Saṅkarācārya is a unique figure in the history of Indian Philosophy religion and culture, and his works are studied with different outlooks. The Advaita that existed before Saṅkara also may be looked from different viewpoints. It may however be stated without any fear of contradiction, that the following three principles are regarded as the essentials of Saṅkara’s philosophy by all his interpreters: (1) The Absolute Reality of Brahman; (2) the phenomenality of the creation; (3) and the essential identity of the individual soul with the Brahman. In all these ten chapters we have seen the continuity of the Advaita from the Vedas to Saṅkarācārya.

The linguistic method of Vedic studies would immediately say, that high philosophical thoughts of the Advaita can never be found in the primitive Vedic literature. It is generally believed that, in ancient times humanity was in a primitive state, and hence ancient records must give primitive philosophy. A primitive man cannot have an idea of two separate entities as body and consciousness.
He would rather believe in a conscious body, a desiring, feeling, thinking body. Naturally he attributes qualities like volition, sensation, perception, etc. to the elements of nature. Fire, wind, earth, sun, etc. are according to him not insentient objects, but animate powers which can be pleased by prayers and praises. Such thoughts about God give rise to different forms of worship, which as time passes, develop into inviolable dogmas. Dogmas however hamper free play of reason, and hence philosophy has to progress necessarily by fighting them.

Necessary conclusions that follow from this order of growth of human thought are, (a) that primitive human thought gives rise to dogmas which form religion, and (b) philosophy which comes forth as a result of free speculation is in constant struggle with religion, which is a mass of dogmas.

When these conclusions are applied to old Indian literature, the inevitable result that the Upaniṣads which speak of high philosophy are anta-
antagonistic to the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āranyakas. In almost all attempts to formulate a history of Indian Philosophy, scant attention is paid to the earlier texts, and the speculative utterances in them are disposed off unceremoniously as freaks of thought or occasional soarings of imagination.

Before sharing these views, it would be unfair not to look to the other side of the matter. Is it true that humanity was first born on earth only a few thousand years before Christ, and started speculation for the first time when they composed the Rgveda? Can it not be that philosophical thought began at different times in different parts of the world? Such questions still remain unanswered, and what are offered as tentative replies need not be pressed into service to formulate a chronological sequence of the history of Philosophy. Again, let the Vedas themselves tell what they represent. Religion and philosophy as found in the Vedas do not appear to be a matter of guess-work. The concept of Amrtatva is abundantly and lively expressed in
in the Vedas. It seems that Amrtatva was not a mere abstract idea. It was an actual experience; and we have instances of persons who had that experience:

विष्ट्वी शमी तरणित्वेन वायतो मतासः सत्तो भमृतत्वमानुः।

Such a high experience was the consummation of human life. That was the common basis of Vedic religion and philosophy, which were no longer in conflict with each other. It need not be reiterated that people with such high ideals had long left the primitive cradles:

एकं सदृ विश्रा बहुधा वदन्ति।
पुरुषं पर्वें सवं यदृ गुतं यच्च वच्च मध्यमः।

These are not mere vague poetical fancies. They are definite conclusions arrived at after a long and arduous philosophical quest. Comparatively small number of philosophical hymns is no proof
proof for scant attention to philosophy. Philosophy is never a matter indulged in by masses, and hence literature on philosophy must be small as compared to that on other subjects, suitable to ordinary people. The bulk of Samhitās itself is not very large, and philosophical hymns in it must be few. It is not so much the bulk but the very utterances that should count with us.

Along with some introductory remarks, the first chapter of the thesis gives some passages from the Samhitās that directly point to the Advaita. In an appendix to this chapter, it is attempted to show that the whole psychological background required for the theory can be traced in the Samhitās.

The second chapter deals with the Brāhmaṇas. Most of the western scholars have passed unfair remarks about this literature, and they have also opined that this lore is removed in spirit from the Samhitās. Giving reasons for not subscribing to this view, I have discussed a few passages that may lead to Advaitic ideas. The Brāhmaṇas deal—mostly with facts of sacrificial ceremonials, and hence speculative remarks in this lore are few.
There are already many works on the Upaniṣads and scholars mostly agree that there is no want of Advaitic ideas in them. In the third chapter therefore, I have first discussed the etymology and the meaning of the word Upaniṣad with historical significance and attempted to show, that Upaniṣad philosophy was not a revolt against the Brāhmaṇic rituals. Some passages which show Advaita are given.

The fourth chapter deals with the Brahma-sūtras. Some points as to the antiquity of the Sūtras and their subject-matter are stated. With the help of other writings, I have tried to show, that an independant rendering of the Sūtras cannot be far from Saṅkara's interpretation. The Sūtras thus may be taken to represent the Advaita.

In later literature we find some Gods that are not included in the Vedic pantheon. But the philosophical thought seems to be more or less the same. The fifth chapter enumerates some of the Advaitic thoughts in the epics. All this literature gives many reflections, and it is never contended
contended that Advaita was the only thought in those times. It is however emphasised, that we need not lebel these works as representatives of Bhedābheda or any such categorical thought. Like other speculations Advaita too has a place in them.

The Purāṇas prescribe worship of Gods who are different from those given in the Vedas. Preferential worship has given rise to several sectarian Purāṇas, the authorship of all being relegated to Vyāsa. I have not shared the view of scholars, that the earlier Purāṇas which give a genuine outlook of the Upaniṣads and the Sūtras, pay but a scant attention to extreme Advaita. In the sixth chapter I have cited the passages from the Purāṇas giving Advaitic ideas, with occasional remarks on the dates of some of the Purāṇas. I cannot subscribe to the view that Smārta or Paurāṇic religion was essentially different from the Vedic. If basic principles are the same, external change in worship etc. should not lead to the conclusion of change in cardinal doctrines.

In the seventh chapter, I have collected stray references to the Advaita. The Buddhist thought
thought is generally held to be the source on which Advaita of Śaṅkara has drawn much. But Buddhist works are vigilant to categorise their thought as different from the Aupaniṣada Advaita. The mention of Advaita points to its existence earlier than the Bāuddha Philosophy. From the earlier works, it is learnt that Buddha himself always avoided to discuss philosophical problems. Bāuddha philosophy was a matter of a late age, and it was developed by people, who were renegades from Brāhmanism. It is likely therefore that they borrowed ideas from the Upaniṣads. Bāuddhist concepts of philosophy are dealt with in chapters on Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara. The differences of the Bāuddha concepts with those of the Advaita Vedānta are so fundamental that they change the whole philosophical outlook. Advaita has thus nothing to borrow from Buddha. Tāntric practices can never reconcile in spirit with Buddhism. It is clear that they were borrowed from Hinduism. Some scholars are of opinion that Buddhist Tantras were rampant at the time of Asaṅga. Thus Tantra worship and cult existed in India before Buddha. Many Tāntric works give Advaitic ideas, and we need not say
say that all of them were conceived after Śaṅkara. I have given some stanzas. I have given quotations from Smṛtis and classics also that may point to Advaita. We cannot exclude grammatical work of Bhartrihari, who is evidently an Advaitin. Rāvaṇa quotes from an old Advaita work. Reṇuka, Dramiḍa, Brahmadatta, Sundarapaṇḍya are also some names of Advaitic thinkers.

The eighth chapter deals with Gauḍapāda. I have tried to show how, starting from the Śāṅkhya idea, the Advaita has reached a conclusion, quite contrary to that of the Baudhās. Recent contributions on the subject are many, and I have only shared the views of Prof. Kārmkar and Dr. Mahādevan, especially the former - with a few additional evidences. I have tried to prove by putting a statement of Gauḍapāda in syllogistic form, that Śaṅkara, in the beginning of his famous commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra, has picked up the thread from the stanza that occurs nearly in the end of the Gauḍapāda-Kārikās.

The Yogavāsiṣṭha is rarely believed to be a pre-Śaṅkara work. I however believe it to be so. In this ninth chapter, I have discussed this point
point at some length, for I had to give evidences in support of my view. While discussing the philosophy of this great work with the help of citations, I have pointed out that the thought in this work cannot be called Subjective Idealism. It will be wrong to interpret the thought of the Yogavāsiṣṭha after the German idealism for the differences in these are very important.

The tenth chapter deals with Śaṅkara. I have not accepted the date of Śaṅkara given by Dr. Pathak. I had to join issues with him at some length. Certain references from the writings of Śaṅkara refer to a state of chaos, extinction of Varnāśrama, rise of Buddhism, etc. etc. Such a state seem to have prevailed after Hārsha. There are some other evidences also that lead to the belief of Śaṅkara’s age as the middle of the seventh century, and I have discussed them. I have described and discussed the theory of Advaita proper, but in doing so a detailed account of the theory is purposely avoided. The theory is known too well to require a lengthy elaboration. Secondly Śaṅkara himself is variously understood by scholars, as pointed
pointed out by Dr. Singh. As he has shown, Śaṅkara's philosophy is essentially a metaphysics of value. But it must also be remembered, that no Indian philosopher has neglected this aspect of philosophy. No school of Indian philosophy, except that of Cārvāka or Lokāyata, believes that an individual is merely a biological firmament, acting under the dead weight of instincts and passions. An individual is essentially a spiritual being, and the consummation of philosophy or religion lies in the fullest manifestation of his spirituality. Mokṣa is deliverance from the bonds that bind one merely to physical limits; and this Mokṣa is called Parama-puruṣārtha, the highest value. Value, in Indian parlance, is but a manifestation of the essential spirituality of an individual, a manifestation of what already exists; and ultimately the concept of Being becomes identical with that of value. The subject is vast, and needs a full treatment of the concept of Being and value, not only of Śaṅkara but also of his critics; and Śaṅkara's speciality as distinguished from the concepts of others is also required to be
be shown. A Survey of pre-Saṅkara Advaita Vedānta may not include this subject, and hence I have left it out. I have tried to show from traditional lists of Ācāryas, that the waters of Advaita flowed through many channels, and Saṅkarācārya brought out a reconciliation of all existing systems of thought and manners of worship in a wide synthesis, that would stand any test of logic.

It is very clear that I have departed from the normal path of the development of Indian thought as laid down by many Western and Eastern scholars. The essentially spiritual nature of an individual was a fact known to the earliest seers of India, the seers of the Rgveda. They longed for immortality, the highest spiritual experience, and not merely for physical wellbeing. Realisation of supersensuous truth, clear statements as to the fundamental identity of Gods, the wide concept of the Universe and its order, the final end of the creation and the individual, all show, that all the stages of development of human thought and society had passed long before the Rgveda. It was quite possible that the Advaita philosophy
philosophy occurred to the people born in the high Vedic atmosphere. Though the theory had terms of good and bad days, it continued to engage highest speculative minds, and finally we find it in a full-fledged form in the writings of Śaṅkara. It was neither borrowed from the Buddhists, nor was it a figment of the supreme intellect of Śaṅkarācārya. The view that it gives about an individual, the Universe, and the Supreme Reality is so comprehensive, that it can accommodate all findings of speculation and intuition in the past and even in future. Every Hindu can legitimately be proud of this precious heritage, that has come to him from long long past through several generations.