its ultimate ontological value. There is yet another question worth consideration for every absolutism. Is it possible for man, purely on the basis of reason, to assert that there is such a thing as the absolute? Reason at its best may **only** speculate about the possibility. Even if the possibility is accepted, reason cannot positively affirm that the absolute is really there. Further, is it possible for reason to show the way of knowing the absolute experientially? Certainly not; reason is confined to concepts only. So how are we to be positively sure that the absolute is there, that it can be experienced and that it can be experienced in such and such manner? It is here that we see the incompetence of unaided reason and the necessity of taking help from intuition and scriptures. It is only scripture whose message is based on intuitive experience that can categorically affirm the absolute and can not only assure us of the possibility of knowing of the absolute but can also tell us the way the absolute can be experienced. Our readiness to depend on the scripture not only suggests the limits of reason but also of our earnestness to seek the absolute.

The conception of a negative absolute generates the problem of accounting for the presence of the phenomenal world. The ultra-transcendent God is without the attribute of creativity and that fact serves his contact with the world otherwise considered as his creation. Faced with this difficulty the gnostic systems have devised an emanationist scheme in which some quasi-creative

beings are made to intervene between the absolute, non-creative God and the created world. thus while corresponding to Brahman of Upanishads and Advaitism we have in Sadra the conception of necessary existence, the ultimate reality from which proceeds the Nous or First Intelligence that in its turn gives rise to world-soul and souls. Vedas similarly speak of Hiranyagarbha and Purusha as intermediary beings between the Brahman and the multiplex world.

Creation for Sadra is a kind of radiation or emanation while for the Upanishads it is rather in the nature of manifestation or inherence as Ramanuja later said. The one alone being real, the world of multiplicity and change is unreal, matter being a principle of non-being or darkness. Man, too, is essentially one with One but the realization of this unity comes only at the end of one's spiritual journey. This unity with the One is of the nature of identity; in other words, man has only to discover his real nature to find that he is one with Brahman. This discovery is not intellectual; it is rather a kind of awakening, it is intuitive. Not only moral virtues but also cathartic virtue, especially freedom from desire for enjoyment that is necessary for intuitive wisdom or illumination.

Most of the features of absolutism as pointed out above are shared by Sadra. The necessary existence is infinite and unchangeable. As transcendent it is beyond thought but as the ground of everything it is also immanent. And though transcendent, it is intuitively knowable as it is one with our real self. The world of plurality and change, though dependent on the One, is not unreal. It is same for Ramanuja though for Shankara 'Brahman is real, the world is false, and Brahman and the self are one and not different'.

It could be said that the world of plurality being an emanation from the One cannot be false and if it is false it cannot be called emanation. There is no doubt that there is some difficulty regarding the idea of emanation, but it seems that the very significance of the idea of emanation is two-fold. Firstly, it does not mean any change in the One, and secondly, it does not affect the absoluteness of the necessary existence. If so, the phenomenal world needs not necessarily be false. The world is then neither transformation of the One nor absolute creation but kind of radiation or overflow which least affects the source. The necessary existence only lends reality to or allows itself to be the ground of appearance. The world is a real manifestation for Mulla Sadra but for the Upanishads the position is not unambiguously so.

Although the system of Mulla Sadra is quite close to Upanishads and Advaitism on many onto-cosmological issues yet some differences are there. Mulla Sadra no doubt regards the world as appearance (quiddity which is in mind) and also talks of the fall of man as a result of ignorance of his real self, but he does not elaborate any theory of ignorance of real self as is done in Advaitism. There seems to be no doubt that Sadra does not regard ignorance as mere absence of knowledge or takes it to be the source of all evil. Ignorance is neither fully positive nor negative but is different from both. Advaitism, too, makes it clear that ignorance is not positive because it is negated but it is also not wholly negative as it gives rise to appearance. Being different from both being and non-being (like sky flower) it is really indescribable in terms of the real and the unreal. So we come to the conclusion that these two systems share

most of the essential features of absolutism, though Advaitism does so more. There seems to be a kind of incompleteness in the philosophy of Sadra. Our comparison does not intend categorically to suggest that Sadra was influenced by Upanishads directly or indirectly as Neoplatonism affected Sadra more. The former possibility is however not completely ruled out given the substantial similarities between the two systems of thought.

The word Brahman cannot be translated exactly. It has been suggested that Brahman is that which expands, because the term Brh means 'to expand'. This would however be a wrong translation, because the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita refuse to accept Brahman as an activity itself. These texts are unanimous in accepting the fourfold nature of Brahman : 1) Avyaya Brahman (the eternal infinite ground of all); 2) Aksara Brahman (the indestructible One, absolute cause); 3) Atmaksara Brahman (the supreme self, endowed with the potentiality of creation, preservation and destruction, and hence a creator, not yet differentiated in subject and object); 4) Visvasrit Brahman (cosmic form, the pluralistic world of galaxies, super galaxies and individualities as an irradiation of just one spark of the supreme self).¹ It is noteworthy that Avyaya Brahman is not even One or a unity. In this sense, the necessary existence of Mulla Sadra may be similar or closer to Avyaya, though not exactly same with it. The Avyaya is also called Parapara (beyond the beyond).

Now if we go back over these four aspects of reality and compare them with the Mulla Sadra's four stages of descent, we find the two schemes not

essentially very different from each other. In Sadra the four levels of reality are as follows:

1. One reality that is called necessary existence, and that is absolute, undifferentiated, formless source;
2. Nous, the divines names, principle of creation;
3. World-soul, the agent of creation;
4. The sense-world where we find a remarkable similarity of structure and intensity of being.

According to Upanishads, similarly, the following are the different levels of being:

1. Absolute, undifferentiated source of all;
2. Purusha, the creative principle, unity of divine ideals;
3. Hiranyagarha or the World-soul creating the world from within itself;
4. Sense world and the individual soul immersed in its externality.

The Brahman is described in two ways in the Upanishads: cosmic and acosmic. It is called cosmic in its being all-comprehensive and full of all good qualities (saprancha, saguna, and savisesa). And it is also called acosmic, quality-less, indeterminate, indescribable i.e. Nisprancha, Nirguna, Nirvisesa and Anirvacaniya. This distinction is the root of the celebrated distinction made by Shankara between Ishvara and the absolute. The former is called lower Brahman (apara Brahma), and the latter higher Brahman (para Brahma) or the absolute. The cosmic Brahman is regarded as the cause of production,

maintenance and destruction of this universe. All beings arise from Him, live in Him and are absorbed in Him.

“There are two forms of Brahman, the material and the immaterial, the mortal and the immortal, the solid and the fluid, sat (being) and tya (that), (i.e. sat-tya, true). Everything except air and sky is material, is mortal, is solid, is definite. The essence of that which is material, which is mortal, which is solid, which is definite is the sun that shines, for he is the essence of sat (the definite). But air and sky are immaterial, are immortal, are fluid, are indefinite. The essence of that which is immaterial, which is immortal, which is fluid, which is indefinite is the person in the disk of the sun, for he is the essence of tyad (the indefinite). So far with regard to the Devas.” (Brh. Up., II. 1-3)

The acosmic Brahman is the transcendental absolute, the Turiya or the fourth, the Amatra or the measureless, the Anirvachaniya or the indescribable. The absolute can be best described only in a negative way, though it is not itself negated by it.

“For when there is as it were duality, then one sees the other, one smells the other, one tastes the other, one salutes the other, one hears the other, one perceives the other, one touches the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he see another, how should he smell another, how should he taste another, how should he salute another, how should he hear another, how should he touch another, how should he know another? How should he know Him by whom he knows all this? That Self is to be described by No, no! He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended; he is imperishable, for he cannot perish; he is unattached, for he does not attach himself; unfettered, he does not suffer, he does not fail. How, O beloved, should he know the Knower? Thus, O Maitreyi, thou hast been instructed. Thus far goes immortality.' Having said so, Yagnavalkya went away (into the forest).” (Brh. Up., IV.5.15)

This Nirguna Brahman appears as Atman in small realm and it appears as Brahman in the great realm. Saguna Brahman is Jiva in small realm and it is Ishvara in great realm. All of this may be compared to Mulla Sadra's idea of immanent (tashbih) and transcendent aspects (tanzih) of God. Mulla Sadra, like Ibn Arabi, accepted both Tashbih and Tanzih but he also believes that it is not possible for both Tashbih and Tanzih to be accepted together because that would involve a contradiction. So he said that Tashbih and Tanzih are real. He says that Tashbih comes with quality and Tanzih comes with transcendence. When attributes of creatures are ascribed to creator then Tashbih is possible. In the state of transcendence, as all beings are different in intensity i.e. from weak levels to highest level of being that is necessary existence, Tanzih is realized. Mulla Sadra, thus, like Ramanuja, believes both personal and impersonal God to be real but Shankara thinks only impersonal God as truth.

Upanishads and Mulla Sadra together grapple with the notion of unity of existence. Sadra believes two types of unity: gradational unity and existential unity. In the formulation of gradational unity, existence is known as one reality that has its presence in things in various degrees: from lowest level of pure matter to highest level of necessary existence. The world of multiplicity is made by the intensity of existence. Mulla Sadra thus accepts both unity and multiplicity as real. He believes that the presence of existence in God and man are same; the difference is only in intensity not in substance. Sadra compares existence with light and says existence is like light that is reflected from sun as its origin or source. The more the light gets far from the origin, the more it

becomes weaker. The existence similarly that is stronger would be closer to Allah.

In existential unity, Mulla Sadra accepts the mystic idea of Ibn Arabi. He says that there is nothing real except existence. According to his theory existence is one that is the being of the transcendent God. There is nothing in the realm of existents except existence which is nothing other than the sacred divine essence. All the creatures in the objective realm are the manifestations and shadows. Existence and existent are therefore essentially unitary and this leads us to the point that only unity is real. However, the unity of existence in this version means that the essential real existence is specific to the sacred Divine Essence, and all contingent beings, beginning from first emanation to the matter, are only manifestations and rays of that Unitary Real Existent. So, according to this theory, the absolute multiplicity is not denied; rather, it is annihilated in the Real Existence, and attributed to His manifestations and appearances.

It is clear that by transferring the multiplicity from existence to manifestation, the commencement is also transferred from existence to the manifestation. Accordingly, the nearer the manifestations are to the Real Existence, i.e., the sacred Divine Essence, the more intensive and powerful they are; and the farther they are from the Real Existent, the weaker they are. The intensity and weakness of these appearances however do not cause any alteration in the unity, purity and simple-ness of the Real Essence. A thing by itself does not have any real existence. Its existence is derivative and sourced from the

ultimate Existence. Mulla Sadra in fact insists that Existence is one reality which is the very Truth, and the contingent quiddities do not have any real existence. Rather, their being existents are by the light of existence; and their intelligibility is acquired from a way among the ways of the manifestation of existence and a kind among the kinds of its appearance. What is there in all manifestations, quiddities, aspects and determinations is but the reality of existence; that is, it is the existence of God that is the Truth while the creation has the differences of His manifestations, the plurality of His aspects, and the multiplicity of His modes. Upanishads, similarly, try to explain the plurality of world as Brahman's own act of going out while yet remaining within like a spider weaving a web from within itself.

We could also compare the idea of causality in the philosophies of Mulla Sadra and Shankara who is the most famous commentator of Upanishads. Both of them used the theory of causation to prove unity of existence. Both of them deny causality where the relation between the ultimate being and the being of world is concerned. According to Shankara the relation of causation cannot be real because cause and effect are one. There is no difference between cause and effect because effect doesn't have something more than the cause. It is like the jug that is not more than the clay that is its cause. The effect is the appearance of cause in disguise. Mulla Sadra also believes that effect is not different from cause in so far as it keeps the existence within itself. Effect is the quiddity which is a psychological event having no reality of its own. It is one and same

reality one side of which is real (cause) and another side unreal (effect). The relation between the two also, therefore, cannot be recognized as real relation.

For Mulla Sadra nothing can come into existence without the cause. He says that all contingent existences need a cause. The levels of phenomena are contingent upon the first act that comes from God. It is like the concept of Brahman in Shankara's philosophy who encompasses all other causes. Shankara believes that the ultimate reality that is known as Brahman is the only cause. Any other causes in the realm of objective reality are reducible to Brahman because ontologically Brahman or absolute is identical with all things. In the phenomenal realm Brahman encompasses all creations and all causation. Here Shankara gave the example of silver bowl. Brahman as the ultimate reality is the cause of silver bowl because silver bowl is one of Brahman's aspects. The Brahman thus encompasses the material cause as well. Therefore Shankara accepts Brahman as the only cause. According to Mulla Sadra also what are known as natural, temporal causes cannot be real causes. They are only preparatory conditions that cannot give being to effect that arises from necessary existence.

“Indeed, true cause is only that which not only gives existence to its effect but also continuity, so that it becomes inconceivable that an effect should last without its cause. The effect, therefore, has its being only in the cause, not outside of it, since the cause must be “present with (ma)” the effect throughout the latter's existence.”²

Shankara accepted causation on two levels: absolute reality and the reality of phenomena.

He, like Mulla Sadra, spoke about one kind of material cause that is the original material cause and that lasts forever. The second kind of material cause is the effect of original material cause that can be retained even if the object undergoes vast changes (called Parinama). Shankara also discussed two kinds of material change, which he tries to distinguish without making an ontological distinction. It means that in his ontological system only Brahman ultimately remains, the difference in phenomena being rendered unreal and illusory. It also means there is no real distinction between the cause and effect. The difference between them is only notional or in name, in reality they being no different from each other.

Shankara again says that the cause does not merely precede the caused but is present in its effect. Unless the cause persists in the caused, the latter cannot be perceived. Clay continues in the vessel and the threads in the cloth. This is also the position of Mulla Sadra who said that existence is present in all existent objects. The distinction between the effect before its manifestation and afterwards is a relative one. The cause and the caused represent two aspects of one and same reality and are really of one nature. It could be said that we could not find two different things that would be of same nature, while their forms are altered by manifestation and dissolution. The cause and the caused are not different. According to him one substance cannot forfeit its nature and become another substance by appearing under a different form. All change is change of and in something. A mere succession of disconnected contents held together by no common nature is no change at all. All that occurs is a change

of form. For example, we could see the continuity of the substance of milk in the curd, of the seed in the tree.

The similarity between Shankara and Sadra is that both of them used the theory of causation to prove unity of existence. According to Shankara the relation of causation cannot be real because cause and effect are one. As Radhakrishnan says:

Samkara adopts the theory that cause and effect are not different. He reduces the transitions from causes to effects, which underlie the entire dynamic evolution of reality to a static relation of sequence characteristic of certain types of logical and theoretic connection.³

Mulla Sadra, too, believes that effect is dependent on cause. Effect is just the quiddity that is a psychological event and it is not real. So the relation in which one side is real (cause) and another side unreal (effect) cannot be recognized as real relation. The relation of causation is therefore not real.

In conclusion it can be seen that both the systems try to show first cause as ultimate reality and try to prove unity of existence with the help of their respective theories of causality. Shankara and Mulla Sadra both accept only cause as real.

The theory of Mulla Sadra about causation and creation is based on his theory of motion in substance. All things are in the state of becoming because they tend to pass their imperfection and achieve to perfection that is the goal of creation. Moreover, according to Mulla Sadra, the speed of the movement causes it to be imperceptible to man. The process of motion happens in both

substance and existents. The motions in the things however need motion in substance. It means that motion in things do not occur unless there is motion in their substance. Then movement in substance is the cause of accident's movement.

Mulla Sadra believes that while the realm of matter is in the process of motion the realm of spirit that is different from matter is unchanging. The forms in the realm of spirit are stable and there is no change in them. The change happens in the realm of becoming being dependent upon the immutable archetypes that are beyond the change. Here the immutable archetypes are same as the knowledge of ultimate reality or God. The creation is a [link](#) between the changing world of the particulars and its creator who is above and beyond change. Mulla Sadra believes that God is both the cause of universe and the goal of creation. He accepts the two processes involved in manifestation; the descent of existence in a gradual process of lower and lower existents and the ascent of existence from the least perfect to the most perfect. These two processes however complement each other and take the form of circle. The descending arc is showed by one side of the circle indicating the weakening of existence and the ascending arc by the corresponding intensification. The end point of the descending arc is the starting point of the ascending arc. Man plays a significant part in both states of ascent and descent of existence in the cosmic being. This view is almost identical with Upanishads where the circular conception of origination and destruction of the universe in Brahman is categorically maintained. At the end all creation is absorbed in Brahman but

this absorption also turns into a point of fresh beginning and of emergence of a new world.

According to Upanishads and Mulla Sadra creation is dependent upon the ultimate reality that is respectively called by them Brahman and necessary existence. The cause of creation in Upanishads however is the creative process of Maya (an idea endorsed by Shankara but not by Ramanuja) but in Mulla Sadra it is real and due to love. Creation in the philosophy of Upanishads means the process of becoming but in the school of Mulla Sadra, it is both being and becoming. Mulla Sadra like Ramanuja recognizes creation as real process but Shankara has the opposite view. Where, however, Sadra and Upanishads agree in their view is that the creation serves as a kind of veil upon the ultimate reality. For Sadra the existence cannot be perceived by senses or intellect; what can be known by these means is the quiddity of things that resides in our minds and which alone are what we have access to. Quiddities being the immediate objects of knowledge, they act as a kind of curtain to hide what is really out there i.e. the Existence. The same idea is upheld in subdued form in Upanishads but in vigorous form in Shankara. The world is Maya or illusion that prevents us to see Brahman in its original glory. The Maya, a creation of Brahman, is also a veil upon the Brahman. Maya basically represents non-being even though, compared to absolute non-beings like a sky-flower or horns of donkey, it may still be supposed to have some reality. The quiddity of Sadra is similarly not completely unreal in being the mental representation of things that are a mix of being and non-being.

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