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An understanding of *Maya*: The philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva

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Declaration

Declaration of Plagiarism

1. I understand what plagiarism means and I am aware of the university's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this Dissertation is my own work.
3. I did not make use of another student's previous work and I submit this as my own words.
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I, John Derrick Whitehead hereby declare that the following Dissertation is my own work and that I duly recognized and listed all sources for this study.

Date: 3 December 2019

Student number: u12083802

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Foreword

I started my MTh and was unsure of a topic to cover. I knew that Hinduism was the religion I was interested in. Dr. Sukdaven suggested that I embark on the study of the concept of *Maya.* Although this concept provided a challenge for me and my faith, I wish to thank Dr. Sukdaven for giving me the opportunity to cover such a deep philosophical concept in Hinduism.

This concept *Maya* is deeper than one expects and has broaden and enlightened my mind. Even though this was a difficult theme to cover it did however, give me a clearer understanding of how the world is seen in Hinduism.

List of Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
BC	Before Christ
BCE	Before Common Era
BS	Brahmasutra Upanishad
BSB	Brahmasutra Upanishad with commentary of Sankara
BU	Brhadaranyaka Upanishad with commentary of Sankara
CE	Common Era
EW	Emperical World
GB	Gitabhasya of Shankara
GK	Gaudapada Karikas
Rg	Rig Veda
SBH	Sribhasya of Ramanuja
Svet. U	Svetasvatara Upanishad
Ved.Sang	Vedartha Samgraha

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The debate about whether Hinduism is a religion or a philosophy is still ongoing. Hinduism can be regarded as a sponge that can embrace other religions within its philosophical systems.

In this study, the philosophy of the concept of *Maya* will be addressed as it is understood by three different philosophers within the Hindu philosophical system.

In an ordinary sense, the word '*Maya*' means, trickery, fraud or deceit. Magic, jugglery or witchcraft are different forms of illusion that distract and deceive the senses. In the spiritual parlance, *Maya* means unreality, distinct from the reality represented by God or Brahman. God in His eternal and absolute aspect is pure consciousness and His creation is a mere formation within that consciousness. (Warrier:1961:305-307)

Maya exists so long as there is an experiencer distinct from the experience. Etymologically speaking, *Maya* is that which arises from *Prakriti* (nature) or *Pradhana* (primal energy). '*Ma*' means the source, the cause and '*ya*' means that which proceeds, goes, walks or spreads out. Therefore literally *Maya* means that which issues forth, expands or arises from the source, '*ma*', the universal mother. *Maya* is also described in the Hindu scriptures as the play (*lila*) of God enacted through his creative and dynamic energy or force (*shakti*). It is the web of deception weaved by the universal spider (Brahman) to envelop the worlds in delusion (*moha*). (Warrier:1961:308)

The term *Maya* was not a term developed by Sankara due to the fact that the word *Maya* can be gleaned from smriti and sruti texts. The idea of *Maya* is present as an important element in Indian religious history.

Sankara though used the idea of *Maya* to defend his philosophy of Advaita commonly understood as absolute non-dualism, although the gist of the meaning of *Maya*is found in his philosophy. (Betty:1978:16). Sankara taught that the only thing that is real is Brahman and everything else is an illusion. Ramanuja, on the other hand, was most widely known for his philosophical and theological teachings. He taught a philosophy called Vishishtadvaita, which means qualified non-dualism. Finally, Madhava was known to be a dualist. He taught that there are three entities, Brahman, the soul, and matter. Ramanuja, by contrast, taught that the universe is the body of Brahman, which is the unchanging foundation of reality. He also describes the body as a substance completely controlled by the soul. However, they are inseparable. (Arrington:2003:261)

Ramanuja rejects the notion that the world is an illusory perception. All knowledge is genuine knowledge, even though mistakes occur in the act of cognisance. Both mistaken identity and empirically valid perception are related to the objectively real and as such could be called valid perceptions. (Arrington:2003:263-264)

Ramanuja uses the concepts of *Prakrti* and *purusa* to explain the link between the body and the soul. He says that the body, which is linked to the primordial matter (*Prakrti*), is governed by (the sentient soul (*purusa))*, in a relationship where *Prakrti* is entirely subordinate to *purusa*. The existence of these two related but distinct entities are the grounds for qualified non-dualism. (Tennent:2002:70)

Madhva was born into a Brahman family. As a youth, he was discoursing learnedly with the priests of Vishnu. Later, on a pilgrimage to the sacred city of Varanasi, he is reputed to have walked on water. He may have been influenced during his youth by a group of NestorianChristians who were residing at Kalyanpur. (Radhakrishnan:1927:445)

Madhva rejected the non-dualistic Advaitaphilosophy of Sankara, who believed the individual self to be fundamentally identical with the universal self, which in turn was identical with the Absolute, the only reality. Thus, Madhva rejected the theory of *Maya*, which taught that the material world is not only illusory but also deceptive. Madhva maintained the simple fact that things are transient and ever-changing but it does not mean that they are not real. (Radhakrishnan:1927:445-446)

1.2 Problem statement

In the multiplicity of philosophies accompanying Hinduism, it is inevitable that divergent views exist. In the context of this research, and with the focus on *Maya*, the following three divergent views on Brahman and creation arises. First, a philosophical tradition such as Hinduism can have more than one interpretation of *Maya.*Second, different views on the relationshipbetween Brahman and man are expressed, and finally, the uncertainty as to what constitutes*reality* among the three philosophers, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

Sankara adopted the absolute non-dualism view and his school of philosophy is known as Advaita Vedanta. Sankara states that Brahman is real with a capital R and the rest of the world is unreal and therefore *Maya*.

Ramanuja favoured the qualified non-dualismviewand his school of philosophy is known as Visistadvaita. Ramanuja disagrees with Sankara by stating that even though there is Brahman and the rest of the world, yet everything is inclusive and it is inside the body of Brahman. Ramanuja understands the world and souls to be true but reflects an imperfect picture of Brahman. If Brahman is both cause and effect then there can be no illusion due to ignorance. (Sukdaven:2013:114).

Madhva's view is a form of dualism and his school of philosophy is known as Dvaita. Madhva's dualism insisted that human beings and Brahman were wholly separate and that the division between humanity and the divine is bridged by *bhakti* (devotion). To him God, the world and souls are seen as eternally different from each other. He believes that Brahman is the creator (efficient cause) of the world and that he did not undergo any transformation in order to bring the world into existence. The material world is a manifestation of *Prakrti*. (Sukdaven: 2013:215) Therefore the difference which is experienced in the world is not an illusion but a reality. (Tennent:no date:no page)

1.3 The purpose of this study

It should be noted that the possible outcome of the study will include the following: First to present the different interpretations of *Maya*; second, to present the philosophical understandings of *Maya* by Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva; third to investigate whether a central understanding of *Maya*, according to the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madvha, can be developed.

1.4 The research hypothesis

This study is an attempt to determine, that in and amongst the different philosophical interpretations of *Maya*, that there is a central understanding of *Maya* in the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

1.5 Methodology

This research will constitute a literature study of books, academic articles, e-books and academically acclaimed online references. The research will also peruse predominantly secondary literature, and where possible, primary literature, that is accessible in the English language. The qualitative method will be adopted as opposed to quantitative due to the fact this research is predominantly a literature study.

Quantitative methods emphasise objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Qualitative Research is primarily exploratory research used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential. (Cox 2010:28)

In addressing the nature of qualitative versus quantitative research, Kvale (1996:67) recognises that "Quality refers to what kind, to the essential character of something. Quantity refers to how much, how large, the amount of something". Similarly, Berg (1995:3) states that "Quality refers to the how, when and where of a thing – its essence and ambience", while "quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things".

Seal et al. (2004:312) considers qualitative research to refer to the understanding of the perspectives of the other, and that those perspectives cannot be quantified into

measurable values". Due to the philosophical perspectives under discussion in this study, the qualitative method of research will be adopted.

In addition to the qualitative method of research, this study will also employ the phenomenological method. It begins within the person as the subject and seeks to move outside the person into an objective description of the world, which is intentional. The purpose of the qualitative method is to describe the phenomena as they appear and to attain an understanding of them. To accomplish this, two key activities must be executed. The first key must hold back or stop (the Greek word is *Epoche*). The second key can occur after this the observer performs the eidetic intuition whereby only the essential structures of the phenomena are seen. Cox (2010:28-29) explains that "eidetic comes from the Greek word *eidos* which means form an idea, or essence, allows the observer to see into the very structure or meaning of the phenomena."

Therefore, the qualitative research methodology will be adopted to explore the different interpretations of *Maya* in order to generate a better understanding of the different views from the three philosophers, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. By employing the phenomenological research methodology, it will ensure that the research will not be subjective but will be objective. It will show the research as it appears to obtain a better knowledge of *Maya*. Three different philosophies will be scrutinised to gain insight into the essence of *Maya*. In essence, it remains a comparison.

1.6 Proposed contribution

It is envisaged, that once a clearer understanding of *Maya* emerges from the engagement with the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva, that a central understanding of *Maya* from the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva, can be obtained. It will also contribute to the knowledge of how these three philosophers understand Brahman and reality.

1.7 Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction/Research Proposal

This will be my research proposal. It will contain the background study, problem statement, research hypothesis and a preliminary bibliography. This chapter will just

give a summary of my dissertation.

Chapter 2: *Upanishads* (*Maya* as found in the Vedas, *Upanishads* and how it is used in these texts).

This chapter will be my introduction for my thesis, where I will focus on how *Maya* is found in the Vedas, *Upanishads* and how it is used in these texts. I will also focus on The Vedas and *Upanishads* and how they came into being.

Chapter 3: *Maya* as understood by Sankara

This chapter will focus on how Sankara understands *Maya*. It will also include the life of Sankara and how he came to his understanding of *Maya*. I will also look into Sankara's school.

Chapter 4: *Maya* as understood by Ramanuja

This chapter will focus on how Ramanuja understands *Maya*. It will also include the life of Ramanuja and how he came to his understanding of *Maya*. I will also look into Ramanuja's school.

Chapter 5: *Maya* as understood by Madhva

This chapter will focus on how Madhva understands *Maya*. It will also include the life of Madhva and how he came to his understanding of *Maya*. I will also look into Madhva's school.

Chapter 6: Differences and similarities in the understanding of *Maya* between Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

This chapter will be a comparative chapter on how *Maya* is understood between Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. It will include the similarities and differences between the three philosophers.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Chapter 2

The emergence of the *Upanishads* and its references to *Maya*

2.1 Introduction

The philosophies surrounding Brahman and Atman and as propagated in the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva, although the understanding differs from each other, find their basis in the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* are therefore important and relevant in this study because Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva use the *Upanishads* extensively for the development of their philosophies. These philosophers have written many commentaries based on the texts of the *Upanishads* and as such developed, amongst other ideas, the relationship between Reality and *Maya*. This chapter is dedicated to how the *Upanishads* emerged and how the idea of *Maya* is latently and at times explicitly embedded in its texts thus giving rise to the three schools of philosophies, Advaita Vedanta (Sankara), Visisadvaita Vedanta (Ramanuja) and Dvaita Vedanta (Madhva)

The *Upanishads* emerged from the Vedas. Hindus regard the Vedas as timeless revelations, orally composed and transmitted from teacher to student, and codified between 3000-2000 BCE probably by Viyasadeva. (Sukdaven 2013:8). There are four known Vedas, Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. Witzel (2003:69) explains that each of these four Vedas is divided into four levels: the Samhitas (mantra collections), Brahmanas (theological/ritual commentary), Aranyakas (wilderness texts) and the *Upanishads* (secret philosophical texts). The Upanishad therefore, consisting of the fourth and last level, is at times referred to as the Vedanta. Rodrigues (cited in Sukdaven 2013:11) denotes that Vedanta is often used when referring to *Upanishads* and its teachings because the word "Vedanta means the end or concluding sections (*anta*) of the revealed Vedas". Therefore the schools of philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva to referred to as Advaita Vedanta, Visisadvaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta, consecutively.

These *Upanishads*are written in ancient Sanskrit and contains some of the ideas of

the central philosophical concepts in Hinduism. The *Upanishads* played an extremely important role in the developing of spiritual ideas marking a movement from Vedic ritualism to new institutions and ideas. This happened in ancient India where the most important literature in the history of Indian culture and religion were written. The *Upanishads*are well known of all Vedic literature and their main ideas are at the spiritual core of Hinduism. (Singh 1991:311).

2.2 The development of the *Upanishads*

The word *Upanishad* actually means 'sitting down near'. Kaul (Kaul 2014:8) concurs by stating that, "the meaning of the *Upanishad* comes from the Sanskrit *upa* (near), *ni* (down), and *sad* (sitting)'. *Upanishad* also means the secret that was handed down by word of mouth by an illumined teacher only to the initiated". This "secret" can be broken down into three categories: secret word, secret text and secret import.

Deussen (1906:16-17) explains three secret forms which constitute the *Upanishads*.
1. The Secret word – Here the *Upanishads* are described as mysterious words and expressions that are only understood by the initiated which contains secret rules for action and behaviour.
2. The Secret text – Here the *Upanishads*are described as existing texts, as well as the older texts underlying them. Some of these emanate from the Brahmanas and Aranyakas as addressed in 2.1 above.
3*.* The Secret import – Here the *Upanishads* are described as the secret allegorical meaning in relation to ritual conceptions and or practices

From the understanding of how the *Upanishads* are described by Deussen above, the word 'secret' is nevertheless the fundamental word which aptly signifies the reason why Hindu philosophies varied as different philosophers began to explain these secrets through commentaries which were written.

In the following section, the emergence of the Upanishad is addressed and the prominence given to the Upanishad.

2.3 Date and authorship

According to Sukdaven (2013:52), the *Upanishads* began to emerge when "certain influential ascetics began to attract disciples around them… with their own codes of conduct while at the same time challenging the orthodox teachings of the time". This emergence is traditionally believed to be during the speculative period (800-400BCE). Kaul (2014:8) believes that "the *Upanishads* were written sometime between 1200 BC and 600 BC, the *Upanishads* developed the ideas and symbols of the Vedas fully, and it is in them that the philosophical ideas of the ancient Vedic sages actually reach their fruition". This major gap can be seen as an estimated timeline in which a date can be derived from. Cohen (2017:18) places the *Upanishads* after the Zend-Avesta, which was authored much later than the *Rgveda*.

According to Burnett (1992:57), modern scholars considered the emergence of the *Upanishads* to be a result of the excessive practice of ritualism. In this regards Worthington (1982:13) mentions two possible reasons for this reaction:

1. The Kshatriyas reacted to the Brahmins who jealously guarded their knowledge of the Vedas. Due to this monopoly, the Brahmins were able to exercise power over the rest of the community.
2. With increased social-economic interaction between the rural and urban communities, an attitude of exploration and inquiry were promoted.

Potter (2008:3) suggests that, because of ambiguous meanings attached to the 'secret' teachings of the Vedanta, various schools of thought began to emerge leading to different interpretations of these texts. This led to six 'orthodox' schools of philosophy: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. (Burnett: 1992:176-178).

1. Nyaya school

Gautama is credited to be the founder of Nyaya philosophy. According to Sukdaven (2013:54), the word nyaya means the collocation of conditions that leads the mind to a conclusion. These conclusions are realised through arguments and reasoning which are either valid or invalid.

The Nyaya school of philosophy is concerned with knowledge and the nature of epistemology. By means of correct knowledge the correct apprehension of objects is

attained.

2. Vaisheshika school

The Nyaya school and the Vaishesika school are seen as one school combined. The reason why these two schools can be seen as one school, is because the empirical epistemology of Nyaya is accepted by the Vaishesikas and the empirical metaphysics of the Vaishesikas is accepted by the Nyaya.

According to Grimes (2004:542), the Vaisheshika school was founded by Kanada. The name Vaisheshika is derived from *vishesha,* which means the characteristic that distinguishes a particular thing from all other things. The Vaisheshika school of philosophy is concerned with the nature of reality.

According to Sukdaven (2013:58), this nature of reality can be obtained by knowing the special properties or essential differences of the objects of experience.

3. Samkhya school

According to Rodrigues (2006:123), the word *Samkhya* is translated as enumeration or calculation.

The Samkhya is recognised as one of the oldest systems of Hindu thought. Masih (1988:30), states that "Kapil Muni is said to be the originator of Samkhya." In *Mokshadharma* and *Anugita* sections of the Mahabharata, early versions of Samkhya are found. These sections of the Mahabharata are 12 and 14.

Masih (1988:31) suggests that Samkhya has been shown in theistic forms in the Gita form of the Mahabharata. There is some controversy that the Samkhya philosophy is atheistic. The *Buddhacharita* of Ashvaghosha, in *Charaka Samhita,* and the Samkhya of *Panchashikha* show that this philosophy can be seen as atheistic.

According to Masih (1988:31), the reason behind this is that Samkhya was originally theistic and about 200 A.D or later, it became atheistic due to the form adopted in *Samkhya Karika.*

4. Yoga school

According to Sukdaven (2013:63), the word *Yoga* means union, which is derived

from the Sanskrit word *yuj.* The Sanskrit *yuj* suggests the idea of unity. This unity is the uniting of human consciousness with the universal consciousness. The reference to the universal consciousness is understood as god.

Scholars have grouped Samkhya and Yoga schools together because of the metaphysical references common to both. Rodrigues (2006:125) confirms this when he states that, "the early articulations of Yoga philosophy are based on the metaphysical system of the *tattvas* associated with Sankhya." *Tattvas*, in some instances, refers to an aspect of deity.

5. Mimamsa school

Rodrigues (2006:131), suggest that the term *Mimamsa*can be considered as investigation or interpretation. This can be identified as the tradition that investigates and reflects on the meanings within the Vedic scripture.

The Mimamsa school can be divided into two categories: the *Uttara-Mimamsa* (posterior study – concerned with the Upanishads) and the *Purva-Mimamsa* (prior study – concerned with the early part of the Vedas). Rodrigues (2006:131) states that "the *Uttara-Mimamsa* is better known as Vedanta because the focus of this philosophy dealt with the latter portion of the Vedas, the *Upanishads*, while the *Purva-Mimamsa* focused on the other sections of the Vedas and became known simply as Mimamsa."

The philosophy of the Mimamsa school can be identified as genuine Vedic tradition because it is a true profession of interpretation of the Vedas.

6. Vedanta school

The term Vedanta is interpreted as the end of the Vedas. Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita are just a few of the Vedanta traditions.

The term Vedanta means end of the Vedas. Therefore the Vedanta philosophy reflects contemplation based on the *Upanishads*. At times the *Upanishads* are referred to as Vedanta and Vedanta is referred to as *Upanishads*.

It is in the Vedanta school of philosophy that Sankara, Ramanuja and Dvaita began to interpret the texts and develop different philosophies, even to the extent of having

a totally opposite understanding of concepts related to Brahman, Atman and *Maya*.

The Vedanta in its pure original form has been represented and is the earliest philosophical writings of the world. They are all pre-Buddhistic. Radhakrishnan (1927:22) says that "these *Upanishads* belong to the Axial Era of the world when a man for the first time questioned the traditional pattern of life on their own and at the same time in China, India and Greece, which was about 800 to 300 BC." Radhakrishnan (1927:22) elaborates further that, "as almost all the early literature of India was anonymous, we do not know the names of the authors of the *Upanishads*. Some of the chief doctrines of the *Upanishads* are associated with the names of renowned sages as Aruni, Yajnavalkya, Balaki, Svetaketu, Sandilya."

Therefore, an accurate determination of the period when the *Upanishads* actually appeared is a difficult task indeed. It is not the within the scope of this research to determine the period of the appearance of the Upanishad but to examine the understanding of *Maya* within these texts in order to assess whether a common understanding of *Maya* can be determined from the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. The following section therefore, attempts to bring into focus the main principle ideas of the *Upanishads* such as Brahman, Atman and *Maya*.

2.4 Brahman and Atman in the *Upanishads*

Some Vedantins have taken to the analogy of the sun's reflection in the water to explain the difference between *jiva* and Ishvara or the the relation between *jiva* and Brahman. This idea of Brahman, according to Sukdaven (2012:211-212), "began to gain momentum in the Upanishads and it seemed that it was only well understood by those of great intellect (knowledge) and therefore could not be regarded as 'popular religion'. Here the movement from a plethora of gods to a single 'force' known as Brahman began to evolve more fully".

The old view was known as reflection theory or *Pratibimbavada,* which was advocated by Vivarana school, whereas the new view to describe this difference or relation is known as limitation theory or *Avachchhedavada,*which was advocated by the Bhamati school.

According to Singh (1991:52), the reflection theory suggests that Ishvara is the reflection of Brahman in *Maya,* while *jiva* is the reflection of Brahman in *Avidya*. A

jiva is said to be the reflection of Brahman on the finite mirror of ignorance.

Singh (1991:53) states that "The defect in this theory is that it reduces the *jivas* to mere images. Brahman and *Maya* are both being formless."

In order to avoid this it is suggested by some to use the limitation theory. Singh (1991:53) elaborates on this theory by stating that "just as one ubiquitous space appears to be different owing to its apparent limitation by a jar etc., even so the same Brahman appears as different *jivas* on account of it being conditioned by different internal organs."

The *jivas* are not the reflections of Brahman according to this, but Brahman itself as limited or conditioned by the internal organs, while Ishvara is the Brahman as conditioned by *Maya.* The question that how can *Maya* or *Avidya* constitute limitations to Brahman can be seen as the defect to this theory.

The "know that you are the Atman" is the *Upanishads* thematic focus, as well as the concepts of Atman (soul, self) and Brahman (ultimate reality). These are the main ideas in all of the *Upanishads*.

The *Upanishads* revolve around two important ideas, Brahman and Atman. Although in some philosophies, these terms are synonymous with each other, Deussen (1906:39) explains that there is a difference, by claiming that, "the difference between Brahman and Atman emerges most clearly where they appear side by side with one another in brief sayings. The passage Brih. 4. 4. 5 may serve as an example: "truly the Brahman is this. Atman" (*sa va' ayam atma Brahma*)."

Klostermaier (2007:167), suggests that, "Atman is the form that is the most grammatical of the impulsive pronoun in Sanskrit; according to the situation, it can be defined as the body, anything that someone believes as myself or mine, a definition that leans towards the searching question of what this "myself", the theme of all thought, wishes and feelings, really consists of". Klostermaier shows that Brahman has more than one meaning.

The final support of all occurrences according to Klostermaier (2007:166) is the Real. To understand this Real, there are centrally two clear paths. One is the subjective consciousness, found in its depth, the Real, which shows to be the foundation of

everything. Eventually, the comprehension dawns that the immanent Atman is exactly the same as the transcendent Brahman. The other path is manifold objects and the outside world. These two eventually reduce to five elements, then onto three, and eventually to one Reality. Atman is Brahman. So therefore, the conclusion can be made that:

Brahman = Atman

This idea and thought that Brahman is the same as Atman will be found to possess importance reaching far beyond the *Upanishads*. In chapters 3, 4 and 5 the three philosophers show that although the *Upanishads* state that Brahman is equal to Atman, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva have different views.

2.5 The concept of *Maya* in the *Upanishads*

In the Vedanta philosophy, the doctrine of *Maya* was developed, in a systematic form, by later thinkers. The Indian and Western critics tell us that if one accepts the concept of *Maya* one must believe that life on earth is meaningless and that liberation consists in turning away from it. Nikhilananda (2003:41) states that "the implications of the doctrine have been distorted and misunderstood by its critics, Indian as well as Western".

According to Herman (1976:108), the means by which higher or *nirguna* Brahman is enabled to mainfest itself as lower or *saguna* Brahman, is called *Maya.* The English translation for *Maya* is translated into words such as measure or magic. The *Upanishads* answer the all important cosmological question which is, how did there come to be anything at all, by simply indicating that the *Maya* or power of God made all this.

The great Lord or Ishvara does all the actual creating through *Maya*:

> "Know that nature (*prakrti*) is *maya* and that the user of *maya* is great Ishvara. And the whole world is filled with beings that are part of him."

> (Svet. U. 4. 10)

Herman (1976:109) states that, "*Maya* here takes on a double meaning, actually, for it is the product of that power of creativity as well as the power itself. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* speaks about *Maya* as the magic power by which Indra

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both conceals and reveals himself. *Maya* again, comes to have a kind of double sense, the sense of product and process, revealing and concealing, displaying and hiding. But its fundamental sense remains that of power or creative energy, and it is ultimately the power that higher Brahman must wield in order to manifest lower Brahman."

Therefore, the reason there is anything at all is that the higher Brahman brought this all into being through the instrumentality of the great Lord and *Maya.*

This statement may cause a dilemma which is either *Maya* is real or it is not. If it is real, then it can consider that the higher Brahman is not the only reality in the universe, which the *Upanishads* want to maintain. Therefore, *Maya* cannot be real.

However, if *Maya*is not real, then it would be impotent as a power to produce lower Brahman and the world. Therefore, the philosophical understanding of *Maya* creates a dilemma. *Maya*is therefore considered being either powerless or impotent, or threatening the monistic metaphysics of the *Upanishads.* Neither of these outcomes is wanted by, especially those who espouse the Advaita Vedanta traditions commonly referred to as the Vedantins, who firmly believe in absolute non-dualism.

*Maya*can be found in the oldest text of the tradition namely the *RigVeda*. According to Shastri (1911:6-7), there are 101 references made to the concept of *Maya* in the *RigVeda.* The number of occurrences of *Maya* in the *RigVeda* is an indication of the prominence and importance with which this term is regarded within Hindu philosophy. The following is a comprehensive list of occurrences of *Maya* in the *RigVeda* as given by O'Neil (1980:29-30):

1. mayah (nominative and accusative plural twenty –four times)

> *I.32.4; I.117.3; II.11.10; II.27.26; III.20.3; III.53.8; V.2.9; V.31.7; V.40.8;*
> *VI.18.9; VI.20.4; VI.22.9; VI.44.22; VI.45.9; VI.58.1; VII.1.10; VII.98.5;*
> *VII.99.4; VIII.41.8; X.53.9; X.73.5; X.99.2; X.111.6*

2. mayaya (instrumental singular nineteen times)

> *1.80.7; I.144.1; I.160.3; II.17.5; III.27.7; IV.30.12; IV.30.21; V.63.3; V.63.7;*
> *VI.22.6; VII.23.15; VII.41.3; VII.104.24; IX.73.5; IX.73.9; IX.83.3; X.71.5;*
> *X.85.18; X.177.1*

3. *mayinah (accusative plural and genitive singular of mayin fifteen times)*

I.39.2; I.51.5; I.54.4; I.64.7; I.159.4; II.11.10; III.38.7; III.38.9; III.56.1; V.44.11
VI.61.3; VII.82.3; VIII.3.19; VIII.23.14; X.138.3

4. *mayabhih (instrumental plural thirteen times)*

I.11.7;   I.33.10;   I.51.5;   I.151.9;   III.34.6;   III.60.1;   V.30.6 ;   V.44.2;   V.78.6;
VI.47.18; VI.63.5; VII.14.14; X.147.2

5. *mayinam (accusative singular of mayin ten times)*

I.11.7;   I.53.7;   I.56.3;   I.80.7;   II.11.5;   V.30.6;   V.58.2;   VI.48.14;   VIII.76.1;
X.147.2

6. *Maya (three times)*

III.61.7; V.63.4; X.54.2

7. *mayam (accusative singular three times)*

V.85.5; V.85.6; X.88.6

8. *mayi (nominative singular of mayin three times)*

VII.28.4; X.99.10; X.147.5

9. *mayinam (three times)*

I.32.4; III.20.3; III.34.3

10. *mayini (two times)*

V.48.1; X.5.3

11. *mayina (instrumental singular of mayin)*

VI.63.5

12. *mayini*

V.48.3

13. *mayavina*

X.24.4

14. mayavan

IV.16.9

15. mayavinam

II.11.9

16. mayavinah

X.83.3

The above references in the *Rigveda*, and its application in the, especially *Uttara-mimamsa* section of the Vedas, and the application of a philosophical understanding of *Maya*, can be encapsulated by Masih (1988:276) who expresses this when he states that, "the *Upanishads* describe Brahman as unoriginated, eternal and changeless. But EW (empirical world) is constituted of changes. How can the only one, non-dual Brahman give rise to EW? It is also contended that Brahman, cannot be regarded either as self-caused or caused by anything different from them." Further to this statement by Masih, he suggests that the *Maya* doctrine may be implicit in the *Upanishads*, however, explicitly this doctrine is not found in the *Upanishads*, except in the *Upanishads* such as *Maitri* and *Svetasvatara*. Masih (1988:278).

According to Mahadevan (1956:62), there are two various forms of the non-dual Brahman-Atman which is shown in the *Upanishads*. Mahadevan (1956:62) says that "Brahman-Atman is the all complete ground of the universe wherein which the one is the non-dual and another in which changing reality is an emergence which is shown as *Maya"*.

Vroom (1996:57) states that "The word *Maya* in the *Upanishads* has been interpreted as 'illusion,' but then it does not affect normal illusion. Here 'illusion' does not indicate that the world is not real and simply a creation of the human imagination. *Maya* indicates that the world is not as it seems; the world that someone encounters is deceptive as far as its true nature is affected".

Maya is the perceived changing reality in the *Upanishads* and it exists together with

Brahman which is the concealed true reality. *Maya*, or as we have learned can also be known as "illusion", is a crucial idea in the *Upanishads*, and the reason being is because the texts state that it is *Maya* which confuses, distracts, and obscures a person in the human chase of liberating self-knowledge and peacefulness.

Masih (1983: 81-82) says that,

> "According to Keith, the *Upanishads* teach pantheism, not illusionism. Of course, the *SetasvataraUpanishad* does make use of the word *Maya* but, perhaps according to Keith, the term *Maya*has not been used in this sense of *Vedantic* illusionism, besides, this use is a matter of latter development, since *Setavatara Upanishad* is of late origin. Keith does not refer to BU 2: 5: 18, 19. But quite obviously the term *Maya* has been used here in the sense of magical conjuring up, and not in the sense of Vedantic illusionism."

However, according to Deussen (1906:228), the doctrine of illusionism is found in older *Upanishads*. He goes on to state that "We propose now to show that the older the texts of the *Upanishads* are, the most uncompromisingly and expressly do they maintain this illusory character of the world experience."

Deussen's (1906:228) main points of contention are two. The first is, the *Upanishads* teach reality and the second is that the world of *namarupa* conceals this non-dual reality. Of course, Masih (1983: 82) states that "the seeing of non-dual unity in all things has been done by the method of successive abstraction as was done by John Locke in establishing the reality of primary qualities, by Samuel Alexander in establishing the primary stuff of space-time continuum, and by R. Descartes in establishing the duality of extension and thought."

2.6 Schools of Vedanta

The *Upanishads* are literally the final sections of the Veda which is what the term Vedanta means. Therefore, Vedanta philosophy is that philosophy which takes its lead from the *Upanishads*. However, there came to be several Vedanta philosophies corresponding to differing interpretations because of the meanings of the *Upanisadic* statements are so ambiguous.

Potter (2008:3) states that "despite an evident similarity in terminology, which is derived from their common allegiance to the same basic literature, these Vedanta

philosophical systems vary substantially among themselves, and there is a polite but perfectly clear rivalry among them as to which system really represents the teachings of the *Upanishads*."

The *Upanishads* shape one of the three main foundations for all schools of Vedanta, together with the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.Raju (1992:177) states that, "the schools of *Vedanta* search to answer questions about the connection between Brahman and Atman, and the connection between the world and Brahman. The schools of *Vedanta* are identified after the connection they see between Brahman and Atman".

2.6.1 Advaita Vedanta

Advaita means non-duality, and it is a monistic system of thought. It expresses the non-dual nature of Atman and Brahman, thus suggesting that there is no distinction between Atman and Brahman. Of the Vedanta schools of philosophy, the Advaita Vedanta School is considered by Radhakrishnan (1953: 273), "to be the most significant sub-school of the Vedantaschool of Hindu philosophy."

Although Sankara was intimately involved with Advaita Vedanta, he was not the founder. This is confirmed by Rahakrishnan (1953:273) who states that "Sankara's guru, Gaudapada, was the first person to describe the key principles of the *Advaita* philosophy. Gaudapada's *Advaita* information was later on developed by his pupil Sankara."

King (1999: 219), says, that "Gaudapada's most important work, *Māṇḍukya Kārikā*, is introduced with philosophical terms of Buddhism, and uses Buddhist analogies and arguments."

2.6.2 Vishishtadvaita

Vishishtadvaita is the second school that we will be focusing on. Ramanuja (1017–1137 CE) founded this school. Ramanuja did not agree with the Advaita school of philosophy and therefore did not agree with Sankara.

The school advises a loyalty to godliness and stable memory of the love and beauty of personal god. Another understanding in the Vishishtadvaita school is that the *Upanishads* are educating that *Ishwar* or Vishnu, which is the seat of all helpful qualities, with all of the empirically professed worlds as the body of God who resides

in everything. Does Ramanuja support the empirically professed world? The answer can be seen in chapter 4 and according to Klostermaier (2007:361-362), he states that " Ramanuja understands that the *Upanishadic* literature to be educating a body-soul theory, where the Brahman is the resident in all things, and at the same time also different and beyond all things, as the immortal, the soul, and the inner controller".

2.6.3 Dvaita

The last Vedanta school is known as the Dvaita school which was founded by Madhva, who is also known as Madhvacharya (1199–1278 CE). Madhva, much the same as Sankara agrees with the views for Advaita, and not like Ramanuja who agrees with the views of Vishishtadvaita, says that his theistic Dvaita Vedanta is set in the *Upanishads*. (Fowler: 2002:356)

According to the Dvaita school, states Fowler (2002:356-357), "the *Upanishads* that talk of the soul as Brahman talk about similarity and not identity".Madhva understands the doctrines of the *Upanishads* as becoming one with Brahman, or in other words, known as "entering into Brahman", just similar to a drop in the ocean. Brahman is a Supreme reality in the *Upanishads,* independent, separate and according to Madhva; this involves dependence and duality, where Atman and Brahman are distinct realities according to the Dvaita school.

According to the Dvaita'sschool of philosophy, the souls and matter are separate from one another. Madhva has a similar concept to Sankara where he believes that Brahman and Atman are separate and Atman only resembles Brahman in smaller instances. It is interesting to see that Madhva believes that they are different realities and he could also be leading to, that there is no connection between us and Brahman.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address the emergence of the *Upanishads* as well as the central theme of Brahman and Atman and the relation of *Maya* to these two entities. The differing views on the philosophies that emerged from the different interpretations by many philosophers of the Vedas led to the establishment of six major schools of philosophy. The school of philosophy, which was of interest for this study, was the School of Vedanta. It is to this school that Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva are associated, although their philosophies differ radically from each other. The following three chapters are dedicated to understanding the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva and their understanding of *Maya*.

Chapter 3

Sankara and his philosophy of *Maya*

"Brahma satyan jagat mithya, jivo brahmaiva naparah"

"Brahman the Absolute alone is real; this world is transient (mithya is anirvachaneeya, cannot be defined, cannot be translated as unreal), but the Jiva or the individual soul is not different from Brahman."

Adir Sankara

3.1 Introduction

Sankara is an advocate of the Advaita school of Vedanta. The philosophy that he espoused was entrenched in the idea of absolute non-dualism, known as Advaita Vedanta. It is non-dualistic because it suggests that Brahman is the only thing that is absolutely real. Sankara used three basic sources to further develop the idea of Advaita Vedanta. These three sources were:*Upanishads, Brahmasutras,* and the *Bhagavad Gita.*

In Sankara's philosophy, the concept of *Maya* finds relevance predominantly in the *Brahmasutras.* This chapter will address the life and times of Sankara and his philosophies especially his interpretation of *Maya*, based on the *Upanishads, Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

3.2 Date of birth, life and influences of Sankara

Although Sankara's life was brief, he made a significant contribution to Hindu philosophy. This section will not only focus on Sankara's birth and life but will also briefly investigate those that have influenced his life and shaped his thoughts and ideas.

3.2.1 Date of birth

The controversy of the date of birth of Sankara has been a point of debate. Although it is accepted that Sankara was born in Kaladi, scholars such as Sastry, Isayeva, Bhattacharya, and Pande all have different views on the date of birth of Sankara. Isayeva (1993:83) confirms the difficulty of finding an exact date of his birth. According to Sastry (1916:181), Sankara was born in the year 509 BC.

Isayeva (1993:83) proposes a possible date by stating that "if one were to rely on the material of *Brhatsankaravijaya,* Sankara was born in the year Nandana, or the twenty-sixth year of the sixty-year cycle, in the lunar month *Vaisakha*, under the zodiac sign of the Archer". Isayeva (1993:83) states that "there are two possible dates: 568 AD and 805 AD."

Bhattacharya (1982:88) suggests Sankara's birth be 788-820 AD. Pande (1994:41-54) concludes that the dates of Sankara can range between 650-100 AD.

Most scholars though seem to support Battacharya's dating because this date coincides in relation to three historical developments: (1) It is in relation to Buddhist philosophical thought of the time, (2) It is in relation to the ideas of Gaudapada (his paramguru) and finally (3) It is in relation to Govinda (his guru).

This dissertation will accept the date considered by most scholars to be an acceptable date, 788-820 AD.

Although he had a short lifespan of about 32 years, he wrote many commentaries. Some commentaries attributed to him are in dispute. What is not in dispute is that some of his commentaries include commentaries on the *Upanishads*.

Even more admirable, according to both Pande (1994:78) and Bhattacharya (1982:89), is that Sankara started speaking in the first year of his birth and learned Sanskrit before he learned his mother tongue. Pande (1994:78) further comments that between the ages of two and three, Sankara learned to write and memorised poetry.

Sankara performed his *Upanayana,* which is when a person is initiated into student life and was therefore sent to the house of a guru. Pande (1994:78) states that the house of the guru is also regarded as the *gurukala.* There is a debate between

Pande (1994:78) and Bhattacharya (1982:89) as to whether Sankara returned from *gurukala* at the age of seven or eight. Bhattacharya believes that Sankara returned at the age of seven because he had nothing else to learn, while Pande believes that Sankara returned at the age of eight after achieving proficiency in the orthodox systems of philosophy.

Regardless of whether Sankara was seven or eight when he returned from *gurukala*, Klostermaier (1998:106) states that it normally takes about twelve years to achieve what Sankara achieved in two or three years. This achievement led others to believe that he was an incarnation of *Shiva*. According to Bhattacharyan (1982:91), scholars would visit Sankara and engage in academic conversations. His knowledge and young age combined led scholars to believe that he must be a divine soul in disguise.

According to Pande (1994:80), at the age of eight Sankara, wanted to become a *samnyasi.* In order to become a *samnyasi* he needed his mother's blessing. When she refused he was desperately disappointed. Prasad (2011:22) recounts a legendary story of how Sankara convinced his mother to relent and offer him her blessing. According to Prasad (2011:22) legend has it that:

> " one morning, while bathing in the *Purna* river with his mother, a crocodile suddenly caught hold of Sankara's foot. As the desperate mother cried out in the heat of the moment, wooingly assured her that the crocodile would relent if she would only permit him to become a *samnyasi.*"

His mother had no alternative but to give her blessing to Sankara. Prasad (2011:23) believed that Sankara spent four or five years in Banaras, finishing his commentaries on the *Brahmasutras, Upanishads,* and the *Bhagavad Gita.* Then he set out on an extensive journey of India by foot.

For the thirty-two years that Sankara lived, it is claimed that his contributions made to Indian philosophy, and his knowledge, created an impact on the Indian philosophy still followed today.

3.2.2 Influencers of Sankara's thought and those who were influenced

Two major people that influenced Sankara's philosophy was Govinda (Sankara's *Guru*) and Gaudapada (Sankara's *paramguru*). The influence of these two philosophers on Sankara's philosophy as well as the followers of Sankara can be summarised as follows.

3.2.2.1 Govinda (Sankara's *guru*)

Sankara's *guru*, Govinda, aided Sankara along his philosophical journey and provided the necessary support of moulding Sankara into the kind of philosopher that is known today. Although Govinda was not as prominent as Sankara's *paramguru*, Gaudapada, his contribution to Sankara was nevertheless influential.

Govinda was the disciple of Gaudapada and teacher to Sankara. According to Prasad (2011:22), Sankara found Govinda upon reaching the banks of the river *Narmada* (in present Gujarat state)*.* Sankara requested to become his disciple and became engrossed in advanced studies on the Vedantas. Sastry (1916:63) states that although Govinda felt inferior to Sankara, he nevertheless continued to assist Sankara with the formalities of becoming a fully-fledged ascetic.

Both Tigunait (1983:217) and Sastry (1916:69) agree that among the various works that Govinda taught Sankara, including the *Brahmasutras,* as explained by Vyasa, the *Karikas*, which was written by Gaudapada, impressed Sankara the most. Sastry (1916:69) claims that Sankara found the principles of Vedanta philosophy through the *Karikas*. This created a deep desire in Sankara to want to meet Gaudapada and to request his permission to write an elaborate commentary on the *Karikas*.

Sankara grew in a well-acclaimed knowledge and wisdom thus leading Prasad (2011:23) to believe that Govinda sent Sankara to the Banaras for four or five years. Govinda only sent him after having the assurance that Sankara acquired the proper training in Vedanta. According to Klostermaier (1998:106), this was the major seat of Hindu learning. It was in the Banaras where Sankara established himself as an advocate for Advaita Vedanta.

3.2.2.2 Gaudapada (Sankara's *paramguru*)

Even though Sankara was a pupil of Govinda and accepted him as a *guru*, Gaudapada was seen as a greater *guru* than Govinda. There is a concern that Gaudapada was a Buddhist and this may have affected Sankara's philosophy somewhat. However, Gaudapada's *Karikas* made a valuable contribution to Advaita Vedanta, which greatly influenced Sankara.

The assumption made, as to the period in which Gaudapada lived, is based on the dating of Sankara (780-820 AD). This assumption is confirmed by Deutsch and Dalvi (2004:157), in that, "if tradition is correct in maintaining that he was literally Sankara's *paramaguru* then he must have lived no earlier than the seventh century".

Dasgupta (1975:422) states that "Gaudapada seems to be the most important man, after the Upanisad sages, who revived the monistic tendencies of the Upanisads in a bold and clear form and tried to formulate them in a systematic manner." This also led Shankara to confess that, "the absolutist (Advaita) creed was recovered from the Vedas by Gaudapada."

Although scholars would agree with Dasgupta's statement, the concern is an influence of Buddhist thought and philosophy on Gaudapada's thought and philosophy and whether or not he was, in fact, a Buddhist.

Nevertheless, Sharma (1976:251) believes Gaudapada to be a Vedantin. Sharma substantiates his statement by comparing Mahayana Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta. The outcome of this comparison is that both teachings and philosophies are not two opposed systems of thought, but that they are only a continuation of the same fundamental thought of the *Upanishads.*

A brief selection taken from the Gaudapada *Karikas* as quoted by Deutsch and Dalvi (2004:158-159) is listed below which illustrates the contribution that Gaudapada made to Advaita Vedanta. In this quotation, one can nevertheless notice the great influence that Gaudapada had on Sankara's philosophy as would be observed when assessing Sankara's philosophy later in this section (3.3).

1. I,16. When the empirical self (Jiva) is awakened from the sleep of beginningless illusion (*Maya*), it realises the unborn, sleepless, dreamless non-dual (reality).

2. I,17. If the phenomenal world were (really) existing then it ought no doubt to disappear. But this (whole universe of) duality is a mere illusion: the absolute truth is that of non-duality.

3. I,18. If anyone merely imagined the world of diversity (to exist). It would disappear (upon the termination of his fancy). This talk (of duality) is only for instruction. There is no duality (when reality) is known.

4. II, 4. As in the dream state so in the waking [sic] state, the objects seen are insubstantial because of their being perceived. The difference between them is only that the objects of a dream are confined within the body.

5. II, 11. (Objector's question). If in both states the objects are unreal, who is it that perceives these objects? Who is it that imagines them?

6. II, 12. The self-luminous Self (Atman) imagines Itself through Itself by the power of its own illusion. It is itself the cogniser of objects. This is the definite conclusion of the Vedanta.

7. II, 13. The Lord (Self) imagines in various forms the well-defined objects which are in His mind when His mind is turned outward, and (various ideas) when His mind is turned within.

8. II, 17. As a rope, which is not clearly perceived in the dark, is imagined to be a snake or a line of water, so the Self is imagined in different ways.

9. II, 18. As definite knowledge of the rope destroys all illusions about it and the conviction arises that it is nothing but a rope, so is the nature of the Self-determined.

10. II, 31. As dream and illusion or a castle in the air are seen (to be unreal), so this whole universe is seen by those who are wise in Vedanta.

11. II, 32. There is no dissolution and no creation, no one in bondage and no one who is striving for or who is desirous of liberation, and there is no one who is liberated. This is the absolute truth.

12. III, 19. The birthless One is differentiated only through illusion, and in no other way. For if differentiation were real then the immortal would become mortal (which is absurd).

13. III, 28. There is no birth for a non-existent thing either through illusion or in reality. The son of a barren woman is not born either through illusion or in reality.

14. III, 46. When the mind does not disappear nor again is dispersed, when it is motionless and without sense-images, then it becomes Brahman.

15. III, 48. No individual is born, for there is nothing to cause (it is birth). This (Brahman) is that highest truth - where nothing is born.

The above quotation, though elaborate, reveals a distinct philosophy of absolute monism. It also references the idea of *Maya* (further elaborated upon in 3.2.2.3 below) as the cause of this unreality as seen those verses. The following four verses though provides sufficient substantiation of Gaudapada's strong assertion of an Advaita Vedanta: (1) that the birthless One is differentiated only through illusion, and in no other way. For if differentiation were real then the immortal would become mortal (which is absurd), (2) that no individual is born, for there is nothing to cause (it is birth). This (Brahman) is that highest truth - where nothing is born, (3) that when the empirical self (Jiva) is awakened from the sleep of beginningless illusion (*Maya*), it realises the unborn, sleepless, dreamless non-dual (reality) and (4) that if the phenomenal world were (really) existing then it ought no doubt to disappear.

Potter (1981:79), concludes that, "Sankara gets the notion of *Maya* from Buddhism through Gaudapada but that he develops it in his own special way. Specifically, where Gaudapada did not equate *Avidya* and *Maya*, Sankara does. Still another contrast is that, whereas Gaudapada seems to speak only of real and unreal, Sankara's explication indicates a three-level view with the empirical world occupying a position midway between Brahman and pure non-existence".

3.2.2.3 Gaudapada's understanding of *Maya*

Gaudapada's understanding of the concept of *Maya* was of importance to Sankara's understanding.

Sukdaven (2013:112) states that,

> "Gaudapada used the term '*Maya*' to explain his main doctrine on the theory of no origination. In GK 1.16 *Maya* is referred to as 'beginningless'. It renders the idea of *Maya* being a beginningless phenomenon. This theory suggests

that the entire world of duality is merely an appearance which can be construed as an illusion. Shankara was seemingly having great difficulty in explaining that if *Maya* is beginningless, then surely Brahman cannot be the only reality?"

Shaha (1987:100) assumes that Gaudapada is moving towards the Buddhist idea of non-origination as well as the fact that *Maya* meant illusion in Buddhist literature. Deutsch and Dalvi (2004:157) state that to explain this dialectical critique of causation and no origination, Gaudapada appeals to the doctrine of *Maya.*

3.2.2.4 The followers of Sankara

There are three followers that were influenced by Sankara: Padmapada; Vacaspati; and Prakasatman. Prasad (2011:15) shows how they were influenced by the following paragraph.

Padmapada wrote an elaboration of his guru's commentary on the first four *Sutras* was Sankara's direct disciple. *VivaranaPrasthana* which developed this book as its basis literally means the school based on the gloss. Another interpretation of Sankara's work was done by Vacaspati in the year 841 CE. His work is known as the *Bhamati*. Another commentator who wrote a commentary on the Pancapadikaaround 1000 CE was Prakasatman.

3.2.3 Works of Sankara

The works that were collaborated by Sankara are of importance in Hindu literature. There is a doubt on whether or not Sankara wrote the commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads,* and the *Brahmasutras.* Klostermaier makes a statement of how old Sankara was when he wrote these three commentaries, however Pande argues that Sankara could not have written these because of the accumulative errors. Isayeva divides Sankara's works into three parts, however, Isayeva also agrees with Pande which will be addressed below.

According to Klostermaier (1998:107) when Sankara was twelve years old he wrote his commentaries on the *BhagavadGita*, *Upanishads* and the *Brahmasutras* as well as a few other works. Pande (1994:4-5) argues that there is a possibility of numerous contradictions, obscurity and distortion.

Pande (1988:99-129) concludes after a thorough investigation that,

> " the need for the edition of several texts and for the critical edition of most of those ascribed to Sankara remains a major desideratum in the absence of which definitive stylistic judgements are not always possible. As the texts stand, many of them even contain occasional grammatical lapses which it would be hard to attribute to Sankara himself. This could only reflect faulty publication or preservation."

According to Isayeva (1993:91), Indian tradition ascribes Sankara the authorship of more than 400 extant Vedantic works. Sankara's works are divided into three parts.

The three parts according to Isayeva (1993:92) are as follows:

- The first part embraces the commentaries; among them are the *bhasya*, or the most authoritative, primary interpretation of basic texts, as well as the *vivarana* and the *tika*, representing, as a rule, sub-commentaries on commentaries. These sub-commentaries are supposed to interpret both basic texts and their primary explanations.

- The second part of texts includes mostly hymns, poems, metric incantations and praises of the god (*stotra, stava,* and *stuti*).

- The third part consists of independent compositions, treatises and compendia.

The controversy occurs in Sankara studies today as to which works can be attributed to this advocate of Advaita. According to Isayeva (1993:92), the variety of contents makes it highly improbable that all these works should have been written by the same person. Sankara is credited with these three works: *Brahmasutras, Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*, which can be classified as his major works.

Potter (Potter, 1981, p.119) states that "neither Western nor Indian educators agree on the correctness of Sankara's interpretation of *Badarayana'sSutras*, powerful as it is. Many works in English show the difference between the interpretations of a single sutra by the various Vedanta authors."

Although according to Isayeva (1993:100), Sankara's commentary is undoubtedly the most prominent work based on *Badarayana's* text. It occupies a central place in

all of the Advaitst's work.

O'Neil (1980:72) states that "Sankara's commentary on the *Sutra* brings out what he sees as the import of the *Sutra* itself. This import is the coherent system of non-duality or Adviata. The Advaita maintains that there is only one Reality, Brahman. The world and name and form has its foundation the only Real that is. This Real is the same for all things which participate in existence (*sat*). The world is real only in relation to its true ground or essence. Man must; therefore embark on an inquiry into this Real. Therefore we find the opening sloka in the *Brahma Sutra*: "Now, therefore, the desire to know Brahmna.""

3.3 Advaita Vedanta according to Sankara

It is now evident that Sankara was not the founder of Advaita Vedanta. However, Nakamura (1950:221) confirms that "the most important supporter of the Advaita Vedanta is seen by the tradition to be 8th-century educator Sankara."

Having briefly surveyed how Govinda and Gaudapada viewed the teaching of the *Upanishads* and developed the understanding of absolute monism, which was understood as Advaita Vedanta, Sankaranarayanan (1991:1) provides a broad definition of Advaita by listing the core principles of this philosophy:

> "Advaita is the Truth about the nature of the Supreme Reality, of Man and of the Universe... It is a final experience or realisation... it is a denial of duality... In the last analysis, Reality is only one; of that Ultimate Reality, it cannot be said that there are two. It also denies the disparateness of the Universe and Man from that Reality... It does not, however, deny the existence of the Universe and of Man; but only denies their reality. They are forms in which Reality appears; but they are not real in the manner in which they appear. They 'exist'; but they are not 'real.'"

Mayeda (2006:78-79) states that "the term Advaita can be referred to its view that the soul (true self or Atman) is similar as the maximum metaphysical Reality which is also referred to as Brahman".

Deutsch (1988:3) states that "Advaita Vedanta emphasizes *Jivanmukti* the idea

that *moksha* is achievable in this life in contrast to Indian philosophies that emphasize *videhamukti*, or *moksha* after death. The school uses concepts such as Brahman, Atman, *Maya*, Avidya, meditation and others that are found in major Indian religious traditions, but interprets them in its own way for its theories of *moksha*."

Sankara sets the theme of addressing the nature of reality in the preamble to his BSB. Gambhirananda (2006:1), in translating this commentary of Sankara writes that:

> ... the superimposition of the object, referable through the concept "you", and its attributes on the subject that is conscious by nature and is referable through the concept "we" (should be impossible), and contrariwise the superimposition of the subject and its attributes on the object should be impossible. Nevertheless, owing to an absence of discrimination between these attributes, as also between substances, which are absolutely disparate, there continues a natural human behaviour based on self-identification in the form of "I am this" or "This is mine." This behaviour has for its material cause an unreal nescience and man resorts to it by mixing up reality with unreality as a result of superimposing the things themselves or their attributes on each other.

The nature of truth or reality is understood by Sankara through this criterion of truth as immutable and permanent. However, Sankara's base this criterion on Gaudapada's explanation on the essential immortal entity found in his *Karikas*.

Sankara's philosophy of the ultimate reality is known as the *paramarthika*. Narain (2003:39) explains that *paramarthika* or the transcendental absolute is the only reality whereas all other phenomena are false (*mithya*).

3.3.1 Brahman and Atman

The concept of Brahman can be identified as two different Brahmans according to Sankara. These two are known as Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman. Saguna Brahman is illustrated as Brahman with attributes. The BSB (1.1.11) confirms this description by stating that Brahman is the cause of the universe and the ordainer of the masters of the organs. Nirguna Brahman is described as a state of pure bliss and absolute consciousness. The BSB (1.1.11) states that Nirguna Brahman is opposed to Saguna Brahman.

Singh (1991:68-69) states that,

"Sankara uses the word Brahman in two ways: primary and secondary. The primary can be seen as Absolute reality, indescribably and unqualified. The secondary can be seen as literally meaning God (*Isvara*) as qualified. Sankara uses the term Brahman for *Isvara*. Sankara says that Brahman is not an object of devotion, just the Absolute. On the other hand, *Isvara* requires individual souls and the world to be ruled by Him."

Therefore, Brahman in Sankara's eyes is Absolute and Ultimate Reality according to Singh. He takes away the devotion aspect from Brahman but places that on *Isvara.*

An extract from the BS (1.1.1) is used to show Sankara's explanation of the whole meaning of the BS:

That omniscient and omnipotent source must be Brahman from which occurs the birth, continuance, and dissolution of this universe that is manifested through name and form that is associated with diverse agents and experiences that provides the support for actions and results, having well-regulated space, time, and causation and that defiles all thoughts about the real nature of its creation.

Sukdaven (2013:96) states that "in empirical reality, the Self, just like Brahman, is perceived to be individual souls (Jiva). This is due to the superimposition on the 'Self' (BSB 2.3.50). The self (*Jiva*) has a relation with Brahman. Deutsch (1985:51) continues this notion by explaining that this relation is a combination of experience and reality.

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Sankara tries to distinguish the true self from the object and declares that subject and object are different like light and darkness so that what is truly subject can never become an object.

Ignorance is the form of the superimposition (*adhyasa*) resulting in our origin of the individual self or soul (Atman). Arrington (2003:283) says that "through our ignorance (*Avidya*) of the real nature of Brahman we falsely superimpose as a "limiting adjunct" (*upadhi*) the experienced features of the world consisting in "my body" and "my senses" to arrive at the sense of "my individual consciousness." Just as the ignorance that a red flower stands behind a translucent crystal leads us to see the crystal as red."

3.3.2 Understanding knowledge according to Sankara

The word that is used to describe valid or true knowledge is *Prama*. O'Neil (1980:73) provides this definition and relation to the *pramana* using the six ways of knowing:

> "A *prama* or knowledge, therefore, can be accurately regarded as a cognition the object of which is neither contradicted nor already known as as an object (*anadhi-gata-badhita-rtha-visayam jnanam*).

> The special source o a particular *prama* or knowledge is called *pramana*. A *karan* is conceived as the unique or special cause through the action of which a particular effect is produced. In the case of perceptual knowledge or *pratyakasa prama,* for example, a sense-organ (in the case of an external perception) or the mind (in the case of an internal perception) is said to be the *karana* or instrumental cause...."

O'Neil states that "Sankara in his works actually refers to only three *pramanas* but generally the Advaita system is said to utilize six. Even though Sankara may not have actually spoken of some *pramanas*, this does not imply that he did not utilize them in his works."

For Sankara, the main or primary *pramana* is *sruti* or testimony. *Sruti* is the scripture of the Vedanta. It is seen as transpersonal because, it has always existed and was put down by the ancient seers of the Indian tradition. *Sruti* for the Advaita is held in the *Upanishads* and they are concerned with Brahman.

In the Advaita there is a difference between two types of scripture, one suggesting absolute truth or *para vidya* and the other suggesting relative truth or *apara vidya*. According to O'Neil (1980:74), the differences between the two types are based upon the knowledge they give:

> "According to Sankara the authority of a scriptural passage is established if it is able to generate certain and fruitful knowledge. The Upanisadic texts are able to give such knowledge, which, Sankara says, is seen to result in the removal of evils such as ignorance, grief, delusion and fear which are at the root of transmigration. Further, the *Upanishads* themselves say that 'for him, who see unity there can be no delusion and grief.' Some passages in the Veda such as 'He (the god Fire) cried; so he was called Rudra (the crier)' may not give any certain and fruitful knowledge; and they have consequently no authority. Also texts like 'the sun is the sacrificial post' have to be understood figuratively, because their literal meaning is contradicted by perception; and their purport does not lie in their literal meaning. But there are certain texts in the *Upanishads*, are found to be their central theme. Since these texts give us fruitful knowledge not obtained by any other source and since they found to be 'important' as they have an independent meaning on their own, the Advaita school maintains that their purport must be accepted at all costs."

Therefore, Sankara maintains that the *pramanas* supply us correct knowledge in the best option that is possible. O'Neil (1980:77) suggests that scriptural testimony is the most successful *pramana* and supplies us with truth of the non-duality of Brahman. The path to the knowledge of Brahman is one which journeys through the maze of ignorance.

3.4 *Maya* as understood by Sankara

O'Neil (1980:92-93) states that "*Maya* must not be understood as completely new development within Sankara's thought or system and it can already be found in the oldest text." Sankara's understanding of *Maya* is undoubtedly significant and important in Hindu literature. Although he did not discover the term *Maya,* he was a true advocate and his understanding paved the way for future philosophers and understandings.

Sankara taught that the only thing that is real is Brahman and everything else is an illusion. He believed in absolute monism. Sankara was a solid believer of the common understanding of *Maya*. The problem that occurs is how one then explains the things that we see, touch and hear, if the only thing that is real is Brahman and that everything else is an illusion.

In order to answer this dilemma, Sankara turns to the idea of *Maya*. According to Sankara, *Maya* is the existence and non-existence entity which creates an illusion and therefore creating something which in reality does not exist.

According to Prasad (2011:58), "this *Maya* cannot be considered as having an existence of its own, since what really exists is Brahman alone. It cannot be considered as non-existent either because it is incessantly causing the appearance of the manifold world. Therefore it could only be defined as something neither existent non non-existent or*sad-asad-vilaksana.* In other words, it is indefinable or *anirvacaniya.* The appearance of the world that is caused by *Maya* is often compared to the appearance of a snake in a piece of rope."

Sankara uses the example of the rope and the snake to illustrate the concept of *Maya*. From a distance, a rope can be mistaken as a snake. On closer inspection, the snake turns out to be a piece of coiled rope. Once the delusion breaks, the snake vanishes forever.

Another example is a mirage. From a distance, the mirage appears to be a puddle of water. On closer inspection, there is no water at all. Sankara, similarly explains the world that we see, touch and hear as these examples. He says that just like the rope and the mirage, the world does not exist but rather merely an illusion. This illusion is therefore caused by *Maya.*

According to Masih (1988:277), the empirical world for Sankara has been superimposed on the changeless Brahman in the same way in which the snake is superimposed on its underlying foundation called the rope. According to Sankara it is *ajnana* (ignorance) by virtue of which the *jivas* (human beings)experience multiplicity in the place of unity. Therefore, the doctrine of of *ajnana*.

Masih (1988:277) states that, "Sankara has not further analysed the notion of *ajnana* into *Maya, Avidya* (incorrect understanding)and *Adhyasa* (false attribution). In

post-Sankara Advaitism these terms, with their ramifications, have assumed many subtle distinctions and discussions."

Maya is therefore, the cause on an empirical world reality (Brahman). Therefore*Maya* creates an illusion of two Brahmans: the Saguna Brahman; and the Nirguna Brahman. It is only through the knowledge that we come to realise that the Saguna Brahman actually does not exist, but only the Nirguna Brahman which is seen as reality or Atman.

Prasad (2011:62) states that, "*Maya* causes the apparent emergence of individual beings. For this reason, the life and thought of individuals also seem wholly subject to the play of *Maya.* We appear unable to transcend *Maya* in order to realise our own true nature- the pure, all pervading Self that is Brahman. *Maya* here seems to veil one's own real nature and content."

Therefore, we live unaware that we are all Brahman. *Maya* effects all the sense organs, the body and our conditioning essential part.

The incorrect knowledge can be seen as ignorance which plays a part in this illusion. Sankara therefore attributes ignorance into *Maya.* It is through ignorance that the rope is seen as a snake or the mirage is seen as a puddle of water.

The doctrine of *Maya* is only a theoretical means of attaining an end to solve certain difficulties in relation to Brahman as pure *cit*.

Sankara's philosophy has four basic qualifications that insist requirements necessary for wisdom. Prasad (2011:68) provides the following four qualifications as follows:

1. *Nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka:* Discrimination between the eternal and transient.
2. *Vairagya:* Dispassion towards objects here and hereafter.
3. Six essential codes of conduct:

   Sama: Restraining the mind.

   Dama: Restraining the senses.

   Uparati: Self-withdrawl.

   Titiksa: Forbearance.

Samadhanam: Self-settlement.

Sraddha: Faith in the scriptures and the *guru.*

4. *Mumuksutvam:* Yearning for liberation.

According to Sankara, only when one is full equipped with the above qualifications, wisdom can dawn for the performing practice.

3.4.1 Brahman and *Maya* in Sankara's philosophy

Sankara employs the theory of *Maya* in his understanding of the empirical world. According to Singh (1991:159), *Maya* is said to be the cause of the entire world and the potentiality of Brahman. Brahman due to *Maya* is therefore known as Isvara. Therefore, Brahman is called the creator of the world because of this potentiality and the indeterminate Brahman becomes the determinate.

Sankara's philosophy is identified as absolute non-dualism. This implies that there is only one Absolute Reality that is always real in the past, present and future, therefore Sukdaven (2013: 120) states that "Sankara believes that only Brahman is real, without attributes and qualities. Brahman is 'One without a second'. The world is superimposed upon this Brahman creating an appearance known as *mithya*, which at times is incorrectly translated as 'illusion' whereas it should be translated as 'not real'.

Maya can there be best understood in Sankara's understanding as misconception or ignorance or false knowledge. Only through right knowledge can *Maya* be removed and the realisation of Brahman is achieved. Another allegory is how Sukdaven explains this. He interprets *Maya* as a veil of ignorance and through the right knowledge can the veil be lifted.

According to Singh (1991:160), this ignorance with the two powers of concealment and projection is like the rope snake appearance. The rope is concealed as a rope to concealing the power of ignorance and it gives rise to the illusion of a snake due to the power of projection. This is described as the creative power of illusion.

The most probable way for Sankara to define *Maya* is to say that it is neither existent nor non-existent. If it was existent then Sankara's philosophy of absolute non-dualism can be seen as questionable because there would be another reality. If

it is non-existent then the empirical world is non-existent.

This dilemma can be resolved by Sankara's idea of two aspects of Brahman. These two aspects were briefly addressed in 3.2.2. These two aspects are one. Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes) which implies that God has a name and form and other attributes. Sukdaven (2013:121) states that "Sankara refers to Saguna Brahman as "possessed of the limiting adjunct constituted by the diversities of the universe which is a modification of name and form". BSB 4.3.10 and 4.3.11. Shankara refers to Saguna Brahman as 'conditioned Brahman' and by inference regards it as lower Brahman.

2. Nirguna Brahmann (Brahman without attributes) which implies that God as the Absolute spirit and pure consciousness has no name, form or attributes. Masih (1988:302) states that "It is the state of pure bliss and absolute consciousness, free from all adjuncts and attributes."

The Advaitins have declared their key concepts of *avidya* and Brahman to be indescribable. Masih (1988:379-380) summarises the stand of Sankara as follows:

1. Gaudapadian vision of the oneness of all things was imparted to Sankara by his *Guru* Govinda. Sankara was thrilled by this vision.

2. He avidly read and mastered all the *Upanishads*, *Gita* and *Brahmasutra* from the standpoint of non-dual reality of Brahman. He to his own satisfaction and of his disciples could interpret this vision with the help of the philosophical tools used by Gaudapada and Buddhism. Filled with the missionary zeal, he could convert a large number of Buddhists and Brahmins to his standpoint.

3. The most palpable proof of this oneness could be found in the paradigm case of dreamless sleep. Peace, tranquillity and bliss of dreamless sleep came to stand both as the confirmation and foretaste of Brahman-realisation. Later on, the state of *turiya* was cited as the fore-runner of the state of bliss which a tortured soul can find in this earthly frame.

The yogic state of *turiya* simply means the emptying of mind of all objects, whether of consciousness or unconsciousness.

4. This Brahman, the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker cannot

be an object to itself. The same notion of an eternal, objectless and unborn consciousness, underlying all past, present and future cognitions has been emphasized by Sankara. Brahman is also bliss and its realisation even in the smallest way will take the seeker beyond this world of sorrow. Nay, on a very small fraction of this bliss all creatures endure their earthly existence.

5. This objectless state has been conceptualised in the identity formula of *tat-tvam-asi.*

6. What about multiplicity and the distractions of everyday life? They must be described as illusory in comparison with the vision of non-duality. Unreality is found in different degrees.

   a) The lowest is called *alika*. For example the son of a barren woman is called contradictory.

   b) Dreams are also unreal, because they are sublated by waking experience, and, reality is eternal which can never be sublated by any experience whatsoever. But dreams are less unreal than *alika*, because they have the seeming reality as long as they last. What about waking experience?

   c) They too are unreal, because

      i. The *Upanishads* have the the highest authority and they declare that reality is one and non-dual. Hence, dualistic thinking and manifoldness of waking experience cannot be real.

      ii. Besides, the higher state of dreamless sleep and *turiya* supports the reality of non-dual Brahman.

      iii. Directly it could be shown that dualistic thinking mediated through the categories is hsot through with contradiction. Sankara himself has used the dialectic, but it was most effectively used by Nagarjuna and Gaudapada for showing the falsity of EW. Naturally, the question arises, when and how is this unreal world?

7. Through nescience, this EW has arisen. This nescience is beginningless but has an end on the dawning of true *jnana.*

According to Masih (1988:380), the examples of the snake and the rope or the silver conch shell illusions helps in the understanding the falsity of EW. Dreams can be identified as false experiences and therefore hallucinations. However, Sankara's advaitism is based on the intuition of the Supreme Reality.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address Sankara and his philosophy of *Maya* as well as the theme of Brahman and Atman and the relation with the concept of *Maya.* The controversy of his date of birth was a debate, however, in 3.2.1 the date that was accepted in this dissertation was 788-820 AD.

The school of philosophy which was covered in this chapter was the Advaita Vedanta School. This philosophy was known as Absolute dualism and entrenched in the Advaita Vedanta School

Although Sankara was not the founder he was regarded as the most important follower. The way in which Brahman and Atman are understood by Sankara was addressed as well as the central theme of how *Maya* is understood by Sankara. The following chapter is dedicated to the second philosopher, Ramanuja, and his philosophy of *Maya.*

Chapter 4

Ramanuja and his philosophy of *Maya*

"Entities other than Brahman can be objects of such cognitions of the nature of joy only to a finite extent and for limited duration. But Brahman is such that cognizing of him is an infinite and abiding joy. It is for this reason that the shruti scripture says, `Brahman is bliss'. Since the form of cognition as joy is determined by its object, Brahman itself is joy."

Sri Ramanuja

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will address the second philosopher, Ramanuja with the main theme, his interpretation of *Maya.* The philosophy that he espoused was entrenched in the idea of qualified non-dualism, known as Vishishtadvaita Vedanta. Like Sankara's philosophy, it is non-dualistic; however it is qualified because Ramanuja believes that it is meaningless to speak about a Nirguna Brahman.

4.2 Life and influences of Ramanuja

Ramanuja was born in Sriperumbudur in the year 1017 CE. He lost his father while at a young age. According to Prasad (2011:30), Ramanuja was a maternal nephew of one of Yamuna's disciples named Mahapurna. Through another sister, Mahapurna had yet another nephew named Govinda. Both Ramanuja and Govinda became disciples of Yadava Praksa, a reputed scholar of Advaita Vedanta. Ramanuja then married and moved in Kancipuram, where his *guru* Yadava Praksa lived.

According to Arrington (2003:261), "Ramanuja was initiated into the Vedanta order by his uncle Mahapurna, at Madhurantaka.Ramanuja returned to Conjeervaram and continued his devotions to God." Radhakrishnan (1927:665-666) suggests that Ramanuja had a course in the Vedanta under Yadava Prakasa of Conjeevaram, after receiving the general training given to boys of his class.

Ramanuja, nevertheless could not support Yadava Praksa's interpretations of Sankara's understandings of Brahman. This will be discussed further in 4.2.1.1 Alavandar, who was also the famous head of the mutt at Srirangamwas impressed by Ramanuja's learning.

Ramanuja went on to meet a prestigious Vedanta scholar Yamunacharya of the 11[th]century, however, according to Young (1996:286), Sri *Vaishnava* tradition holds that the Yamunacarya died before the meeting. Some writings on the lives of saints suggest that the corpse of Yamunacharya miraculously rose and named Ramanuja as the new leader of Sri *Vaishnava* which was previously led by Yamunacarya. One of the writings states that after leaving Yadava Prakasa, Ramanuja was initiated into Sri *Vaishnavism* by Periya Nambi, who was another Vedanta scholar.

Prasad (2011:32) disagrees with Young (1996:286) by stating that after Yadava Prakasa discontinued Ramanuja's lessons, Yamunacarya would visit Kancipuram and come to know of Ramanuja. He would eventually recognise Ramanuja as a promising visionary.

Radhakrishnan (1927:666-667) says that Ramanuja held a deeply religious view which reveals God to man through creation, through the prophets and through the incarnations. His study of the *Alvars* and his training by the *Acaryas* helped him develop elements which otherwise would have remained dominant in the *Upanishads* and the *BrahmaSutra.* He did not for a moment feel that he was submitting a system of his own, but was expanding the wisdom of the wise of all time.

4.2.1 Influences of Ramanuja's life and those who were influenced

Ramanuja was deeply influenced by the bhakti oriented sentiments of the Alvars as mediated by his teachers. Two major people that influenced Ramanuja's life was Yadava Praksa and Yamunacarya. The influence of these two philosophers and the Alvars on Ramanuja's life as well as Ramanuja's followers will be summarised as follows.

4.2.1.1 Yadava Praksa (Ramanuja's *guru*)

According to Sr Vaisnava traditions, he was a renowned scholar and students came from all over to be his disciples at his school at Kanchipuram. He is known to be a follower of Sankara.

Vagarwal (2001) lists the following works that can be ascribed to him:

1. Commentary on the *Brahmasutras*: Ramanuja refutes this at several places.

2. Commentary on the *BhagavadGita*.

3. *Vaijayantikosa*.

4. *Yatidharmasamuccaya*.

5. Commentary on *Pingala'sChhandaSutras*.

6. *Taittiriya*.

Vagarwal (2001) states that " According to Yadava Praksa, Brahman is of the nature of pure Universal Being, endowed with three distinct powers as consciousness, matter and God. Through these three powers, it passes through the various phenomenal changes which are held up in it and at the same time, are one with it, just as the one ocean appears in diverse forms as foam, billows and waves."

Although Yadava Praksa did not influence Ramanuja's thought, he did however, influence Ramanuja's course of life and philosophy by explaining that Sankara's interpretation that Brahman is the Real, the Knowledge and the Infinite is incorrect. This led Ramanuja to object to this and contended that the Supreme God (*Bhagavan*) should be understood to possess awareness, infiniteness for his divine qualities and realness.

After a dispute between Yadava Praksa and Ramanuja, he stepped down as Ramanuja's guru. The dispute happened when Yadava Praksa was running a school in Kanchipuram and Ramanuja disagreed over a meaning of a line of the *Upanishads*. This line reads "*kapyasam pundarika mevan-akshin*." Seshadri (1996:298) states that "Yadava Praksa interpreted as follows: The eyes (of the Brahman) were as red as the posterior of a monkey."

Due to this interpretation, Ramanuja proved through his exegesis that this line means that the Brahman had eyes that resembled a lotus blossoming as the sun rose.

Ramanuja disagreed again on a line in the *Taittreya Upanishad*. According to Seshadri (1996:294), this line reads "*satyam, gnanam, anantham Brahma*" which is translated into truth, knowledge, eternity. According to the Advaita line of Sankara, Yadava Praksa identified these three qualities as God himself. Ramanuja agreed that these were the necessary qualities of God, however not God himself.

Ramanuja settled down at *Srirangam* and acquired full knowledge of the *Tirurvaymoyi*. Ramanuja wrote *Veddantasara*, *Vedarthasamgraha* and *Vedantadipa*, and wrote his great commentaries on the *Brahmasutra* and the *Bhagavadagita* with the help of his disciple *Kurattalvar*, who knew by heart the *Bodhayanavrtti*.

Ramanuja toured around South India, restored many *Vasinava* temples and converted large numbers to *Vaisnavism*. Radhakrishnan (1927:666) states that "the teachings and lessons he learned among the *Vaisnavas* gave their approval to Ramanuja's exposition of the *Brahmasutra* and it became the commentary for the *Aisnavas*."

4.2.1.2 Yamunacarya

As discussed in 4.2 Yamunacarya recognises Ramanuja as a promising visionary. Prasad (2011:32) suggests that Yamunacarya heard about the disagreement between Ramanuja and Yadava Praksa and therefore developed a desire to groom Ramanuja into his successor. This disagreement was when Yadava Praksa had certain scriptural text interpretations that Ramanauja could not agree with.

According to Prasad (2011:32), after hearing that Yamunacarya was on his last breath, Ramanuja noted that three fingers on Yamunacarya's corpse were pointed unusually straight. Ramanuja came to the conclusion that these three fingers must indicate the three unfulfilled desires of Yamunacarya's life.

Prasad (2011:32-33) provides these three desires as follows:

* To propagate the idea of intense devotion and self-surrender (*prapatti*) as a legitimate means to attain God, as taught by the *Alvars*.

- To write a commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* of Badarayana from the standpoint of Vaisnavism.

- To write several books promoting the Vasinava cult.

Without hesitation, Ramanuja set out to fulfil these desires and according to Prasad (2011:33), Yamunacarya's fingers returned to their normal position after these desires were fulfilled. Again these desires that Ramanuja fulfilled did not influence his philosophy in a certain manner but did however influence his life.

4.2.1.3 The Alvars

According to Masih (1988:412), Ramanuja was not only influenced by *prasthana traya* – the three points of departure (Brahma Sutras, Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads), but also by the Vaisnava portions of the Mahabharata, *VishnuPurana*, the *BhagavataPurana* and the Hymns of the Alvars.

These hymns had an appeal towards everyone because most of them are simple and do not need such extensive interpreting. In order to make it more accessible they were written in the language Tamil. This was all necessary because the Alvars insisted the personal experience of being saved from the miseries of endless rebirths.

Nathamuni who died in 920 A.D collected the hymns of the Alvars. These hymns were written for music that was used regularly for Vaisnava worship. Nathamuni's grandson, Yamuna, combined the religious passionate feeling of the Alvars with the philosophy contained in the *prasthana traya*.

After Ramanuja succeeded Yamunacarya he set out to carry on the mission of Yamuna to its completion. There is no doubt that Ramanuja included in his theism the place of religious devotion in his system of thought.

Masih (1988:412-413) states that "the Alvars were essentially religious mystics and vaisnava devotees. Apart from the hymns, they have not presented any separate work of philosophy. But certainly some sort of Vaisnava philosophy lay behind their devotional hymns."

Ramanuja was there left to take over and articulate the theistic philosophy of the Alvars and the *Upanishads* doctrine of the Absolute reality combined. Ramanuja's

vishishtadvaitism did have difficulties in attempting this reconciliation.

Masih (1988:413) suggests that the Alvars appear to have emerged in the same timeline as Sankara, and have protested against the advaitic interpretations of the *Upanishads*, the teachings of Jains and Buddhism.

For the Alvars, Vishnu is given credit by showing grace and virtue to those of which he protects and preserves the world. This point has been fully taken over by Ramanuja. Masih states that:

> "The Philosophy, implicit in much of the work of the Alvars, and explicit in Ramanuja, maintains the personal existence of the Supreme Being, and emphasizes his love and pity for the sinful beings who adore him."

4.2.1.4 The followers of Ramanuja

The two followers that will be examined are Sudarsana Suri; and Venkatanatha. Prasad (2011:17-18) summarises the two followers as follows.

The first follower is Sudarsana Suri, who was one of Ramanuja's prominent disciples. Sudarsana Suri wrote explanatory comments for the *Sri-Bhasya* and the *Vedartha-Samgraha* of Ramanuja.

The second follower of Ramanuja is Venkatanatha, who is quite well known as Vedanta Desika. He was the most outstanding student after Ramanuja. He improved the Vishistadvaita system to the disappointment of many critics. This follower of Ramanuja disagreed with the arguments that were put forward by Sankara and his followers.

According to Prasad (2011:18), the way in which Venkatanatha improved the Vishishtadvaita was by revising and cleansing the Vishishtadvaita of all the additions that had totalled up over the years. He also corrected all its logical inconsistencies.

Prasad (2011:18) states that "Venkatanatha's works are numerous. His elaborations upon Ramanuja's commentaries are as follows:"

- The incomplete gloss on the *Sri-Bhasya.*

- Named the *Tattva-Tika Tatparya Candrika* (Moonlight of the Essential Meaning.)

- The *Nyaya-Siddhanjanam* (Unfolding the Attainment of Reason).

- The *Tattvamukta-Kalapam* (A Collection of Pearls of Basic Principles).

Venkatanatha also wrote his own commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita. According to Deusen (1999:160) the initial followers of Ramanuja eventually formed the *Shrivaisnava*, named after Shri the consort of Vishnu. Tradition has it that Shri was Vishnu's first student. Similarly, the founders of *Shrivaisnava* were Ramanuja's initial students.

4.2.2 Works of Ramanuja

According to Radhakirshnan (1927:666), Ramanuja wrote *Veddantasara*, *Vedarthasamgraha* and *Vedantadipa*, and wrote his great commentaries on the Brahma sutra and the *Bhagavadagita*w with the help of his disciple *Kurattalvar*, who knew by heart the *Bodhayanavrtti*.

4.3 Vishishtadvaita according to Ramanuja

In 4.1 Vishishtadvaita was explained as qualified no-dualism. Qualified non-dualism explains that Brahman is independent, whereas the souls and matter are dependent. Etter (2006:62) states that "Vishishtadvaita was developed primarily by the philosopher Ramanuja." The philosophy of Vishishtadvaita Vedanta implies the importance of Supreme Being with essential qualities or attributes.

According to Sharma (1994:374), Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita shares the theistic devotional ideas with Madhva's Dvaita. Both schools imply that human souls (*Jiva*) and Brahman (as Vishnu) are different.

Ramanuja disagrees with Sankara about how illusion is seen and to what point does this "illusion" start. This sense of ignorance is perpetuated and created by our illusory sense of subject and object perception. Baba (1972:300) states that "if we take into consideration the Vishishtadvaita, it postulates *Chit* and *Achit* in the phenomenal world and accepts the phenomena of appearance and illusion. It states that both are true and valid. Vishishtadvaita has also established the oneness of *jagat*, which is *Jada* or still and of *Jiva,* which is full-on consciousness".

Etter (2006:63) suggests that Ramanuja agreed with Sankara in one sense that the universe was universally non-dualistic, however he did not agree that the sense of self is in itself was an illusion. It is not that the sense of self is an illusion, but merely the world we see is perceived through illusory ideas of reality.

Vishishtadvaita is not only a philosophy but a philosophy of religion as it gives synthetic view of the spiritual experience of God. According to Singh (1991:328) "Sankara is an advocate of ultimate identity between finite souls and the infinite Brahman. Madhva and Nimbarka are the advocates of relation of difference and identity indifference". Ramanuja is convinced of the ultimate difference between Jiva and Brahman.

Sullivan (2001:239) confirms that "Ramanuja's theories assert that there exists a distinction and plurality between Atman and Brahman; while he also affirmed that the individual soul has the potential to realise identity with the Brahman and the unity of all souls".

4.3.1 Brahman and Atman

Masih (1988:466) states that "the soul body formula has been taken to be the kingpin of the whole system of Ramanuja. Through this formula. Ramanuja is a very subtle way tries to interpret identity and neti-texts, the unitivness of Brahman, His differenced unity (or, qualified reality) and above all his doctrine of *bhakti* and *prapatti*. Ramanuja is quite conscious of the importance of this formula.

> "The interpretation of the various types of texts must be such that they are not made to contradict among themselves in their contents; and not a single text should be so interpreted as to be divested of its primary and fundamental significance. "

(Ved. Sang, pada 115)

Identity texts can be seen as valid if they are not interpreted as essential substance of identity.

> "If that identity is interpreted in terms of the relation of body and soul, between the individual self and the supreme Spirit, there is absolutely no error."

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Ramanuja again states some texts that hold onto this Soul-body formula.

"identify Brahman and the world in the manner of co-ordinate predication, which bears in this connection direct and primary meaning."

"there is nothing contradictory in his being one with the universe in the sense of having it as his body."

The purpose of Ramanuja's philosophy was religious. *Saguna* Brahman or qualified Brahman is the object of religious worship. The Soul-body formula does not only teach that Brahman is not only the essential nature of an individual soul but it is also qualified.

However according to Masih (1988:468), the Soul-body formula from a viewpoint of religious philosophy explains the pantheistic passages of the Gita and *Upanishads* successfully. Therefore, the Soul-body formula tries to reconcile the attributes of God, and therefore, the Soul-body formula remains the fundamental key =-concept of Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita.

To Ramanuja, Brahman was eternal, pure bliss (*ananda*) and pure consciousness (*chit)*. Brahman is an eternal oneness that is the source of all creation and is both actively involved in its existence and omnipresent in its design. Ramanuja argues against the idea that Brahman was an empty oneness and also impersonal. He argues against the idea that ultimate truth was devoid of any type of essence or attribute.

Etter (2006:62) suggests that "to Ramanuja, Brahman was ultimate Reality, but this ultimate Reality was absolute being' (*sat*) and that this being-ness was omnipresent and all-encompassing."

According to Singh (1991:67), there are four important points to be noted: as Ramanuja's explanation of God.

- God is the Absolute reality possessed of two integral parts which are; matter and

spirits.

- The Absolute is one without a second as nothing exists independent of Him.
- All the finite spirits and material objects exist in Him.
- Therefore Ramanuja is an advocate of ultimate unity in diversity.

To Ramanuja, God is both the immanent ground of the world and the transcendent. God is a person and not a collection of other people; therefore he cannot be confused with the objects of their thought and thinking individuals. Radhakrishnan (1927:683-685) puts it perfectly by saying that "Ramanuja's conception of God is not that of a merely last term in an ascending series of real reflective self-consciousness individuals, nor that of a merely transcendental absolute existing above and beyond the finite universe."

While the conscious and the unconscious objects of the universe exist together with God, they yet derive their existence from him and are sustained through him. The pluralistic universe is real in precisely the same sense as God is real. The universe however, depends on God as its ground. God is not to be regarded as simply the immanent ground, for then the "many" will have to be conceived as wholly absorbed into the undifferentiated oneness of God or God will have to be conceived as wholly differentiated into the "many".

According to Rodrigues (2006:252), Atmans or Jivas are not identical with Brahman, but aspects of Brahman, are dependent on God. The Atman or soul can be seen as a conscious substance and forms part of the body of God.

Masih (1988:469), states that "it is difficult as to say what constitutes the difference between the different atmans in their state of release, for they have all one essential quality only, namely, knowledge."

> "The atmans of all creatures are equal when their proper form is
> separated from *prakrti,* for all of them have one and the same
> form, Knowledge;...."   (G.B.6.29)

Ramanuja was aware of the difficulty that appeared from this which was how can atmans be then distinguished if they all have one essential quality of knowledge. Ramanuja expresses this awareness in the following:

"Since thus the plurality of the eternal individual selves rests on good authority, those who have an insight into the true nature of selves will discern without difficulty different characteristics distinguishing the individual selves, although all selves are alike insofar as having intelligence for their essential nature".

(SBH.2.3, 43, p.562)

To overcome this difficulty Ahirbudhnya Sanhita suggests that the liberated souls differ in terms of their devotional inclinations.

Therefore, Ramanuja ascribes two kinds of souls: positive and differentiative. The positive kind can be ascribed as positive qualities, which some are common to both souls and God. Singh (1991:49) states that "like God, a soul is a *Pratyaka* or internal principle and *chetna* or conscious. The soul is self-luminous substance."

The differentiative kind is when a soul is differentiated from all possible things with which it may be identified. According to Singh (1991:49) "it is different from its body, sense-organs, mind, vital breathes and even cognition."

Mahadevan (1965:116) suggests that the soul is of the essence of spirit. It is and has knowledge. The soul as knowledge does not change, but as having knowledge it changes. Knowledge characterises both souls and God.

Etter (2006:63) says that "Ramanuja believed that through obtaining knowledge of God's divine essence we too would regain our knowledge of this being-ness and through our Atman regain "knowledge of self" and union with universal being-ness. The reason we do not have everyday knowledge and awareness of universal being-ness is ignorance"

4.3.2 Understanding knowledge according to Ramanuja

The valid sources of knowledge that Ramanuja accepts is perception, inference and scripture, and is indifferent about the rest. Radhakrishnan (1927:672) states that "it is impossible to capture objects that are entirely lacking all the elements of distinction."

Carman (1974:31) says that "*Pramana* refers to the correct knowledge, arrived at by thorough reasoning, of any object. *Pramana* forms one part of a trio(*triputi*)." This trio

is:

- the subject; the knower of the knowledge (*Pramatir*)
- the cause or the means of the knowledge (*Pramana*)
- the object of knowledge (*Prameya*)

According to Carman (1974:31) "In Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, only the following three *pramanas* are accepted as a valid means of knowledge":

- *Pratyaksa* — the knowledge gained by means of perception. Perception refers to knowledge obtained by cognition of external objects based on sensory perception. In modern-day usage, this will also include knowledge obtained by means of observation through scientific instruments since they are an extension of perception.
- *Anumana* — the knowledge gained by means of inference. Inference refers to knowledge obtained by deductive reasoning and analysis.
- *Shabada*— the knowledge gained by means of *shruti*. *Shruti* refers to knowledge gained from scriptures - primarily the *Upanishads*, the *BrahmaSutras* and the *BhagavadGita*

For Ramanuja the individuals alone are real. There is no such thing as a class essence subsisting in them, though there is a resemblance among the individuals, such as the arrangements of parts. We frame the concept from the fact of resemblance. According to Radhakrishnan (1927:673) "It is the resemblance that is the basis of the use of the same word. Vedanta *Desika* argues that difference in itself is no way relative to the fact which it distinguishes. Accordingly, perception can give us knowledge of fact as well as its distinction."

According to Radhakrishnan (1927:673-674), there are four other sources of knowledge that Ramanuja states. These four are Yogic perception, *Smrti*, Inference and Scripture.

4.3.2.1 Yogic perception

Yogic perception is not admitted as an independent source of knowledge by the followers of Ramanuja. Each sense has its particular sphere of objects and, even when well trained, cannot grasp objects belonging to other senses. The ear cannot see nor do the eyes hear. If the Yogic perception operates through the senses, then it is not different from sense-perception; if it is independent of all experience, then it is invalid.

4.3.2.2 Smrti

Smrti or remembrance is regarded as valid and given a separate place. We cannot bring it under perception simply because all remembered knowledge assumes perception; for in that case even inference, which presupposes perceptual knowledge, will have to be brought under perception.

4.3.2.3 Inference

Inference is knowledge derived from a general principle. As a matter of fact, a single instance suggests the general principle. A number of instances help us in removing our doubts. By means of *tarka* or indirect proof, and the use of both positive and negative instances, we eliminate the non-essentials and establish the general rule.

4.3.2.4 Scripture

Ramanuja accepts the authority of scripture. The highest reality, which is the sole cause of the world, is not the object of the other means of knowledge but is known only through the *sastras*.

After identifying how Ramanuja understands knowledge it may be possible to distinguish how Ramanuja understands *Maya.* By obtaining the correct knowledge it may be possible to remove the veil of illusion.

4.4 *Maya* as understood by Ramanuja

Ramanuja's philosophy is qualified non-dualism. It is non-dualistic because it upholds that there is only one Absolute Reality and that is Brahman. Although, it is qualified because, according to Ramanuja, it is meaningless to speak, comprehend or relate to about a Nirguna Brahman. Therefore *Maya* is real, and Brahman is Saguna, or possessing qualities.

Singh (1991:155-156) states that,

"*Maya*, according to Ramanuja, is the real power of God by which He creates the wonderful world. It stands for God's power of creating wonderful objects (*VichitrarthasargakariSakti*). It also stands for *Prakrti* to signify her wonderful creativity. It is real and characterises the Brahman, making it determinate. It is different from *Avidya* or ignorance by which an individual identifies him wrongly with the evolutes of *Prakrti*-body, senses, mind etc. He does not accept that *Maya* and *Avidya* are identical (Sankara's notion)."

According to Arrington (2003:263-264) "Ramanuja rejects the notion that the world is an illusory perception. All knowledge is genuine knowledge, even though mistakes occur in the act of cognisance. So he is trying to reassert the power of knowledge. Both mistaken identity and empirically valid perception are related to the objectively real and as such could be called valid perceptions."

Dasgupta (1975:179) agrees with Arrington by saying that Ramanuja explains that all illusion can be described as perception. This is when a thing appears to be different from what it is. In all illusions, for example, the conch shell example that was used in chapter 3, appears in another form such as silver. In all theories of illusions it must be admitted that in all illusions one thing appears in the manner of another.

According to Seshadri (2001:295), Ramanuja asserts that the material world is not illusory or otherwise known as *Maya*, as Sankara argued, but rather real. Ramanuja does not accept the theory of unqualified monism, the concepts of *Avidya*, and identity of cause and effect.

A passage from Shelly's stanza in Adonais reads:

> "Lifelike the dome of many coloured glass
> stains the white radiance of Eternity"

This passage supports the philosophy of Ramanuja which dictates only a reflection and not the reflection on the coloured dome is the white brilliance.

Ramanuja has three primary and ultimate certainties known to philosophy. According to Shastri (1911:118) these three primary and ultimate certainties are:

1. God: Universal Soul, personal, and intelligent.

2. Soul: Individual, intelligent.

3. Matter: Non-intelligent.

These three primary and ultimate certainties are distinct from the other. Ramanuja's supplies charges towards the doctrine of *Maya.* These charges will be discussed in 6.6.

According to Shastri (1911:134-135), the school of *Vallabha* has not entered into conflict with the theory of *Maya*, but it pointed out the undefendable nature of Ramanuja's standpoint. Ramanuja, as we have seen, only qualified the original Advaita; but *Vallabha* thought of purifying it together. It could not be held that Brahman, which is all *cit*, should be in inseparable union with *acit*. This would have been a contradiction in terms and would have soiled the doctrine of the *Upanishads*. Brahman was therefore supposed to become by its will.

Shastri (1911:134-135) says that "now, this tendency to question the validity of Ramanuja's standpoint went so far as to keep the school of *Vallabha* away from discussing the theory of *Maya*. While Ramanuja made it a point to use all means at his disposal to bring the doctrine of *Maya* into discredit, *Vallabha* stood up to criticise Ramanuja".

This is why we do not find any accusations by *Vallabha* against "*Maya*". Of course, this does not mean that he supported the theory, but simply that he did not interfere with the wrong or right of the question, and was pleased to establish his own views in reference to a criticism of Ramanuja's.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address Ramanuja and his philosophy of *Maya* as well as the theme of Brahman and Atman and the relation with the concept of *Maya.* His life and influences showed the disagreement between his *guru* and the relationship with Yamunacarya. This relationship can be identified as important, because, Ramanuja dedicated a part of his life to fulfil the three desires after the death of Yamunacarya.

The school of philosophy which was covered in this chapter was the Vishishtadvaita Vedanta School. Unlike Sankara, Ramanuja primarily developed the school. The philosophy that was entrenched in the Vishishtadvaita Vedanta School differed from

Sankara and was known as qualified non-dualism.

The way in which Brahman and Atman are understood was addressed as well as the central theme of how *Maya* is understood by Ramanuja. The following chapter is dedicated to the third philosopher, Madhva, and his philosophy of *Maya.*

Chapter 5

Madvha

"God Vishnu has complete power over souls and matter and that Vishnu saves souls entirely by his grace which is granted to those who live pure and moral lives. Evil souls are predestined to eternal damnation and, should, of mediocre quality will transmigrate eternally."

Madvhacharya

5.1 Introduction

Madhva was a Hindu philosopher and the main supporter of the Dvaita school of Vedanta. Madhva called his philosophy *Tatvavada* which means arguments from a realist viewpoint.

Like Sankara and Ramanuja, Madhva was also an advocate but for the school of Dvaita. The philosophy he espoused was entrenched in the idea of dualism, known as Dvaita Vedanta. Dvaita Vedanta suggests that there are three types of entities that exist: Brahman; souls; and matter. Souls and matter are dependent on Brahman in order to exist, while Brahman is independent. This chapter will address the life and times of Madhva and his philosophies and in the theme of this dissertation will focus on his interpretation of *Maya.*

5.2 Life and influences of Madhva

Madhva was born in the year 1238 at *Pajaka-Ksetra*, which is south-west of the *SrngeriMatha* which is a leading centre founded by Sankara. Prasad (2011:41) suggests that this could have influenced him, as the teachings of Sankara might have been very prominent around that area. His father was *MahagehaBhatta*. He received his scriptural education under Acyuta Preksa, who also would initiate him into *samnyasa.* Acyuta Preksa was seen as Madhva's guru and will be further discussed 5.2.1.1.

Already as a teenager, Madhva was studying Hindu philosophy and started writing

commentaries. Ramanuja and Sankara also started at a young age and it seems to be a common denominator between these three philosophers. Sharma (1962:15) states that "Madhva studied the classics of Hindu philosophy, particularly the Principal *Upanishads*, the *BhagavadGita* and the *BrahmaSutras*. He commented on these and is credited with thirty-seven works in Sanskrit. His writing style was of extreme brevity and condensed expression."

Just like Ramanuja. Madhva also debated against a few scholars and defeated them. After defeating scholars he also travelled widely similar to Ramanuja's travels. The reason why he travelled so extensively was that he enjoyed debating against Advaitic scholars. Prasad (2011:41) agrees here by stating that "the Madhva *Vijayam* claims it was after this incident that he travelled south with Acyuta Preksa to reach a small town called *Vishnumangalam*. From there he proceeded further south to reach *Anantapurma*, where he then debated and defeated some Advaitic scholars from the *SrngeriMatha*. "

He then visited *Dhanuskoti* and *Ramesvaram* temples to worship Vishnu. Afterwards, he returned to *Udupi*. By the time Madhva returned he had already become the recognised guru of a new brand of Vedanta. He would then embark on another travel but this time to the north where he would cross the mighty Ganges to visit *Haridwar* and *Badrinath*. According to Prasad (2011:41-42) it was in *Badrinath* that he reputedly had a vision of *Vyasa* who instructed him to compose a new commentary on the Brahma *Sutras*.

Prasad (2011:42) carries on by saying that while on his way back to *Udupi*, Madhva would meet and defeat all challenging Advaitins in debate, who then would become his followers. On the banks of the Godavari River, Madhva would meet and defeat the most prominent of these opponents, Govinda Battha. Madhva was such a great debater that afterwards they became his followers and agreed to his ways and views. Even his own teacher or guru became his disciple.

Madhva was a critic of Sankara's Advaita and Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita Vedanta teachings. He toured India several times, visiting places such as Bengal, Varanasi, Dwarka, Goa and Kanyakumari, engaging in philosophical debates and visiting Hindu centres of learning. According to Sharma (1962:17-18) "Madhva established the Krishna Mutt at *Upupi* with a *murti* secured from *DwarkaGujarat* in 1285 CE."

His initial studies in Vedanta followed the Sankara school of thought. However, as he progressed, he would method his own views that would engender a school of thought contrary to the views of Sankara. According to Prasad (2011:41), Madhva would eventually denounce the arguments of 21 previous commentators of the *BrahmaSutras* in his own commentary.

The eleventh and thirteenth chapters of the Madhva *Vijayam* reveal that the head of *SrngeriMatha* found Madhva's teachings detestable and would attempt to hinder their circulation. He even stole Madhva's prized collection of books, which were later recovered through the intervention of *Jayasimha*, King of *Vishnumangalam*. However, Madhva's philosophy began to be accepted. In his later years, Madhva returned to the north. Prasad (2011:42) suggests that Madhva probably passed away by 1317 CE, but his followers maintain that he lives on in the presence of *Vyasa*.

The fact that *Matha* stole Madhva's prized collection of books shows how Madhva was getting under peoples skin. When this happens it proves that he was changing the way Hindu philosophy was seen but proving them wrong at the same time. Only later was his philosophy accepted and his followers maintain this philosophy even after his death.

5.2.1 Influencers of Madhva's thought and those who were influenced

One person who may have influenced Madhva's thought and philosophy was his *guru* Acytua Preksa. This philosopher, as well as the followers, will be summarised as follows to understand how Madhva was influenced and how he influenced others.

5.2.1.1 Acyuta Preksa (Madhva's *guru*)

Acyuta Preksa was the person who initiated Madhva. It can be assumed that Acyuta had an important role and influence over Madhva and there have been a few arguments whether or not he actually became an Advaitin.

According to an excerpt from the Kannada book: *Madhva Mathagala sasanagalu*, "it is known that Sri Purushothamatirha, the teacher of Sri Madhwacharya belonged to the Advaita school and taught the same to his pupils. It is also known that he had not accepted the dwaita system of philosophy as propounded by his celebrated pupil Sri Madhwacharya until very late in his late. In this edict of 1281 A.D., Sri Naraharitirtha

acknowledges Sri Purushothamatirtha, probably still a follower of monism as the teacher and mentor of Sri Madhwacharya. It goes to the credit of both Naraharitirtha and Sri Madhwacharya that Sri Purushothamatirtha, is acknowledged as the teacher although they differed in their philosophical inclinations.

From this excerpt we can determine that:

- Acyuta Preksa was an Advaitin, initiated into it by an Acharya who was also an Advaitin.

- Acyuta Preksa was a sannyasin, with the name Purushottma Tirtha.

- Madhva took him as his Sanntasa Guru.

- Acyuta Preksa was not convinced that of Advaita as he was told by his Guru that Advaita is not a tenable system and the goal of Advaita *anubhava* and liberation is impossible.

- Acyuta Preksa longed to be shown the right path and prayed to the Lord.

- Acyuta Preksa's association with Madhva resulted in his conversion to Dvaita.

5.2.1.2 The followers of Madhva

According to Prasad (2011:19)"the first follower of Madvha is Aksobhya Tirtha who was a direct disciple of Madhva. Aksobhya Tirtha debated the Advaitin Vidyaranya on the meaning of that thou art (*tat-tvam-asi*), which is one of the great dictum of the *Upanishads* (maha-vakyas)." In the debate, the Visistadvaitin Vedanta *Desika* was moderator. *Vidyaranya* was defeated. However, this is seen as a story and can possibly not be true.

The second follower is Jaya Tirtha who was seen as the system's most outstanding disciple after Madhva, was Aksobhya Tirtha's disciple. Prasad (2011:19-20) says that Jaya Tirtha wrote commentaries upon Madhva's most important works. Jaya Tirtha wrote the important commentary on Madhva's *Anu-Vyakhyana* titled the *Nyaya-Sudha*. Furthermore, he wrote two original works of his own. One, named the *PramanaPadddhati*, elucidates the epistemology of the *Tattva-Vada* system. The second original work, *Vadavali*, clarifies the essential philosophy of the *Tattva*-Vada system.

The third follower of the Madhva School was Vyasaraya, who is credited with nine books. According to Prasad (2011:20), his two most significant works are the *Nyayamrtam* and the *TatparyaCandrika*. *Vyasaraya* was the most imaginative, original thinker of the Madhva school. These three followers are just a few of the many that followed Madhva and contributed to Hindu philosophy.

5.2.2 Works of Madhva

Rao (2002:84) states that "Madhva composed works to amplify the teachings of the *Prashthanas*. His work on the *SutraPrashthana* seeks to understand the *BrahmaSutras*." There are 37 works attributed to Madhva, collectively called the *Sarvamula*. His greatest work is considered to be the *Anu-vyakhyana*, a philosophical supplement to his *bhasya* on the *BrahmaSutras* composed with a poetic structure. According to Sharma (1962:17). In some of his works, he proclaimed himself to be an avatar of *Vayu*, the son of god Vishnu.

Sharma (1962:18) states,

> "thirty-seven Dvaita texts are attributed to Madhva. Of these, thirteen are *bhasya* on earliest Principal *Upanishads*, *bhasya* on the foundational text of Vedanta school of Hinduism *BrahmaSutras* another *Gita-bhasya* on *BhagavadGita*, a commentary on forty hymns of the *RigVeda*, a review of the Mahabharata in poetic style, a commentary called *Bhagavata-tatparya-nirnaya* on *BhagavadPurana*, plus *stotras*, poems and texts on *bhakti* of Vishnu and his avatars. The *Anu-Vyakhyana*, a supplement to *Madhvacharya's* commentary on Brahma *Sutras*, is his masterpiece."

Prasad (2011:19) on the other hand states that,

> "there are thirty works of Madhva that have been discovered and ascribed to him. In a single volume, he presented his epistemology, methodology, and how he understood the nature of the ultimate truth in his ten chapters which are known as *DasaPrakaranas*. He also wrote commentaries for the Brahma *Sutras* as stated above, the *Upanishads*, and the *BhagavadGita*. His other major works include commentaries on the first three chapters of both *RigVeda* and the work entitled: The Essence of Mahabharata. However, his most

outstanding contribution is the Further Comments , a versified, philosophical restatement of the *BrahmaSutras*."

Both Prasad and Sharma agree that Madhva wrote more than thirty works. Other than the commentaries on the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the *Sutras* etc., in which he dealt with the problems of his metaphysics, Madhva wrote a few *Stotras* and other works of various nature, dealing with rituals, religious worship etc. According to Sharma (1981:187-188) these small works reflect his deeply religious spirit. The four different Stotras that Madhva wrote are:

- Yamaka-Bharata

  This is a short *Yamakakavya* in 8 verses, in various metres, dealing with the exploits of *Krsna* and his help to the *Pandavas*. It may be pronounced to be a successful work from the point of view of skill in handling a variety of metres and the use of rhymes(*yamakas*), alliteration (prasa, *anuprasa*) etc.

- Narasimha-Nakha Stuti

  This is a short eulogy of the nails of God *Nrsimha*, in two *Sragdhara* verses. There are found prefixed to the *Vayustuti* of *TrivikramaPanditacarya*, one of Madhva's favourite disciples. According to tradition, Madhva composed these two verses and had them prefixed to his disciple's *Vayustuti*, praising Madhva in his three "incarnations" as he did not approve of the disciple's praising him exclusively.

- Dvadasa Stotra

  This *Stotra*, in twelve short *adhyayas*, is believed to have been composed by Madhva, at the time of his acquisition of the image of Sri *Krsna*, which he installed in his Mutt at *Udipi*. There is also another tradition about the origin of this *Stotra*. There are 126 verses here, in a variety of metres, handled with distinct musical effect and impressiveness.

- Krsnamrtamaharnava

  This is a collection of 242 verses, including five of a benedictory nature in praise of *Vishnu*, from various sources. It is mostly in *Anustubh*, but other metres also are found. The verses include those attributed to Siva, *Narada*, *Pulastya*, *Dharma*, Brahman, *Markandeya*, *Marici*, *Atri*, *Angiras*, *Pulaha*, *Atreya*, *Kausika*, *Agastya*, *Suta*, *Vyasa* and *Rukmangada*.

According to Sharma (1962:18) "while being a profusely productive writer, Madhva

restricted the access to and distribution of his works to outsiders who were not part of Dvaita School".

5.3 Dvaita according to Madvha

The Dvaita School was founded by Madhva and according to Sharma (1962:18) "it influenced the *Bhakti* movement *a*nd the *Vaishnavism*, in medieval India." It has been one of the three influential Vedanta philosophies, along with Advaita Vedanta and Vishishtadvaita Vedanta. Madhva's historical influence in Hinduism.

Dvaita Vedanta is a sub-school in the Vedanta tradition of Hindu philosophy. The Dvaita Vedanta School believes that God and the individual souls exist as independent realities, and these are distinct. Dvaita is dualist whereas Advaita and Vishishtadvaita are non-dualist.

According to Fowler (2002:238-243) "the Dvaita school differentiates with the other two major sub-schools of Vedanta, the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara which posits non-dualism that ultimate reality, Brahman, and human soul are identical and all reality is interconnected oneness, and Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja which posits qualified non-dualism that ultimate reality, Brahman, and human soul are different but with the potential to be identical".

Sharma (1981:1) states that "the term Dvaita is commonly used to designate Sri Madhva's system". The opinion is gaining ground among a section of the followers of Madhva, that this term, though traditionally current for the system, is not really equal with or fully expressive of its true metaphysical ideology. Sharma suggests that the Sanskrit term Dvaita and its English equivalent Dualism have certain association of ideas with established schools of ancient and modern thought, which are not true of Madhva's philosophy and that, therefore the careless application of such names to designate his philosophy would be and has been, a source of many unfortunate misconceptions.

Dualism, as understood in Western philosophy, is a theory which admits two independent and substances that are not able to be simplified. In Indian philosophy, the *Samkhya* Dualism answers to this definition. However the Dualism of Madhva while declaring Reality as a whole regards only one of them.

Singh (1991:94-95) states that "Madhva is considered to be the champion of Dvaita

or unqualified dualism. According to him, there are two types of ultimate *Asvatantra* or dependent and *Svatantra* or independent. Lord *Vishnu* or *Purusottama* is the only independent reality." Madhva disagrees with Ramanuja and Sankara. He believes that God, souls and matter are separate entities but souls and matter are independent to God. Madhva believes in God, souls and matter as three absolutely real entities. God alone is independent while souls and matter are dependent on Him. God is the highest reality, the cause of creation and subsistence.

However, according to Singh (1991:95) "Madhva also views God as the only the efficient cause and not the material cause of the world. God is the abode of infinite good qualities, such as freedom, power, knowledge and bliss etc. Existence, knowledge and knowledge and bliss constitute His essence. He is free from all evils and impurities. He is the Lord of Karma. The individual souls are eternal, conscious and blissful, but subject to pains and imperfections. "

Singh (1991:95) explains how Madhva recognises souls and matter are controlled by God. "Madhva recognises the five-fold differences between individual souls and God, between souls and material substance, between material substance and *Isvara*, between soul and soul, between material objects themselves." These differences constitute the very nature of all things and on account of these only; things are distinguished from one another. For Madhva these differences have separate existence and constitute the unique nature of things.

5.3.1 Brahman and Atman

Madhva is a Vedantist. Therefore, like other Vedantists, he does not doubt the ultimate Reality of Brahman, and in this sense, he is not a stranger to monistic thinking.

According to Madhva, Brahman is the absolute reality which the *sruti* characterises as the Supreme (Sarvottamma). Madhva defines *Sarvottama* as the Supreme is known as the independent achiever because it does and makes others do without depending upon anything else. Brahman is *Sarvottama* because He alone is independent. He is the dwelling of all good qualities. Existence, knowledge and bliss constitute His essence. Singh (1991:64-65) states that "when the scriptures speak of Brahman as attributeless (*nirguna*), they only mean that He is untouched by the qualities of *Prakrti*." However, Brahman is only the efficient cause of the world. He is

the immanent controller of individual souls and matter alike.

Madhva is a strong believer that Brahman is the one and only Reality. Everything else is linked to Brahman. He is independent and therefore does not need anything to be where he is or who he is.

Madhva's teachings are built on the premise that there is a fundamental difference between individual soul, self(Atman) and the ultimate reality, God Vishnu (Brahman), these are two different unchanging realities, with individual soul dependent on Brahman, never identical. According to Sharma (1962:18), his school's theistic dualism teachings disagreed with the monist teachings of the other two most influential schools of Vedanta based on Advaita's non-dualism and Vishishtadvaita's qualified non-dualism. Liberation, asserted Madhva, is achievable only through the grace of God.

According to Madhva, the divine is identified as *Vishnu*, the preserver god of the Hindu Trinity, a highly personal creator god singular, perfected, and immutable. This God is invariable. Therefore, Madhva's notion of the divine can be classified as *Saguna* Brahman, or "Brahman with qualities." Sarma (2003:52) states that "this stands in direct contrast to Advaita Vedanta, which holds "*Nirguna* Brahman", to the highest spiritual ideal. Madhva claims that such descriptions are merely a reflection of the human inability to fully comprehend *Vishnu's* magnificence, and noted that such an ideal was inaccessible to religion as it is practiced upon the everyday non-philosophical level."

5.4 *Maya* as understood by Madhva

Madhva is another of those seminal thinkers who began a tradition. His basic insight is universally but radically simple: Difference is not only necessary but is unavoidable if one is going to think; and certainly, if one does not admit difference, then there is the great danger of committing blasphemy against the Supreme Uniqueness of God. Plott (1989:269) states that "when Madhva was being schooled by the disciples of Sankara at *Sringeri* he found their explanations of the concept of *Maya* ridiculously intolerable. Without at least admission of difference between *Maya* and Brahman, monism falls apart."

Sukdaven (2013:115) says that "Madhva does not hold an Advaitic tendency in his

worldview. He rather presents a strict dualist philosophy (two orders of reality). To him god, the world and souls are seen as eternally different from each other. He believes that Brahman is the creator (efficient cause) of the world and that he did not undergo any transformation in order to bring the world into existence. The material world is a manifestation of *Prakrti"*.

Therefore the difference which is experienced in the world is not an illusion but a reality. If *Maya* is expressed as an illusion, as is very often done, then it stands to reason that Madhva will reject the concept of *Maya*.

In many respects, Madhva's system is more like Sankara's than Ramanuja's since, according to Plott (1989:269-270), essentially what Madhva does is to make the *Sankarites* admit that their whole system is impossible to distinguish from the admission of the radical difference between *Maya* and Brahman, both of which are claimed by them to be indefinable. The basic method is relatively similar: wherever Sankara reads *Maya*, Madhva reads the difference. However this difference refers to which is real and not illusion to any other principle.

Plott (1989:270) states that "Difference is the key to all reality, whereas Advaita tries to claim that difference, being unreal, is only the whirlpool of unreality. The five differences (*pancabhedas)* are the skeleton of Madhva's very living system." These five differences are:

- God and soul
- Soul and matter
- Matter and matter
- Matter and God
- Soul and soul

Madhva's rejection of the Adaitin version of *Maya* comes primarily from his *Maya*vada-*Khandana*, which is short but incisively condensed. Plott (1989:271-272) says that Madhva argues that Sankara was after all a crypto Buddhist, having failed to give sufficient refutation of both *Vijnanavada* and *Sunyavada*. He also defends theism, with the radical difference supported by the charismatic texts as well as by experience. Madhva explains the texts that use the term *nirguna* as simply meaning free from all taint and imperfection rather than having no attributes at all.

In order to set forth the Madhva system Plott (1989:270-271) gives nine distinctions to clarify it:

1. *Vishnu* is the Supreme God mentioned in the scriptures. He is the prime import (*mahatatparya*) of them all. Madhva asserts that every word in the language primarily signifies *Vishnu* and refers only secondarily to other objects. This assumption greatly helps him in harmonising the import of the scriptures.

2. The external world is affirmed to be ultimately real (*satya*). It continues to exist at all times. The world process is beginningless and eternal (*anadi* and *nitya*).

3. The ultimate reality of the five-fold difference, namely the difference between God and soul), between soul and soul, between God and matter, between soul and matter, between matter and matter, is accepted.

4. All souls are dependent on God who alone is independent.

5. Among the souls there is gradation. There are three kinds of souls:

    5.1 Those that are fit for liberation (*muktiyogya-s*)

    5.2 Those that travel endlessly through the cycle of birth and rebirth (*nityasamsarin-s*)

    5.3 Those that are fit to be eternally in hell (*tamoyogya-s*)

6. Liberation is the realisation of the soul's innate bliss.

7. Devotion is the means to it. Devotion is that kind of attachment to the Lord which is based on a complete understanding of His supremacy, transcending the love for one's own self and possessions and remaining unshaken under all circumstances. Besides devotion, the Lord's desire to protect the devotee is also necessary for liberation.

8. There are three means of valid knowledge as we covered in 5.6 Sources of knowledge which is: perception, inference and verbal testimony.

9. The existence of God is known only by correct methods of reasoning.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address Madhva and his philosophy of *Maya* as well as the theme of Brahman and Atman and the relation with the concept of *Maya.* His life and influences showed although Acyuta Preksa was an Advaitin, Madhva converted him into a Dvaitin

The school of philosophy which was covered in this chapter was the Dvaita Vedanta

School. Like Ramanuja, Madhva founded the school of Dvaita. The philosophy that was entrenched in the Dvaita Vedanta School differed from Sankara, and Ramanuja and was known as dualism.

The way in which Brahman and Atman are understood was addressed as well as the central theme of how *Maya* is understood by Madhva. Madhva did not view *Maya* as an illusion but rather difference. The following chapter is set to achieve a central understanding between the *Upanishads,* Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

Chapter 6

Central understanding of *Maya*

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation covered the emergence of the *Upanishads* and its reference to *Maya*, Sankara and his philosophy of *Maya*, Ramanuja and his philosophy of *Maya,* and Madhva and his philosophy of *Maya.* This next chapter is set out to address a central understanding of *Maya.*

Although the *Upanishads*, Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva have different philosophies of *Maya,* the central theme of this dissertation is to determine whether or not there is a central understanding of *Maya.*

6.2 The general understanding of Maya

Maya is seen as a fundamental concept in Hindu philosophy. The translation for *Maya* is either illusion or magic. The three philosophers that have been discussed in chapters 3, 4, and 5 all have a different philosophy towards how *Maya* influences the relationship between Brahman and souls.

How *Maya* influences this relationship is through illusion or trickery. Yogini (Yogini: 2017) explains it as *Maya* can be an illusion or delusion. This is summarised as what we experience in this world is an illusion. Therefore, we are in this physical body and the experience can either be good or bad things in your life. A few examples are: Winning a car; a promotion; getting a divorce, or getting robbed.

All these experiences that happen in our lives are based on illusion and are how *Maya* plays a role in our lives.

6.3 The Vedas

According to Patton (2005:132) "Words related to and containing *Maya*, such as *Mayava*, occur many times in the Vedas. These words have various meanings, with interpretations that are contested, and some are names of deities that do not appear in texts of 1st millennium BCE and later. The use of word *Maya* in *Rgveda*, in the later era context of "magic, illusion, power", which occur in many hymns. One titled *Maya-bheda* which is discerning illusion includes hymns 10.177.1 through 10.177.3, as the battle unfolds between the good and the evil, as follows."

पतंगमक्तमसुरस्य **मायया**हृदापश्यन्तिमनसाविपश्चितः।
समुद्रेअन्तःकवयोविचक्षतेमरीचीनांपदमिच्छन्तिवेधसः॥१॥
पतंगोवाचमनसाबिभर्तितांगन्धर्वोऽवदद्गर्भेअन्तः।
तांद्योतमानांस्वर्यमनीषामृतस्यपदेकवयोनिपान्ति॥२॥
अपश्यंगोपामनिपद्यमानमाचपराचपथिभिश्चरन्तम्।
ससध्रीचीःसविषूचीर्वसानआवरीवर्तिभुवनेष्वन्तः॥३॥

The wise behold with their mind in their heart the Sun, made manifest by the illusion of the *Asura*; the sages look into the solar orb, the ordainers desire the region of his rays. The Sun bears the word in his mind; the *Gandharva* has spoken it within the wombs; sages cherish it in the place of sacrifice, brilliant, heavenly, ruling the mind. I beheld the protector, never descending, going by his paths to the east and the west; clothing the quarters of heaven and the intermediate spaces. He constantly revolves in the midst of the worlds. *RgVeda X.177.1-3*

According to Shastri (1911:6-7), there are 101 references made to the concept of *Maya* in the *RigVeda.*

The following is a comprehensive list of occurrences of *Maya* in the *RigVeda* given by O'Neil (1980:29-30)*:*

1. mayah (nominative and accusative plural twenty –four times)

> *I.32.4; I.117.3; II.11.10; II.27.26; III.20.3; III.53.8; V.2.9; V.31.7; V.40.8; VI.18.9; VI.20.4; VI.22.9; VI.44.22; VI.45.9; VI.58.1; VII.1.10; VII.98.5; VII.99.4; VIII.41.8; X.53.9; X.73.5; X.99.2; X.111.6*

2. mayaya (instrumental singular nineteen times)

I.80.7; I.144.1; I.160.3; II.17.5; III.27.7; IV.30.12; IV.30.21; V.63.3; V.63.7; VI.22.6; VII.23.15; VII.41.3; VII.104.24; IX.73.5; IX.73.9; IX.83.3; X.71.5; X.85.18; X.177.1

3. *mayinah (accusative plural and genitive singular of mayin fifteen times)*

I.39.2; I.51.5; I.54.4; I.64.7; I.159.4; II.11.10; III.38.7; III.38.9; III.56.1; V.44.11 VI.61.3; VII.82.3; VIII.3.19; VIII.23.14; X.138.3

4. *mayabhih (instrumental plural thirteen times)*

I.11.7; I.33.10; I.51.5; I.151.9; III.34.6; III.60.1; V.30.6 ; V.44.2; V.78.6; VI.47.18; VI.63.5; VII.14.14; X.147.2

5. *mayinam (accusative singular of mayin ten times)*

I.11.7; I.53.7; I.56.3; I.80.7; II.11.5; V.30.6; V.58.2; VI.48.14; VIII.76.1; X.147.2

6. *Maya (three times)*

III.61.7; V.63.4; X.54.2

7. *mayam (accusative singular three times)*

V.85.5; V.85.6; X.88.6

8. *mayi (nominative singular of mayin three times)*

VII.28.4; X.99.10; X.147.5

9. *mayinam (three times)*

I.32.4; III.20.3; III.34.3

10. *mayini (two times)*

V.48.1; X.5.3

11. *mayina (instrumental singular of mayin)*

VI.63.5

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12. mayini

   V.48.3

13. mayavina

   X.24.4

14. mayavan

   IV.16.9

15. mayavinam

   II.11.9

16. mayavinah

   X.83.3

In conclusion, the *Upanishads* and Vedas take the Sanskrit translation into consideration when it comes to interpreting the concept of *Maya.* This translation is about illusion. To the understanding of the *Upanishads*, *Maya* is more of an idea of knowledge that one might not have.

6.4 The *Upanishads* understanding of *Maya*

The following characteristics are given by Tigunait (1983:223-224) and clarify the nature of *Maya*.

- Like *Prakrti,Maya* is unconscious and is opposed to the conscious principle Brahman, but it is neither real nor independent.
- *Maya* is an inherent power of Brahman, through which Brahman veils itself. It is inseparable and undifferentiated from Brahman. *Maya* is neither identical with Brahman, nor different from Brahman, nor both.
- *Maya* is beginningless.
- *Maya* is both positive and negative, though it is not real. It is positive because it projects the world of plurality, and it is negative because it conceals the real, non-dual nature of Brahman that is perfect knowledge and bliss. These two aspects of *Maya*are known respectively as *avarana-sakti*, the power of concealment, and *viksepa-sakti,* the power of projection. In other words, through its aspect of

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concealment *Maya* hides the purity and originality of Brahman and Atman, and through the power of projection, it produces the world qualified by names and forms. Therefore*Maya* can be said to be non-comprehension as well as miscomprehension.

- *Maya* is indescribable because it is neither real, nor unreal, nor both real and unreal. It is not real because it does not have any independent existence apart from Brahman. It is not unreal because it is the actual power by which Brahman manifests itself as this apparent universe. It is also not both real and unreal because the conception or real and unreal in the context of one thing at one time is self-contradictory. From the standpoint of the world, *Maya* is comprehended as real, but from the standpoint of the absolute Reality it is unreal. Therefore it is neither real nor unreal, nor both real and unreal. Because of its complex nature, it is indescribable.

- *Maya* is relative. The one absolute Brahman appears in many forms and its power of becoming finite is called*Maya*.

- Faulty cognition or mistaking one thing for something else is a form of *Maya*. Seeing a snake in a rope or silver in a shell are examples of this.

- *Maya* is removable. By the right knowledge or proper understanding, the misunderstanding called *Maya* can be removed. Confusing a rope for a snake is rectified through a correct apprehension of the rope.

- The substratum of *Maya* is Brahman, yet Brahman is untouched by it. Therefore*Maya* is the power of the absolute Brahman. It has no independent existence but rests in Brahman. From the practical point of view, however, it is not totally illusion. There are certainly some differences between hallucinations, illusions, dreams, and the experiences of the waking state. Compared to the experiences of dreams, the experiences of the waking state are more real, but from the absolute point of view, hallucinations, illusions, dreams, and the experiences of the waking state are equally unreal.

The *Upanishads* focus more on this concept and how it is understood as it is. This is where the common understanding of *Maya*, which is it can be interpreted as an illusion or hallucination.

To the understanding of the *Upanishads*, *Maya* is more of an idea of knowledge that one might not have. With this knowledge not being obtained or understood, *Maya* is

therefore, the illusion that we cannot see past the confusion of seeing a snake and not a piece of rope.

Maya is the perceived changing reality in the *Upanishads* and it co-exists with Brahman which is the hidden true reality. *Maya*, or as we have learned can also be known as "illusion", is an important idea in the *Upanishads*, and the reason being is because the texts state that it is *Maya* which obscures, confuses and distracts an individual in the human pursuit of blissful and liberating self-knowledge.

6.4.1 Similarities between Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita

Part of the research focus of the three philosophers was their schools. There are some similarities between Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita with regard to *Maya.* According to Etter (2006:64) in some ways, Vishishtadvaita Vedanta is very similar to Dvaita Vedanta as well.

According to Sydnor (2012:84-87), Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita school and Sankara Advaita school are both non-dualism Vedanta schools, both argue on the assumption that all souls can hope for and achieve the state of blissful liberation, however, Madhva believed that some souls are eternally damned and doomed.

Even though Dvaita Vedanta is a dualistic system there are some similarities in the concepts of the essence of the universal and relationship of the individual self and Brahman when moksha is achieved.

These similarities according to Etter (2006:64-65) are:

- In Vishishtadvaita Vedanta and in Dvaita Vedanta the universe is considered to be very real. It is not merely an illusion as in Advaita Vedanta.
- In Dvaita and Vishishtadvaita Vedanta the universe is perceived through illusory perception, but it does in itself exit.
- The only difference between these two systems views of the universe is that in the dualistic system of Dvaita Vedanta the universe is seen as inherently and entirely separate from Brahman and the universe can be divided into separate pieces. Where in the qualified non-dualistic system of Vishishtadvaita Vedanta there is no true separation of anything in the universe.
- In terms of the physical universe, Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, like Dvaita Vedanta,

holds that there are two realities, the Divine and the Physical. However, Vishishtadvaita holds that they exist in mutual harmony as one non-dualistic reality. The first of these realities is the Divine, or that of *Purusha*, which is an unchanging spiritual reality. The second reality is that of *Prakriti*, which the changing physical reality is. These two realities maintain their own distinct existence; however the two remain balanced as one non-dualistic system. *Prakriti*is seen as changing in diverse, but the perception of this as pluralistic or dualistic in any way is an illusion created by *Maya* and subject and object illusory perception.

- Another similarity between these two systems is the concept that the sense of self is retained through and after *moksha*, when the individual is liberated from *samsara* and reunited with Brahman.

- The next similarity is that Ramanuja and Madhva both stress the need from *bhakti* yoga or devotional meditation to achieve union with Brahman. However, the practices were different between these two systems because Ramanuja taught that one could reconcile the relationship of human and divine because they were non-dual from each other and Madhva taught that they were entirely separate and distinct therefore no true reconciliation between the two could be found directly.

These similarities can start to narrow down the understanding of *Maya.* However, most of these conceptions are leading away from the traditional view of *Maya,* which is that it is seen as trickery or illusion. Advaita Vedanta is still a strong believer that the universe is an illusion and is concealed by this concept called *Maya.* Although these are similarities between Vishistadvaita and Dvaita, Etter does point out that there is a difference and that is caused by their views which is dualist and non-dualist. This is where Advaita and Vishishtadvaita have a similarity. These two schools both believe that Brahman and Atman are separate because of *Maya,* while Dvaita believes that Atman and matter are separate.

Vishishtadvaita and Advaita are also similar in the aspect that they are both non-dualistic schools. These schools are both under the assumption that all souls can achieve the state of blissful liberation and hope for it. Sankara's theory suggests that only Brahman are real, whereas the empirical world is elusive. Ramanuja, states that like man, God has both soul and body and all of the worlds of the matter is the glory of God's body.

6.5 Sankara's understanding of *Maya*

Sankara taught that the only thing that is real is Brahman and everything else is an illusion. Sankara was a solid believer of the common understanding of *Maya.* His view in his school which is non-dualist describes the relationship between Brahman and Atman. In Sankara's understanding there is Brahman and Atman is separate from Brahman. The separation is seen and known as *Maya.* This is where the illusion part comes into being. Because we are not one with Brahman we are tricked and deceived. The only way to stop this illusion is to obtain rightful knowledge.

Sankara used the example of the rope and the snake to illustrate the concept of *Maya*. While walking down a darkened road, a man sees a snake; his pulse quickens and his heart pounds. On closer inspection, the "snake" turns out to be a piece of coiled rope. Once the delusion breaks, the snake vanishes forever.

What we can take from this is that walking down the darkened road can be seen as ignorance. In general we see ourselves as mortal creatures, and around us, the universe of form and name, the universe conditioned by space, time, and causation. We then become aware of our bondage, suffering, and limitations. On "closer inspection" both the mortal creature as well as the universe, turn out to be Brahman. Once the delusion breaks, our mortality, as well as the universe, disappears forever. We see Brahman existing everywhere and in everything.

Sankara's *Vivekachudamani* describes *Maya* as, "It is undifferentiated and undivided." Nobody can define what it is, but it has the power of God. Beginningless and yet also called ignorance, it has three qualities; *tamas, sattva*, and *rajas*. It cannot be understood except by its actions, and that, only by the illumined ones. It has created all this universe produced it all. It is *Maya*. *Maya* is unreal because it changes, and it is not unreal because it exists.

Gough (1979:47) refers to *Maya* as an "illusion projected by an illusion" and as such an unreal reality. According to him, it is *Maya* that "presents the manifold experience." He considers *Maya* and Brahman to have co-existed from "everlasting to everlasting" and that this co-existence, both in association and union, is eternal.

However, Radhakrishnan (1914:413) is totally opposed to the concept of *Maya* as interpreted by Sankara. He does agree though that the doctrine of *Maya*, is viewed

today as an essential part of the Vedantic systems which he regards as the illusory character of the finite world.

Potter (1981:79) concludes that "Sankara gets the notion of *Maya*from Buddhism through Gaudapada but that he develops it in his own special way. Specifically, where Gaudapada did not equate *Avidya*and *Maya*, Sankara does. Still another contrast is that, whereas Gaudapada seems to speak only of real and unreal, Sankara's explication indicates a three-level view with the empirical world occupying a position midway between Brahman and pure non-existence".

Gaudapada who can be seen as the *paramguru* for Sankara, also likes the use of the term *Maya*. Gaudapada uses *Maya*similar to *vikalpa*. If so being, then Gaudapada seems to be saying that we often falsely interpret and so find differences where none exist. However, these mistakes in interpretation are rather misinterpretations of something apparently produced by God through traces (in waking) or by us through traces (in dream). (Potter, 1981, p. 68)

Now Gaudapada was very influential towards Govinda who was influential towards Sankara. So the teachings of the concept of *Maya* that Gaudapada taught might have passed down all the way to Sankara which might have influenced his view on *Maya.* Because of these mistaken interpretations we are generally misled and deceived by ourselves and therefore *Maya* can again be our own ignorance. Interesting how Gaudapada refers to misinterpretation as something produced by God.

Is God in Gaudapada's eyes trying to trick or deceive us? Gaudapada further mentions dreams. The question here is how we now perceive what is a dream and what is real. If we look at the movie inception it is about going into a dream which is in a dream of another dream. The point of this is that one can get caught up in so many dreams that it begins to become the reality around us. This is the ignorance that keeps on being referred.

So, in conclusion, Sankara's understanding of *Maya*can be simplified that he views this concept *Maya* as an illusion. His view on the relationship between Brahman and Atman is simple. They are separate because of *Maya* and the illusion can be removed if we obtain the rightful knowledge.

6.6 Ramanuja's understanding of *Maya*

Ramanuja, on the other hand, was most widely known for his philosophical and theological teachings. He taught a philosophy called Vishishtadvaita, which means qualified non-dualism. According to Sukdaven (2013:114)

> "Ramanuja understands the world and souls to be a true but an imperfect picture of Brahman. If Brahman is both cause and effect then there can be no illusion due to ignorance. It is for this reason, that Ramanuja criticises Sankara's concept of *Maya.* To clarify this, Ramanuja uses an aphorism from the Brhadaranyaka, which expresses how the soul and the body is related to Brahman and why therefore *Maya* cannot be conceived as an explanation of this relationship. It is stated in the aphorism that, "He who, dwelling in all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things from within – He is your soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal".

Masih (1988:462) states that Ramanuja believes the following:

> "*Maya* does not mean false knowledge or nescience. It is the really the power of Ishvara, and as such it is is akin to the *Prakrti* of Samkhya which produces manifold wonderful actions, and the highest person is known as *Mayin*."

Ramanuja quotes Svet. U. 4. 9 to support this view of *Maya.* Advaitism makes no distinction between persistence and non-persistence

> "But when of a thing that is perceived in connection with some place and time, the non-existence is perceived in connection with some other place and time, there arises no contradiction."

> (SBH. 1. 1. 1. p. 47)

According to Masih (1988:462), therefore, Ramanuja accepts the Naiyayika theory of *anyathakhyativada* in explaining snake-rope and other illusions of the same type. According to Ramanuja, the snake of snake-rope illusion is not altogether unreal. It does exist but at another place and time.

"But the circumstances of something which is seen at one time and in place not persisting at another time and in another place is not observed to be invariably accompanied by falsehood, and hence mere non-persistence of this kind does not constitute a reason for unreality."

<div align="right">(SBH.1. 1. 1. p. 47)</div>

Ramanuja repeats this point more clearly in the following:

"To prove a thing's falseness it is required to show that it is sublated with reference to that very place and time in connection with which it is perceived; but that a thing is sublated with reference to a place and time other than those in connection with which it is perceived, proves only that the thing does not exist in connection with that place and time, but not that it is false."

<div align="right">(SBH. 1. 1. 13. p. 446)</div>

Ramanuja is a non-dualist like Sankara, however he believes that we are one with Brahman and the rest is an illusion. Ramanuja believes that *Maya* is the power in which Brahman used to create the world and universe.

We cannot reject or accuse him because he attempted to reject Sankara s premise. However, we are unable to see his consistency when even in his own premise he falls short of furnishing a really adequate explanation of the relation between God and the Universe.

6.6.1 Ramanuja's critique on *Maya*

According to Ramanuja, the multiplicity is real and is part or an attribute of Brahman. Therefore Ramanuja does not accept Sankara's theory of *Maya*.Singh (1991:156-157) states that "Ramanuja levels various charges against the Advaita theory of *Maya* or *Avidya*." These charges are:

- *Asrayanupapatti*- What is the locus or support of *Maya*? An individual cannot be the locus of *Maya* because individuality itself is produced by it and the cause cannot depend on its effect. Brahman also cannot be its locus, because Brahman is self-luminous consciousness and *Maya* is ignorance. How can ignorance exist in

knowledge? So where does *Maya* exist?

- *Tirodhananupapatti*- How can *Maya* or *Avidya* conceal the real nature of Brahman? Brahman is essentially self revealing. If *Maya* conceals Brahman, it means that His self revealing nature or self luminosity is destroyed. It is absurd to say that darkness can hide light or cloud destroys the self manifesting nature of the Sun.

- *Svarupanupapatti*- What is the nature of *Maya* or *Avidya*? Is it positive or negative or neither. It cannot be positive for it is *Avidya* or ignorance and ignorance is negative for it is the absence of knowledge. If it is negative, how can it create the manifold world? A negative entity cannot act as the peculiar agency of God for creating the universe of living and non-living things. It is self-contradictory to hold that *Avidya* is both positive and negative. And to say that it is neither positive nor negative is to give up all logic.

- *Anirvachaniyanupapatti*- What is the nature of *Maya*? It is defined by the Advaitins as indescribable (*anirvachaniya*), it is neither real nor unreal. This is a clear self-contradiction. Things are either real or unreal. These two are contradictories and there cannot be a third category. Reality and unreality exhaust all possibilities of predication. It must therefore, be a being or a non-being. Moreover, to say that *Maya* is indescribable is to describe a fact. Therefore, according to Ramanuja, 'indescribable' is either self-contradictory or rejection of the law of contradiction.

- *Pramananupapatti*- By what *Pramana* or valid means *Maya* is know? It cannot be known by perception, for the object of perception is either a positive or a negative being. The indescribable cannot be an object of perception. It cannot be known by inference for it has no valid mark. Nor can it be established by the scriptures for they describe *Maya* to be a really wonderful power of God.

- *Nivartakanupapatti*- How can *Maya* be removed? The Advaitins hold that knowledge of indeterminate Brahman and removes ignorance. It is knowledge of identity between Jiva and Brahman. However, according to Ramanuja, identity is always qualified by difference. Therefore there cannot be knowledge of pure identity or indeterminate Brahman and therefore nothing can remove *Maya*.

- *Nivrtyanupapatti*- What lends to the removal of *Avidya*? According to the Advaitins, *Avidya* is positive and no positive entity can be removed by mere knowledge. *Avidya*, according to Sankara, is the cause of our bondage in the world. It is the superimposition of oneself on one's body. However, this superimposition is natural

and beginningless. It cannot be destroyed by mere knowledge of one's self as distinct from the body. It needs the path of devotion (*Bhakti*) and self-surrender (*Prapatti*) as means to the attainment of release. The bondage of one's soul is destroyed when the karmas are destroyed. It needs prayer and devotion.

These are in summary the seven difficulties which Ramanuja perceived in the doctrine of *Maya.* .Shastri seems to be very aggressive towards Ramanuja with the lack of evidence of the relationship between God and the Universe that he cannot provide. These are just difficulties that Ramanuja has a problem solving which involves *Maya.* In my opinion, Ramanuja has his faults however he has made some intelligent contributions to Indian philosophy. Shastri (1911:133) states that "Ramanuja's criticism rests on the whole idea of a misunderstanding of the genuine Advaita standpoint. All through he has been treating *Maya* as if it were a concrete reality, even perhaps existing in space, etc."

The following two difficulties supplied by Singh (1991:156-157) stand out because it does pose some questions especially after learning what the *Upanishads* and Sankara believe in:

- *Asrayanupapatti-* What is the locus or support of *Maya*? An individual cannot be the locus of *Maya* because individuality itself is produced by it and the cause cannot depend on its effect. Brahman also cannot be its locus, because Brahman is self-luminous consciousness and *Maya* is ignorance. How can ignorance exist in knowledge? So where does *Maya* exist?
- *Nivartakanupapatti-* How can *Maya* be removed? The Advaitins hold that knowledge of indeterminate Brahman which removes ignorance. It is knowledge of identity between Jiva and Brahman. However, according to Ramanuja, identity is always qualified by difference. Therefore there cannot be knowledge of pure identity or indeterminate Brahman and therefore nothing can remove *Maya*.

The first point asks a question which is how ignorance can exist in knowledge. This is a question that has Ramanuja's concern however, according to Sankara and the *Upanishads*, the only way to get rid of ignorance is through knowledge. So is it possible to have ignorance and knowledge at the same time? A logical explanation could be that ignorance and knowledge exist but it is *Maya* that makes us see more

ignorance than knowledge therefore the Sanskrit explanation of *Maya* being illusion.

By removing the ignorance or as Dr Sukdaven states the veil, we can therefore have the rightful knowledge and finally be one with Brahman. The next question that is from the first point is where does *Maya* exist? Does it only exist in Hinduism? *Maya* according to Ramanuja does not affect the relationship between Brahman and the souls and therefore does not deduce *Maya* as ignorance. So if Ramanuja does not believe that *Maya* is ignorance then wherein his eyes does *Maya* fit in? He could possibly refer to that we are in Brahman ad everything else is an illusion or not real and therefore that is *Maya.*

According to Arrington (2003:263-264) "Ramanuja rejects the notion that the world is an illusory perception. All knowledge is genuine knowledge, even though mistakes occur in the act of cognisance. So he is trying to reassert the power of knowledge. Both mistaken identity and empirically valid perception are related to the objectively real and as such could be called valid perception".

Is Ramanuja really true here with what Arrington states? How can all knowledge be genuine knowledge? It is understandable to state that if you are a firm believer in that we are one with Brahman. If we are one with Brahman then we share his knowledge which will be genuine. Knowledge for Ramanuja seems to be very important, more important than the concept of *Maya* which is based on knowledge being tricked with ignorance.

The Advaitins hold that knowledge of indeterminate Brahman removes ignorance. It is knowledge of identity between Jiva and Brahman. Ramanuja disagrees with the Advaitins and comes to the conclusion that *Maya* cannot be removed. No matter how we like it *Maya* will always be in our lives according to Ramanuja.

Ramanuja might believe that everything else in the world is an illusion because the only real thing which is seen as the ultimate knowledge is Brahman and therefore it is understandable why Christians agree the most with Ramanuja. How can *Maya* be removed according to Ramanuja? Looking at what Sankara says in 6.5 that by removing ignorance which is *Maya* we can obtain rightful knowledge.

In conclusion, Ramanuja is non-dualist when it comes to *Maya.* His views on the relationship between Brahman and the soul strikes an agreement towards fellow

Christians. Ramanuja taught that the universe is the body of Brahman, which is the unchanging foundation of reality. He challenges Sankara's understanding of the concept *Maya,* by saying that if Brahman is both cause and effect then there can be no illusion due to ignorance. His idea of illusion is outside of Brahman which is everything else except the souls which are one with Brahman.

6.7 Madvha's understanding of *Maya*

Madhva was known to be a dualist. Arrington (2003:261) states that "he taught that there are three entities, Brahman, the soul, and matter. He also describes the body as a substance completely controlled by the soul, however, they are inseparable."

According to Sukdaven (2013:115),

> "Madhva does not hold an Advaitic tendency in his worldview. He rather presents a strict dualist philosophy (two orders of reality). To him god, the world and souls are seen as eternally different from each other. He believes that Brahman is the creator (efficient cause) of the world and that he did not undergo any transformation in order to bring the world into existence. The material world is a manifestation of Prakrti. Therefore the difference which is experienced in the world is not an illusion but a reality. If *Maya* is expressed as an illusion, as is very often done, then it stands to reason that Madhva will reject the concept of *Maya*."

In many ways and respectful at the same time, Madhva's system is more like Sankara's than Ramanuja's since essentially what Madhva does is to make the *Sankarites* admit that their whole system is impossible to distinguish from the admission of the radical difference between *Maya* and Brahman, both of which are claimed by them to be indefinable. Therefore according to Plott (1989:269-270), the basic method is relatively similar: wherever Sankara reads *Maya*, Madhva reads difference. However this difference refers to which is real and not illusion to any other principle.

Here we see that Madhva does not refer to *Maya* but rather to a difference. In chapter 5 the five differences are as follows:

- God and soul

- Soul and matter

- Matter and matter

- Matter and God

- Soul and soul

So out of the three philosophers, Madhva is the only one to distinguish this concept of *Maya* as differences and not an illusion. The first difference is God and soul which has been a common factor from the other two philosophers. This relationship between God and soul is very important because it determines how *Maya* is viewed.

Like the other two philosophers who portray *Maya* as an illusion, Madhva rejects this notion and we then see his notion of difference. Not only does Madhva reject the notion of *Maya,* but refers Sankara as a crypto Buddhist and argues that Sankara had no evidence to back up his theories.

In chapter 5 the mention of Madhva's system given by Plott (1989:270-271):

1. *Vishnu* is the Supreme God mentioned in the scriptures. He is the prime import (*mahatatparya*) of them all. Madhva asserts that every word in the language primarily signifies *Vishnu* and refers only secondarily to other objects. This assumption greatly helps him in harmonising the import of the scriptures.

Like Ramanuja, Madhva also refers to Brahman as Vishnu. Here Madhva is implying and putting pressure on the fact that God is completely separate from the world and souls. God needed no transformation and no illusion to assert his power. Another intriguing word in point two is:

2. The external world is affirmed to be ultimately real (*satya*). It continues to exist at all times. The world process is beginningless and eternal (*anadi* and *nitya*).

This word beginningless has been used by Sankara and Ramanuja to describe *Maya.* If the world process is beginningless then in Sankara and Ramanuja's opinion, Madhva is stating that the world process was an illusion or *Maya.*

4. All souls are dependent on God who alone is independent.

This next point from Madhva's system can be very similar to Ramanuja's view that Brahman and the souls are one. Although it does say that the souls are dependent

on God, however, it can be interpreted that because they are dependent they are therefore one with Brahman.

8. There are three means of valid knowledge as we covered in 5.6 Sources of knowledge which is: perception, inference and verbal testimony.

This last point of Madhva's system which can be seen striving towards *Maya* is three sources of knowledge. Although Madhva rejects the notion of *Maya*, could these three sources of knowledge could be the knowledge that could help unveil the illusion or is the knowledge that is seen after the illusion?

In conclusion to Madhva's understanding of *Maya*, Madhva is a dualist and believes that God, souls, and the rest of the world are separate entities. He rejects the notion of *Maya* and focuses more on the differences. Therefore he is a solid believer of difference and not *Maya.*

6.8 Similarities and differences between Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva on the concept of *Maya*

Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva have different philosophies on *Maya.* In order to get to the central understanding between these three philosophers, similarities and differences need to be addressed.

As stated in chapter 2 and in 6.5, Sankara's philosophy is Absolute non-dualism. Therefore Sankara is classified as a non-dualist. This describes the relationship between Brahman and Atman. *Maya* plays the role of separation between Brahman and Atman. Although it may be recognised that Sankara had a Buddhist influence in his interpretation of *Maya,* he is a solid believer in the common understanding of *Maya.* Sankara was a believer of Shiva.

In chapter 4 and in 6.6, Ramanuja's philosophy is qualified non-dualism. Ramanuja is a non-dualist when it comes to *Maya,* similar to Sankara, however, different in terms of it is qualified and not Absolute. His views on the relationship on Brahman and the soul strikes an agreement towards fellow Christians Ramanuja, taught that the universe is the body of Brahman, which is the unchanging foundation of reality.

He challenges Sankara's understanding of the concept *Maya,* by saying that if Brahman is both cause and effect then there can be no illusion due to ignorance. His

idea of illusion is outside of Brahman which is everything else except the souls which are one with Brahman. Ramanuja is a believer of Vishnu.

Unlike Sankara and Ramanuja, Madhva is a dualist. His philosophy as stated in chapter 5 and 6.7 is dualism. Madhva rejects the notion of *Maya* and rather holds onto the view of difference rather than illusion. Like Ramanuja, Madhva also is a believer of Vishnu. Madhva accepts that God, souls and matter are three separate entities.

6.8.1 Similarities between Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva on the concept of *Maya*

The following table is used to narrow down the similarities between Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva. These similarities are mainly between Sankara and Ramanuja, where a few are between Ramanuna and Madhva.

	Sankara	Ramanuja	Madhva
Monism	No similarity	Vishnu	Vishnu
Philosophy	Non-Dualist	Non-Dualist	No similarity
Maya	Illusion	Illusion	No similarity
Rightful knowledge	Believes in	Believes in	Believes in
Relationship between Brahman, souls and the universe.	Believes in	Believes in	Believes in
Sankara's Theories	NA	Disagrees	Disagrees
Is the Universe real	No (illusion)	Yes	Yes
Brahman and Atman are separate because of *Maya.*	Yes	Yes	No
The need from Bhakti yoga	No	Yes	Yes

6.8.2 Differences between Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva on the concept of *Maya*

The differences between Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva may provide clarification in terms of finding an idea of whether or not it is possible to obtain a central understanding of *Maya* between these three philosophers.

The following table is used to distinguish the differences between Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

	Sankara	Ramanuja	Madhva
Schools of Vedanta	Adviata	Vishishtadvaita	Dvaita
Maya	Explained as illusion	Explained as illusion	Rejected and explained as difference
Philosophy	Absolute non-dualism	Qualified non-dualism	Dualist
Sankara's Theories	Agrees	Disagrees	Disagrees
Monism	Shiva	Vishnu	Vishnu
Relationship between Brahman and Atman	Separate due to *Maya*	Separate due to *Maya*	God, Souls and universe is separate

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address the central understanding of *Maya.* The general understanding of *Maya* was discussed in order to form a baseline to establish the foundation of the term *Maya.* Though the Vedas and the *Upanishads* supply the characteristics of *Maya* which clarifies the nature of *Maya* as well as the occurrences of this term in the RigVeda, the real focus is on the three philosophers.

Sankara who was a true advocate in the Advaita school, entrenched the term *Maya* and espoused it into his own philosophy Absolute non-dualism. Ramanuja was similar to Sankara in a sense that he too was a non-dualist only this philosophy adapted the concept of *Maya* in a qualified non-dualism form. Madhva, the final philosopher out of the three, went to the complete opposite direction and disposed of the idea of *Maya* and accepted the idea of difference.

The following chapter is set out to conclude this dissertation in a manner in which to determine whether or not there is a central understanding of *Maya*.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Hinduism, as alluded in the introduction of this dissertation, is like a sponge that can accommodate many philosophies and interpretations of its texts, even though these interpretations may be completely opposite to another interpretation by another philosopher. This research considered a very controversial system of thought in Hindu philosophy, which brought antagonism and strong refutation from posterior philosophies. One such interpretation was an understanding of the concept of *Maya.* This was indeed the focus of this study: to find a common understanding of *Maya* among a few prominent philosophers in Hinduism.

From chapter three to five, this research focussed on three philosophers that engaged and offered an interpretation of the concept of *Maya.* The three philosophers were Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

'*Ma*' means the source, the cause and 'y*a*' means that which proceeds, goes, walks or spreads out. Therefore literally *Maya* means that which issues forth, expands or arises from the source, '*ma*', the universal mother.

The hypothesis will be the last point in this section of the intention of this research paper. The question that can be raised here is, did the dissertation achieve the main topic. If either yes or no, an explanation shall be given in order to give clarification.

In order to conclude this dissertation, a small comparative study will be given and referring back to chapter 6. This will form the foundation for the concluding remarks.

7.2 The intention of this research

In the many philosophies that accompany Hinduism, it is without a doubt that diverse amount of views exist. More specifically in the context of this research, and the central theme, which is *Maya,* the following three diverse views on Brahman and creation unfolds and the role that *Maya* played in understanding this relationship. Chapter 1.2 refers to the problem which this research attempted to address and how the philosophies of Sankara, Ramunuja and Madhva addresses these divergent views:

- First, a philosophical tradition such as Hinduism can have more than one interpretation of *Maya.*

- Second, different views on the relationshipbetween Brahman and man are expressed.

- Third, the uncertainty as to what constitutes*reality* among the three philosophers, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

  In order to engage with the three divergent areas and different views, this dissertation adopted the following meaningful structure.

- First to present the different interpretations of *Maya.* (This has been covered in 1.2)

- Second, to present the philosophical understandings of *Maya* by Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. (This has been covered in chapters 3, 4, and 5)

- Third to investigate whether a central understanding of *Maya*, according to the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madvha, can be developed. (This has been covered in Chapter 6)

In 1.4 the hypothesis that was brought forward was that "this study is an attempt to determine, that in and amongst the different philosophical interpretations of *Maya*, that there is a central understanding of *Maya* in the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva".

7.3 Central understanding of *Maya* between the three philosophers

The central understanding is regarded as the crucial point in this dissertation. The central theme in this dissertation is to determine whether or not a central understanding between these three philosophers is possible. A brief summary of each philosopher will be given.

The first philosopher that was covered was Sankara. Sankara's school of philosophy was Advaita Vedanta. This school's philosophy is known as Absolute non-dualism. Sankara was a solid believer of the common understanding of *Maya*. According to Sankara, *Maya* is the existence and non-existence entity which creates an illusion and therefore creating something which in reality does not exist.

The second philosopher that was covered was Ramanuja. Ramanuja's school of philosophy was Vishishtadvaita. This school's philosophy is known as qualified non-dualism. Ramanuja argues that the very idea that something can be ignorant presumes that an individual is capable of being ignorant. Ramanuja disagrees with Sankara by stating that even though there is Brahman and the rest of the world, yet everything is inclusive and it is inside the body of Brahman.

The third and final philosopher that was covered was Madhva. Madhva's school of philosophy was Dvaita. Unlike Sankara and Ramanuja, the Madhva school of philosophy is known as dualism. Madhva's dualism insisted that human beings and Brahman were wholly separate and that the division between humanity and the divine is bridged by *bhakti* (devotion). Madhva rejects the entire concept of *Maya* and accepts the notion of difference.

7.4 Concluding remarks

As stated in chapter 7.2, the research hypothesis for this dissertation is to find a central understanding of the concept *Maya* in the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

The research that has been presented in this dissertation has shown that although there may be a general definition for the concept of *Maya,* due to the divergent views of these three philosophers, it is not possible to obtain a central understanding of *Maya* between these three philosophers' philosophies*.*

Although Sankara and Ramanuja are similar in the sense that they are both non-dualists, however they differ in the context that one is absolute and the other is qualified. Madhva's dualism does not contribute towards the central understanding, because the philosophy he entrenches into his school rejects the concept of *Maya*.

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