The Theological Writings of Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya Re-Examined

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Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya's theological writings are not yet easily accessible to us. Hence most of us depend heavily upon writings on him. But in writings on him there are two dangers involved, 1 Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), whose original name was Bhavani Charan Banerji, was a disciple of Keshub Chunder Sen for some time. He was a friend of Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. It was with him that Rabindranath Tagore founded Shantiniketan. Upadhyaya came to know Jesus Christ through Keshub Chunder Sen and through his own uncle the Revd. Kalicharan Banerji. In 1891 he received baptism from an Anglican priest but, in the same year, he became a Roman Catholic. In 1894 he became a Sannyasi and adopted the new name. His literary activities include the editing of Sophia (January 1894-March 1899), a monthly Catholic Journal; Sophia (June 16, 1900-December 8, 1900), a weekly paper; and The Twentieth Century (January 1901-December 1901), a monthly magazine. Due to a total discouragement from church authorities he almost stopped his theological writings in 1901. Upadhyaya then became fully engaged in the nationalist movement in Bengal. In November 1904 he brought out a Bengali Daily called Sandhya (1904-1907) and in March 1907 a Bengali Weekly called Swaraj. In September 1907 he was imprisoned by the British and in October 1907 he died in prison after a hernia operation.

namely either misinterpretation or superficial interpretation. This is, therefore, a humble effort to re-examine the original theological writings of Upadhyaya and to bring out his valuable contributions to Indian theology. We do not claim that our study is totally free from the two dangers mentioned. We are completely subject to correction by students of Upadhyaya. First of all we shall have a glance at the assumptions on the basis of which Upadhyaya developed his theology. Then we shall come to the analysis of the theological contributions of Upadhyaya.

What we have discovered is this: that according to Upadhyaya the Vedānta conception of God and that of Christian belief are exactly the same, and that Māyā of Advaita Vedānta is the best available concept to explain the doctrine of creation. Though he is honestly actualising his primary assumption that the function of Vedānta is to supply a new garb to an already formulated Christian theology, Upadhyaya does not reinterpret either of the Vedānta concepts Saccidānanda and Māyā to serve as the explanation of a ready made Christian theology. Rather he shows that Saccidānanda is Trinity and that Māyā expresses the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root creare. Or to put it more explicitly, Upadhyaya was of the conviction that the Christian doctrines are there already in Hinduism among its admitted errors and the uniqueness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is that it is the further clarification and affirmation of the main Vedānta doctrines. We believe it was in pointing out this valuable truth as early as 1898 that Upadhyaya made his unique contribution to Indian theology. In our analysis of the theology of Upadhyaya we have tried to point out in footnotes where we believe some previous writings on Upadhyaya have gone astray in presenting his mind. At the end we have provided our own evaluation of the theology of Upadhyaya also.

1. The Basic Assumptions of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya

(i) Vedānta as the new garb of Christian faith

Upadhyaya believed that Christianity, which is the religion of revelation, is a fixed and complete religion. Nothing can be added or

subtracted from the deposit of Catholic faith. At the same time he would add that "to strengthen revelation by preserving its unity, as much as possible through the process of reason, we invoke the aid of philosophy—be it Indian or Greek or European." In the Indian context Vedānta philosophy should be used as an aid to strengthen the Christian revelation. Vedānta thought, if represented correctly and brought into line with the discoveries of modern philosophy and social ethics, will, in its broader aspect, "serve as a natural, metaphysical basis for the one unchangeable, supernatural, universal religion."


B. Upadhyaya, "Our personality," Sophia, Vol. I, No. 13, Sept. 8, 1900, p. 5. Here it should be noted that in the beginning of his theological thinking, till about 1898, Upadhyaya had the idea that the Vedas should be the basis for Christian theology in India. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Theism in the Vedas," Sophia, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1894, pp. 4-5; No. 3, Mar. 1894, pp. 10-11; No. 4, Apr. 1894, pp. 10-11; "The Hymn 'Ka,'" Sophia, Vol. III, Feb. 1896, pp. 2-4. During this period he had also the misunderstanding that as opposed to theism Advaita Vedānta propagates pantheism. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "The Hindu revival," Sophia, Vol. I, No. 6, June 1894, pp. 1 ff.; "Our attitude to Hindu reformers," Sophia, Vol. III, No. 2, Feb. 1896, pp. 6 ff.; Sophia, Vol. I, No. 8, Aug. 1894, pp. 13 ff.; Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1895, p. 6; Vol. III, No. 1, Jan. 1896, pp. 4 ff.; No. 7, July 1896, pp. 6 ff.; No. 9, Sept. 1896, p. 4 etc. But as he came to understand Advaita Vedānta more he became of the firm belief that by Advaita Vedānta, pantheism would be crushed out of existence and true theism could be made to flourish in India. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Vedāntism," Sophia, Vol. I, No. 9, Aug. 11, 1900, pp. 6-7. "According to Pantheism, cosmos is the necessary and intrinsic life of God; God is nothing more than the universe and the universe is nothing less than God" ibid. "True theism holds that God transcends the cosmos. Creation is not necessary for Him to live, being of the finite is derived, dependent and contingent while that of Infinite is self-existent, independent and necessary" ibid. As we shall presently see in his exposition of the Vedānta concepts Sat-chit-ānanda and Māyā Upadhyaya has made it explicit that Advaita Vedānta stands for true theism. Perhaps he was the first Christian to point out this valuable truth to correct the misunderstanding prevalent among Christians that Advaita Vedānta teaches pantheism. The writings of Fr. P. Johanns, S. J., twenty-five years after Upadhyaya, have further affirmed the fact that the doctrine of the absolute independence of God which Śaṅkara reveals constitutes the foundation of theism. Cf. P. Johanns, "To Christ through the Vedanta," Light of
which is Christianity. Vedānta will supply a new garb to the religion of Christ without affecting in the least the essential Christian tenets. The European clothes of Catholic religion should be removed. It should put on Hindu garments to be acceptable to the Hindus.

Upadhyaya points out:

We must fall back upon the Vedantic method in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen. In fact, the Vedanta must be made to do the same service to Catholic faith in India as was done by the Greek philosophy in Europe. The assimilation of the Vedantic philosophy by the Church should not be opposed on the ground of its containing certain errors.

Or to quote again:

We have repeatedly said, and we make bold to say again, that the religion of Christ will never be appreciated by the Hindus if it be not divested of its Graeco-European clothing. It should be restated in terms of Vedānta, before it can be properly intelligible to the Hindu mind.

It was the sincere belief of Upadhyaya that Vedānta will make the natural truths of theism and the supernatural dogmas of Christianity more explicit and consonant with reason than was done by the scholastic philosophy. Moreover, he was of the conviction that the idea of restating Christianity in the terms of the Vedānta can only grow in strength by being thoroughly sifted and analysed.

(ii) Śaṅkara as guide and authority

According to Upadhyaya, true Vedānta is the one expounded by Śaṅkara. The following passage clearly points out his position:

What is Vedantism? It is the religion of the Upanishads as taught by Vyāsa and expounded by Śaṅkara. The schools of Ramanuja and Madhava are called vedantic by suffer nce just as a Unitarian is called a Christian. Statistics show that seventy-five per cent of the Vedantists belong to the school of Śaṅkara. Moreover, the other two schools cannot stand the scientific test of analysis.
It was Śaṅkara’s Advaita which he took as a basis to restate Christian thinking. Whenever he puts forward Vedānta thought it is nothing but Advaita Vedānta that he puts forth. “In representing the vedantic doctrines we shall take the great Sankara as our guide and authority.”

At the same time, Upadhyaya strongly believed that Śaṅkara’s writings would be totally unintelligible if we were to reject the post-Śaṅkarite traditions. Śaṅkara has to be understood with the help of Panchadāśi and Yoga-vāśiṣṭha. To quote:

Our humble opinion is that religious scriptures cannot be understood without the help of traditions. The Upanishads without the interpretation of Vyasa and Sankara are a mere jumble of mystic statements and Sankara without Yogavasistha and Panchadasi is almost unintelligible.

This dependence of Upadhyaya on post-Śaṅkarite tradition for the interpretation of Śaṅkara has had its consequences and this we have indicated in our evaluation.

Coming to the study of the theological contributions of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, first we shall see his doctrine of Trinity as Sat-chit-ānanda, then his doctrine of creation as Māyā and finally the theological points in which he maintained the traditional Christian position.


B. Upadhyaya, “Question and answers,” Sophia, Vol. I, Nos. 15 and 16, Sept. 29, 1900, p. 11. Panchadāśi is a popular handbook of Advaita written by Vidyaranya who is also known as Bharatitirtha. Vidyaranya, who is associated mainly with the Vīvarāṇa school, lived in the 14th century A.D. In Panchadāśi Vidyaranya presents precise definitions of the most important terms in Advaita. Panchadāśi is mainly concerned with cosmological or metaphysical themes rather than with psychological or epistemological analysis. The definitions of Advaita terms given in Panchadāśi exhibit this concern. Panchadāśi’s explanation of Māyā as creative power exhibits this concern. Panchadāśi also tries to synthesize Vedānta with certain basic Śaṅkyan principles (e.g., the doctrine of the guṇās) and it clearly shows the way in which Śaṅkhyā was absorbed or made use of by Vedānta. For English translation of Panchadāśi, cf. Hari Prasad Shastri, Panchadāśi: A Treatise on Advaita Metaphysics, London: Shanti Sadan, 1956. For the philosophy of Advaita from the point of view of Vidyaranya, cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, The Philosophy of Advaita: with special reference to Bharatitirtha Vidyaranya, Madras: Ganesha & Co., 1969. The philosophical poem Yoga-vāśiṣṭha which contains twenty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty-four verses deals with Vedānta problems of a radically monistic type. According to its teaching it is only ideas that have some sort of existence and there is no physical world having a separate existence. Śaṅkara would most emphatically refute such a doctrine and hence the philosophy of Yoga-vāśiṣṭha is more like the doctrine of the Buddhist idealists than the position of Śaṅkara. Nevertheless it is true that the post-Śaṅkarite writing Vedānta—siddhānta—muḥtāvali of Prakāśānanda takes a similar position to that of Yoga-vāśiṣṭha. Yoga-vāśiṣṭha seems to be a
2. Trinity as Sat-chit-ānandam

(i) Sat-chit-ānandam in Śaṅkara’s writings

It is the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara’s writings which Upadhyaya takes as the basis for his explanation of what Sat-chit-ānanda is. First let us see what, according to Upadhyaya, is the position of this concept in Śaṅkara’s Advaita. In Śaṅkara’s Advaita, Sat-chit-ānanda points to the Supreme Being, Brahman. Brahman is Sat (Positive Being), Chit (Intelligence), Ānandam (Bliss).

Referring to Śaṅkara’s Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya 2.3.18 and 1.1.12 Brahmapabandhav Upadhyaya points out that Śaṅkara held the conception of Brahman as Sat-chit-ānandam. To quote:

In refutation of the Vaiśeṣik doctrine that God is potential knowledge, Śaṅkara says: Parasya hi Brahmah chaitanyak-svarupatym annatam (that Parabrahman is essential knowledge—chaitanyak—is spoken of in the Upanishads). He quotes many texts from them against the theory that the supreme Being attains consciousness (vide Bhashya-Vedanta Darsanam, 2.3.18). In his explanation of the Vedanta Sūtra “ananda-mayah abhyasat” (1.1.12) Śaṅkara says: para eva atma ananda-maya bhavitum arhati (Parabrahman is anandam).16

In Śaṅkara’s Advaita the Supreme Being is called Sat-chit-ānandam as well as Nirguṇam. Both these terms point to Brahman in himself, Brahman as unrelated, and there is no contradiction in meaning between them. Upadhyaya warns that a student of Advaita should be very careful not to misunderstand the term Nirguṇam. One should not at once conclude from the use of this term that the God of the Vedānta is an impersonal, abstract, unconscious Being. According to Upadhyaya, “Nirguṇam means that the attributes which relate the Infinite to the finite are not necessary to His being. For example, Creatorhood is not an intrinsic attribute of the Divine Nature.”17 Brahman is said to be Nirguṇam in the sense that He possesses no external attributes, no necessary correlation with any being other than His Infinite Self. The conception of Brahman as Nirguṇam is not contradictory to the conception of him as Sat-chit-ānandam because

Brahmanic modification of idealistic Buddhism written in 9th century A.D., i.e., around the time of Śaṅkara. For the philosophy of Yoga-vāsiṣṭha cf. Surendranath Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, Cambridge: University Press, 1932, pp. 228-72. Even though Upadhyaya mentions Yoga-vāsiṣṭha, in reality it is not Yoga-vāsiṣṭha, but Panchadāśi which has influenced his Advaita thought. This will be clear when we study his writings on Māyā as the best concept to explain the doctrine of creation. It is also worth noting in this connection that Upadhyaya even wrote a commentary on Panchadāśi: cf. B. Animananda, Swami Upadhyay Brahmapabandhav. A study of his religious position, Part II, p. 9.

the meaning of Sat-chit-ānandam is as follows: “He is Sat—existing by himself; He is Chit—self-knowledge, knowing Himself without any external intervention; He is Anandam—supremely happy in His self-colloquy.” Moreover, it should be noted here that for Upadhyaya, personality means “self-knowledge.” So it is wrong to say that the Vedānta has an impersonal conception of God.

(ii) Sat-chit-ānandam in the Upaniṣads

Referring to various Upaniṣadic verses, Upadhyaya points out that in the doctrine of the nature of God the Vedānta conception and Catholic belief are exactly the same. Vedānta conceives the nature of God as Sat (positive being), Chit (intelligence) and Anandam (bliss). There are references in the Upaniṣads to the only one Eternal Being who is the cause of all other beings. Upadhyaya cites the Upaniṣadic verse: *atma va indameka evagra asit: nanyat kinchana mishat* (in the beginning there was only one being; nothing else existed). He points out that Parabrahman is Sat (being) for nothing cannot be a cause. Further he points out the verse *Om tat sat* (that is being) as the mystic mantra of the Vedānta. For explaining Chit Upadhyaya quotes the verse *Sa ikshtā lokan nu srijā iti* (He beheld; shall I create the lokasi?) and narrates Śaṅkara’s comment on it: “The great Śaṅkara says that He beheld the universe not as yet actualised; He beheld the origin, the preservation and the destruction of the universe. He beheld all these before He had created it.” What Upadhyaya infers from this is that Vedānta Rishis had a very clear conception of the universe existing ideally in the intelligence of God from eternity. The further explanation which he gives on Chit on the basis of the Upaniṣads is as follows:

18 Ibid.
20 Summary of the lecture by Upadhyaya, “Hinduism, Theosophy, and Christianity,” *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 12, December, 1897, pp. 1-2: Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya may be perhaps the first Christian who proclaimed that the conception of God in Advaita Vedānta is not impersonal. This is a truth which is often forgotten by Christians and even by Hindus. Further it is worth noting that, according to Upadhyaya, the philosophical meaning of the term “person” in Catholic theology is “a rational individuum, a being endowed with reason and free will.” Cf. B. Upadhyaya, “Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant,” *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p. 9. Hence the similarity between the Christian and Vedānta conceptions of God.
22 Ibid., p. 13. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1a. In this article we reproduce transliterations by Upadhyaya without alteration.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid. The reference is to *Bhagavad Gita* 17.23.
25 Ibid., p. 14. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1b and the Śaṅkara *Bhāṣya* on it.
26 Ibid.
Parabrahman, the supreme Being, is essentially Chit. For Him to be is to know. It is written in the Upanishads that He grows by brooding (tapas) and His brooding is knowledge. He reproduces His self as Sabdabrahman (Logos) by Ikshanam (beholding). The knowing God is mirrored as the known God in the ocean of Chit.21

To point out the Vedānta position of Brahman as Ānandam Upadhyaya describes the narrative in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad in which through the directions from his father Varuna, Brigu came to the knowledge that Brahman is Bliss,28 and then writes:

Brahman is Bliss. He is blessed, ineffably blessed by His very nature. He knows Himself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude... He is in Himself, by Himself... He affects all things but is not affected in return. He is self-satisfied. He is ānanda.29

(iii) Upadhyaya’s own explanation of Sat-chit-ānandam

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya’s own explanation of Sat-chit-ānandam can be summarised as follows: we have to admit a self-existent eternal being, otherwise we would be compelled to admit the absurdity of existence proceeding from non-existence.30 Further, intelligence alone can relate to that which does not exist, for it can think the non-existent. If something has begun that which began was knwon by that which existed. Apart from intelligence, beginning is absurd.31 Moreover, if the Eternal Being finds no repose in the Infinite Image of His own being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge, then it is wanting in perfection. But to say that the Infinite Being is wanting in perfection is a contradiction.32 Thus is proved Sat-chit-ānandam.33 Now, what does it mean to say that Brahman is Sat-chit-ānandam? It means that Brahman knows Himself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude. Brahman is in Himself, by Himself. He is related of necessity only to the Infinite Image of His own Being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge. This relation of Being (Sat) to Itself in self-knowledge (Chit) is one of perfect harmony, self-satisfaction, beatitude, bliss (Anandam). So Sat-chit-ānandam shows us

39 Ibid.
43 In a series of articles entitled “Being” in Sophia, Vol. I, No. 2, June 23, 1900, p. 8; No. 3, June 30, p. 7; No. 4, July 7, p. 7; and in No. 6, July 21, p. 7, Upadhyaya shows that self-existence is a necessary content of being and that being is eternal, immutable, infinite and one. In the last of the same series, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 7, he also proves that the necessary contents of being are Sat (self-existence), Chit (intelligence) and Ānandam (bliss).
how Brahman is ineffably blessed in Himself; blessed in His very nature.\(^{84}\)

**(iv) The Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is exactly the same as the Vedānta conception of Brahman as Sat-chit-ānandam**

Upadhyaya explains the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the following way:

God comprehends Himself by one act of eternal knowledge. The knowing self is the Father, the known self or the self-be-gotten by His knowledge is the Son; and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of reciprocal love proceeding from the Father and the Son.\(^{85}\)

Upadhyaya compares *Sat-chit-ānandam*, the nature of Parabrahman, with the Christian doctrine of the nature of God and proclaims:

We can boldly and safely affirm that this Vedantic conception of the nature of the supreme Being marks the terminus of the flight of human reason into the eternal regions. The Catholic belief is exactly the same. God is the only eternal being; He is purely positive for the particle 'not' cannot be predicated of Him. He knows Himself and reposes in Himself with supremest complacency.\(^{86}\)

Upadhyaya wrote a Sanskrit hymn *Vandē Saccidānandam*\(^{37}\) in adoration of Parabrahman who in Catholic faith is referred as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As an explanation of the hymn, he writes that the hymn


\(^{86}\) B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedānta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 11. Specially note Upadhyaya's wording 'exactly the same'. But the pity is that when we read writings on Upadhyaya, we notice most of them misinterpret this most important point of Upadhyaya's theological thinking. For example, Robin Boyd says: "Brahmanandha is not a Hindu drawing an interesting parallel between Saccidananda and the Trinity. Rather, having come himself to know God in Christ, his own personal experience of God is triune, and he finds the Vedantic teaching fulfilled here in a more meaningful way even than in Śākara. And so, for the benefit of his countrymen, he is led to explain the mystery of the Godhead, the real meaning of Brahman, in terms of the Trinitarian Saccidananda": *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, p. 73. See also pp. 71 and 74. Even Kaj Baago is of the opinion that Upadhyaya presents the doctrine of Trinity as "the solution to the problem of how Brahman is to be known": *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, p. 40.

\(^{37}\) B. Upadhyaya, "Our new canticle," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, pp. 146-47. The hymn is mainly an exposition of the Christian doctrine of Trinity and does not have any theological significance in the context of
is an adoration of that ancient Parabrahma, the Supreme Being whose eternal act finds, according to Catholic faith, an adequate resultant within His own Self, who is not obliged to come in contact with finite beings for the sustenance and satisfaction of His nature. His knowledge is fully satisfied by the cognition of the Logos, the infinite Image of his Being, begotten by thought and mirrored in the ocean of His substance. His love finds the fullest satisfaction in the boundless complacency with which he reposes on his Image and breathes forth the Spirit of bliss. 58

(v) Revelation in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God as Sat-chit-ānanda

An important point to be noted is that even though Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya equates Sat-chit-ānanda with Trinity, he also points out the limitation of reason and need for revelation to understand the inner life of God. 59 Upadhyaya explains the problem facing the Vedāntins which they could not solve as it was beyond the solution of human reason:

How were His infinite knowledge and bliss satisfied within Himself? For, if He had to go out of Himself to satisfy His knowledge and appease the craving of His love, He would be a wanting, a conditioned being. How was relationship compatible with the Absolute nature of the Godhead? This was the problem before them. It was a problem beyond the solution of human reason. So they failed...the result was that they

Upadhyaya’s theological thinking. It would be misleading to look for theology in poetry. What is more important than the hymn is the explanation which Upadhyaya gives to the hymn. Still, it is significant to note that all the words used to explain Trinity are put as adjectives to Saccidānanda and adoration is to Saccidānanda. Moreover in the hymn, bhavavrkshabijaṁabijaṁ (the rootless principle of the tree of existence) denotes Sat; chinmayārūpa (one whose form is intelligence) denotes Chit; saccidāmānasaranam (one who proceeds from the union of Sat and Chit) and ānandāghananam (intense bliss) denotes Ānanda. But it is to be noted that if we isolate this hymn from the rest of Upadhyaya’s writings on Trinity as Saccidānanda and interpret it, such an interpretation would be totally misleading as has been proved in the case of G. Gispert-Sauch, “The Sanskrit hymns of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya,” Religion and Society (see note 2). Upadhyaya does not in his theology give “new meaning” (p. 68) to the Vedānta concept Saccidānanda, nor are the terms heavy with mythological or historical associations (pp. 68-74) relevant to his theology of Trinity as Saccidānanda as Gispert-Sauch thinks. Joseph Mattam, “Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School,” The Indian Journal of Theology (see note 2), is also misleading as reference is given to this hymn alone (p. 195) to explain Upadhyaya’s doctrine of Trinity as Saccidānanda.

came to hold that the idea of the infinite was not for all; it was too subtle for the undeveloped intellects of common people... 40

Through reason we can know that the self-existent Being is necessarily intelligent. But reason cannot tell us how its intelligence is satisfied within the term of its being, what is that which distinguishes the generating self from the eternally generated self. For, in self-cognition, some note or notes are necessary to distinguish the subject from the object. With regard to finite ego this is provided from outside, while in the act of divine self-knowledge foreign intervention is impossible.41 Upadhyaya shows that here the revelation of God in Jesus Christ points to an answer:

Revelation teaches us... that the differentiating note in Divine Knowledge is the response of intelligence. God begets, in thought, His infinite Self-Image and reposes on it with infinite delight while the begotten Self acknowledges responsively His eternal thought-generation.42

Jesus Christ acknowledges responsively His eternal thought-generation from the Father. Between Him and the Father, there is no division in the divine substance; it is a relation of perfect reciprocity. This relation is the revelation of the true relation between \textit{Sat} and \textit{Chit}, as well as the revelation of \textit{Anandam}, the result of that relation.43 So the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God conceived as \textit{Sat-chit-ananda}: “Jesus Christ has declared that God is self-related by means of internal distinctions that do not cast even a shadow of division upon the unity of His Substance.”44 Man had wondered whether being is void of any relation and thus unintelligible. Hence he had also wondered whether God is knowable only in his causal aspect as related to His manifestations. Jesus Christ has solved this problem which puzzled the intellect of man.45 Through Jesus Christ we are able to behold God as he is in Himself, living in communion of self-relation within Himself. To quote:

Jesus Christ has told us that there is a response of knowledge in the God-head. God knows His own self-begotten in thought and is known in return by that Begotten Self... This unique revelation gives us a glimpse of the inner life of the Supreme Being. God reproduces in knowledge a co-responding, acknowledge-

45 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 115.
ledging Self-Image, and from this colloquy of Reason proceeds His spirit of Love which sweetens the Divine Bosom with boundless delight.⁴⁸

3. **Māyā the Best Concept to Explain the Doctrine of Creation**

(i) **Śaṅkara’s position regarding the reality of the world and the meaning of the word Māyā**

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya points out⁴⁷ that both Vyāsa and Śaṅkara,⁴⁸ against the Buddhist School which held the world to be a passing dream, plainly and unmistakably declare that this world is not a dream. The reasons they put forward are: (a) There is an essential difference between the nature of the dream world and that of this external world of ours. The dream world is utterly wanting in coherence while the external world is characterised by persistent coherence. (b) The unreal character of the dream is realised as soon as we rise from sleep. But in our state of waking consciousness we never think the same of the world around us. Nevertheless, as Upadhyaya admits, the world is repeatedly compared in the Vedānta, both by Śaṅkara and Vyāsa, to a dream. This paradoxical language can be reconciled by understanding the true sense in which Vedānta compares the world to a dream. Upadhyaya explains:

When we have a dream we imagine the objects and events we dream about to be possessed of independent existence, whereas they are merely the product of our brain. In like manner, when perceiving this external world through the sense we imagine it to be an independent reality, existing by itself and not as the product of the Divine Mind and Will, then verily our perception of the world may be fitly styled a dream. And it is exactly in this sense and only to this extent that the Vedānta likens the world to a dream.⁴⁹

*Māyā* is the concept put forward by Vedānta to explain the world. The word does not signify that the world is an illusion. What it means is that if we attribute to the world independent and underived existence, then we are creating a perverted and false appearance of the world and it is that creation of our stupid and evil fancy which is an illusion. Upadhyaya in a series of articles entitled *Maya⁵⁰* gave proof-texts from Śaṅkara to show that the concept of *Māyā* does not signify the world as illusion. *Brahma Śūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.28 and 29 hold the doctrine of the objective existence of the world; 1.1.2 says that there can be no question about preservation and dissolution of things unless

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⁴⁸ The reference is to *Brahma Śūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.28, 29.
they have acquired being (labdhasattaka); the first chapter of the Bhāṣya and 2.1.13 point to the distinction between individual souls and material objects, and the first cause; and between cause and effect respectively. But that distinction is not as Madhava or Ramanuja think. Therefore 2.1.14 lays down the non-separateness of the universe from God. Here Śaṅkara shows that the Vedānta, while boldly inculturating the utter nothingness of the universe looked at from the standpoint of intrinsic ontology (paramārtha), strenuously insists at the same time on the contingent (vyavahārika) existence of finite beings.

Further, from Śaṅkara’s central teachings Upadhyaya derives the notion that the universe cannot be the mere sport of Brahman or be a mere illusion:

The universe cannot be the mere sport of Brahman, for as Sankara says: He is all-knowing, intelligent, pure knowledge (Bhashya—adhya 1, pada 1, 4); and that which proceeds from Him (adh. 1, pada 1, 2) must have some reason; though, because He is free and absolutely self-sufficient, as the Acharya (teacher) rightly asserts in the same place, it is the result of choice and not of necessity. Neither can it be an illusion—mere non-being appearing to be being—for Brahman is “free from sin” (Bhashya 1, 1, 20 and Chandogya Upanishad 8, 7, 1) or rather goodness itself, just as He is knowledge itself; and illusion, which is error, cannot proceed from knowledge.51

(ii) The Upaniṣads and Panchadāsī on creation

Upadhyaya also refers to the Upanisadic view of creation. “The Upaniṣads say that creation is an overflow of the bliss (anandam) which sweetens the Divine bosom; it is not a product of necessity but of superabundance.”52 Again, referring to the Aitareya, and Chandogya Upaniṣads he says that creation is by the free determination or will of the Atman:

In the Aitareya Upanishad it is written that the Atman alone lives from eternity, before all, with all and after all. He created this world by sankalpa (free determination of will). So it is in the Taitteriya Chandogya. This sankalpa plainly indicates that he is mukta (free internally as well as externally) in the creative act. If there had been any necessity, there could be no free determination (sankalpa).53

52 B. Upadhyaya, “Two mysteries,” Sophia, Vol. I, No. 8, Aug. 4, 1900, p. 7. The possible references are to the verses in the third Valli of Taittiriya Up. This third Valli of Taittiriya Up. is called Ānanda Valli. Brhadāranyaka Up. 2.4.5 may be an indirect reference according to which it is because the Self is mirrored in things that they are dear to us.
53 B. Upadhyaya, “Question and answers,” Sophia, Vol. I, No. 14, Sept. 15, 1900, p. 7. The possible references are Aitareya Up. 1.1.1; 1.3.1; Chandogya Up. 6.2.3; 7.4.1-3. 
Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya also quotes a number of verses from Panchadasi, to show that Panchadasi, like Saṅkara, emphasises the doctrine of the objective existence of the world:

In the beginning there was Atman (Supreme Being); He contemplated: should I create?—and created the lokas (worlds) by His will (sankalpa). So declare many Rik hymns.

The creative will of God is the cause of the origination of this world, and the human determination (sankalpa) is the cause of the world as related to man and enjoyed by him.

There can be absolutely no subjective world of objects if there be no external existence.

Moreover, Panchadasi teaches that the objects we perceive possess being (asti), intelligibility (bhāti) and goodness (priti)\(^{68}\) and Upadhyaya points out that these three attributes correspond with the Being (Sat), Intelligence (Chit) and Bliss (Anandam) of Brahman, the cause of all things.\(^{69}\) The finite possesses only a communicated existence. Inanimateness manifests His Being, sentience, His Intelligence and rationality His Bliss.\(^{60}\)

(iii) Upadhyaya’s conclusions on the Vedānta teaching of Māyā

Upadhyaya’s conclusions regarding the Vedānta teaching of Māyā can be summarised as follows: Vedānta holds the reality of the objective world. It also holds the ontological (pāramārthik) nothingness of the finite. The origin of this world does not lie in the substantial differentiation or manifoldness of the Brahman or in the modification of the supreme cause. There can be no division or change in Brahman. The world has originated by vivarta, a kind of communication which does not modify the communicator. “There are three kinds of causes: (a) Ārambha (b) Pariṇāmi and (c) Vivarta. The first implies production of effects by combination, the second by transformation and the third by will-causation (sankalpa).”\(^{61}\) In Vedānta, creation is by vivarta, that is by will-causation. This is the meaning of Māyā. Māyā signifies the will-power (sankalpa) of God.\(^{62}\) It means that creation is by the power (sakti) of the will (sankalpa) of God.\(^{68}\) Creation arises from God’s freedom. The desire of creation freely proceeds from His Chit.\(^{64}\) The term Māyā involves three truths:

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\(^{55}\) Panchadasi, 4.5.3.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 4.5.18.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 4.5.35.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 13.5.73.
\(^{59}\) B. Upadhyaya, “Maya,” (see note 54).
\(^{60}\) Ibid.; cf. Panchadasi, 15.20.21.
\(^{62}\) Ibid.
\(^{63}\) Cf. Panchadasi, 4.5.3; 4.5.18.
\(^{64}\) B. Upadhyaya, “Chit,” Sophia, Vol. VI, No. 3, Mar. 1899, p. 239.
(a) God is not necessarily a creator; (b) creatures are non-beings, transformed as it were into being; (c) the transformation is caused by the mysterious power of the will of God. Hence Upadhyaya would say that Māyā is

the fecund Divine power (sakti) which gives birth to multiplicity. This fecundity is called Maya because its character is inscrutable. It is eternal but its operation is not essential to the being of God. By it non-being (asat) is made being (sat).

He points out that, according to Vedānta, this creative fiat cannot be sat (necessarily existent), because God cannot have any necessity to create; nor can it be non-existent, for it is the power of God; nor can it be a mere accident, because there can be no accident in the Eternal. Hence it is called Māyā, something like a mystery, a magical illusion, to the finite intellect of man. Māyā is neither real or necessary, nor unreal, but contingent. Thus Upadhyaya was honestly trying to present the Vedānta meaning of the concept Māyā and it was to this Vedānta understanding of Māyā that he was comparing the Christian doctrine of creation to establish the identity between the two doctrines.

(iv) The Vedānta doctrine of Māyā which explains creation and the Christian doctrine of creation are identical

The point Upadhyaya wants to communicate is that the Vedānta doctrine of Māyā and the Christian doctrine of creation are exactly identical. He compares the Christian doctrine of creation as explained by St Thomas Aquinas with the concept Māyā and points out the following similarities: (a) Māyā signifies that the creation has no being in itself; what it has is derived being. What St Thomas calls creatio passiva is exactly the same. It is the habit of having being from another and resulting from the operation of God. (b) In the Upaniṣads, Brahma Sūtra and its Bhāṣya by Śaṅkara (1.1.13

67 B. Upadhyaya, “Maya,” (see note 65).
69 Here we would like to point out that most of the writings on Upadhyaya are misleading on this point as they hold that Upadhyaya was reinterpreting the Advaita Vedānta concept Māyā to suit his ends. For example, Robin Boyd writes: “The greatest problem facing him was that of creation, and he tackled it boldly by giving a new and original interpretation to Śaṅkara’s teaching on māyā. Vāth and others have felt that this attempt was unsuccessful…” An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology, pp. 74-75. Or cf. Kaj Baago, Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity, p. 41, which says: “…it was through a reinterpretation of that concept (i.e., the concept Māyā) that Brahmabandhav was able to accept Śaṅkara’s philosophy.”
71 Ibid.
and 14) there is reference to "abundance" of Bliss with regard to Brahman and creation can be thought of as the overflow of this "abundance" by Brahman to manifest and impart His own perfections. In Christian understanding too, creation is through the overflow of perfections of God.\(^72\) (c) In Thomist theology creation is the effect of the divine thought and it manifests the perfections of the Infinite and Absolute Being. The supposed root of \(Māyā\), whether \(mā\) (to form, make, create, construct, build, effect, manifest one's self) or \(man\) (to think) indicates that \(Māyā\) also originally meant the same.\(^73\) (d) According to St Thomas, creatures apart from God are indeed darkness, falsity and nothingness (\(tenebrae, falsitas et nihil\)). When the Vedántins affirm all that is not Brahman to be \(Māyā\), they are also pointing to the same truth that if we superimpose independent reality and intrinsic permanence upon creatures that is darkness, falsity and nothingness.\(^74\)

It is interesting to note here that Upadhyaya even takes a further step and declares that the term \(Māyā\) can express the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root \(creare\):

\[\ldots\]the term "maya" is more expressive of the doctrine of creation than the Latin root "creare". Whenever we speak of creation we should be careful to make explicit three factors implied in the creative act. First: there is no necessity on God's part to create. Second: the coming into being of finite objects with the implication that they did not exist. Third: the finite perfections are contained in the infinite in a pre-eminent way. Now the term "Creation" expressed only the second significance, while "maya" conveys…all the three.\(^75\)

But Upadhyaya has also pointed out a difference between the Vedánta and Christian concepts of creation. He thinks that according to Vedánta, individual beings cease to exist in time. But Christian thinking holds that individual souls, though they have no intrinsic power for everlasting life, by God's grace have been blessed to live for ever.

The Vedanta is satisfied only with the ontological view of things. It holds that individual beings must cease to exist in time, because they have no claim to existence. The Catholic philosophy admits the validity of the Vedantic contention, namely, that a creature has no intrinsic power to endure for ever, nay, even for a moment. But it goes further. It teaches that individual souls have been blessed by God to live forever.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
\(^{73}\) Ibid.
The Infinite power, which has given them life for a day, may give them life for days without end.26

4. The Theological Points in which Upadhyaya Maintained the Traditional Christian Position

It should be noted that regarding the doctrines of Man, Sin, Fall, Grace, Atonement and Salvation Upadhyaya maintained the traditional Christian position and did not try to develop Indian Christian thinking on these doctrines.27 The essence of sin lies in choosing the creature above the creator, as an object of final and supreme bliss.

By sin we alienate ourselves from God. By choosing the finite (anatma) as our goal we incur spiritual death and darken our understanding (viveka)... Sin leads to bondage and darkness from which there can be no escape notwithstanding the hardest struggle on our part.28

26 "The true doctrine of Maya," p. 228. Cf. also p. 227. Here it should be remembered Upadhyaya was of the conviction that the teaching of Vedánta contained certain errors as well, side by side with its mostly correct doctrines. He was completely against the idea of the identification of man with God. He would say that "no sin is blacker than that of identifying creature with the Creator": cf. "Question and answers," Sophia, Vol. I, No. 9, Aug. 11, 1900, p. 7.

According to him one among the four blunders the Hindu race has perpetrated to cause the fall of India consists in "upholding the doctrine that man is God"; cf. "Why we are fallen," Sophia, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 15. He points out that it is a horrible blasphemy to say that man is God: cf. "Notes," Sophia, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p. 4. But it is worth noting here that on this point Upadhyaya's understanding of Advaita Vedánta corresponds to post-Sánkara Vedánta especially in its Neo-Vedánta form. Sánkara would never say that man is God. For him, with regard to the Paramátmán, the jivátman is a náma-rúpa, an effect and a mask-like superimposition (upádhi) whose finiteness and apparent independence must be transcended so that its Source and Ground, the Paramátmán, may be seen and known in its unicity. The jivátman is in the form of consciousness (cid-rúpa) but is not absolute consciousness itself; rather, it is rooted in the latter which is the supreme Atman—Brahman, greater and more interior (antarátmán, antaryámin) than the jivátman and the one Energiser of every jivátman (sáravátman). And Mokṣa is when the jivátman discovers its own truth in its own centre, the Paramátmán. Such a discovery is so fulfilling, that there is no sense in claiming a place in it for a separate self-affirmation.


The darkened reason of the sinner can only be reilluminated by the grace of God. It is only the compassion of God that can save the sinner. Jesus Christ who is perfectly Divine as well as perfectly human became one with man in compassionate suffering. He suffered for man’s sin and thus paved the way to salvation. Upadhyaya puts forward Atonement as the central doctrine of Christianity:

The mystery of the restoration to grace is taught in the doctrine of the Atonement. It teaches how God did condescend to be united to humanity in suffering that man may be reconciled to him in joy. This act of divine condescension, this at-one-ment, of divinity and humanity, this sweet mingling of the joy of holiness with the sorrow of compassion is the central doctrine of the Christian religion, because without this exhibition of mercy, man would be deprived of his glorious end.

In such a scheme of theology Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya naturally has to suggest how God became united to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. He wants to explain how the Logos, the Eternal Image of the Father, became incarnate, i.e., united Himself to a human nature created and so adapted as to be wedded to Divinity. This he explains in a manner which would make it easy for the Vedāntin to grasp the Christian position. The following lines of Upadhyaya gives us the gist of his explanation:

According to the Vedanta human nature is composed of five sheaths or divisions (kosha). They are: (1) physical (annamaya) which grows by assimilation; (2) vital (pranamaya); (3) mental (manomaya), through which are perceived relations of things; (4) intellectual (vijnanamaya), through which is apprehended the origin of beings; and (5) spiritual (anandamaya) through which is felt the delight of the Supreme Reality. These five sheaths are presided over by a personality (ahampratyayi) which knows itself... The time-incarnate Divinity is also composed of five sheaths; but it is presided over by the person of the Logos Himself and not by any created personality (aham)... in the God-man the five sheaths are acted upon direct by the Logos-God and not through the medium of any individuality. The Incarnation was thus accomplished by united humanity with Divinity in the person of the Logos. This incarnate God in man we call Jesus Christ.

We may very well agree that this kind of Christological exposition has fully succeeded in putting the already formulated Christian doctrine in a Vedānta garb. Yet we believe that Upadhyaya’s explanation of

79 “Christ’s claim to attention,” pp. 116-17.
80 “A brief outline of Christianity,” p. 32a.
Jesus Christ as *Chit* has a more lasting value in Indian Christology than this exposition: the reason for this has been indicated in the evaluation. Upadhyaya wrote a Sanskrit hymn in praise of the Incarnate Logos.\(^{62}\)

### 5. Summary, Evaluation and Conclusion

We say that Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya wanted to fall back upon the Vedānta method in formulating Christian theology; he wanted to restate Christian doctrines in terms of Advaita Vedānta. He believed that Śaṅkara’s Advaita could serve as a natural, metaphysical basis and thereby supply a new garb which would make the supernatural dogmas of Christianity more explicit and consonant with reason than was done by the scholastic philosophy. In representing the Vedānta doctrines he took the great Śaṅkara as his guide and authority and he was of the opinion that Śaṅkara should be understood with the help of post-Śaṅkarite traditions, especially *Panchadāsti*. We also noticed that the main contributions of Upadhyaya to Indian theology lie in his explanation of the doctrine of Trinity as *Saccidānanda* and the doctrine of creation as *Māyā*. It is the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara’s writings which Upadhyaya takes as basis for his explanation of the Vedānta concept *Sat-chit-ānandam*. In Śaṅkara’s Advaita, *Sat-chit-ānandam* indicates the Supreme Being, Brahman. Śaṅkara explains Brahman as *chaitanyam* (Essential Knowledge) (*Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* 2.3.18) and as *ānandamayāḥ* (Bliss) (ibid. 1.1.12). In Advaita the Supreme Being is called *Sat-chit-ānandam* as well as *Nirguṇam*. Both these terms point to Brahman in Himself, Brahman as unrelated, and there is no contradiction in meaning between them. The Upaniṣads speak of Brahman as *Sat* (Being) (*Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1a; cf. also *Bhagavad Gita* 17.23), *Chit* (Intelligence) (*Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1b) and *Ānandam* (the third *Valli* of *Taittiriya Up.*). To speak of Brahman as *Sat-chit-ānandam* means that Brahman knows Himself and that from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude. Brahman is related of necessity only to the Infinite Image of His own being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge. This relation of Being (*Sat*) to Itself in self-knowledge (*Chit*) is one of perfect harmony, bliss (*Ānandam*). Upadhyaya proclaims then that the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is “exactly the same” as the Vedānta conception of Brahman as *Sat-chit-ānandam*, because in the Trinity the Father’s knowledge is fully satisfied by the cognition of the Logos, the Infinite Image of His Being, begotten by thought and mirrored in the ocean of His substance and His love finds the fullest satisfaction in the boundless complacency with which He reposes on His Image and breathes.

\(^{62}\) “*Incarnate Logos,*” p. 7. All except the first stanza of the hymn is an exposition of traditional Christian understanding of Jesus Christ. The first stanza describes Jesus Christ, the God-man (*Nara-Hari*) as the transcendent Image of Brahman (*Brahmaparātpararūpa*) and Eternal Knowledge (*Chirachit*). Here Upadhyaya explains Jesus Christ as *Chit*, as in his exposition of *Sat-chit-ānanda* as Trinity.
forth the Spirit of bliss. Upadhyaya also points out that the revelation in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God as Sat-chit-ānanda. Coming to the doctrine of creation as Māyā, we saw Upadhyaya giving proof-texts from Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads and Panchadāśi to show that the concept Māyā does not signify the world as illusion. Śaṅkara’s Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya 2.2.28 and 29 hold the doctrine of the objective existence of the world; 1.1.2 says that there can be no question about preservation and dissolution of things unless they have acquired being (labdhasattaka); the first chapter of the Bhāṣya and 2.1.13 point to the distinction between individual souls and material objects, and the first cause and between cause and effect respectively. But that distinction is not as Madhava or Ramanuja think. Therefore 2.1.14 lays down the non-separateness of the universe from God. Here Śaṅkara shows that the Vedānta, while boldly inculcating the utter nothingness of the universe looked at from the standpoint of intrinsic ontology (paramārtha), strenuously insists at the same time on the contingent (vyavahārika) existence of finite beings. According to the Upaniṣads creation is an overflow of the bliss (ānandam) of Brahman (the third Valli of Taittirīya Up. which is called Ananda Valli) and the Supreme Being created this world by sāṅkalpa (free determination or will) (Aitareya Up. 1.1.1.; 1.3.1.; Chāndogya Up. 6.2.3.; 7.4.1-3 etc.). Panchadāśi also explains that the creation of the world is by the sāṅkalpa of the Supreme Being (4.5.3; 4.5.18 etc.). Upadhyaya points out that according to Advaita Vedānta the world originated by Vivāra, a kind of communication which does not modify the communicator. Vivāra implies creation by will-causation (sāṅkalpa). This is also the meaning of Māyā. Māyā signifies the will-power (sāṅkalpa) of God. It means that creation is by the power (sakti) of the will (sāṅkalpa) of God. The term Māyā involves three truths: (a) God is not necessarily a creator; (b) creatures are non-beings, transformed as it were into being; (c) the transformation is caused by the mysterious power of the will of God. Upadhyaya then declares that this Vedānta doctrine of Māyā which explains creation and the Christian doctrine of creation are identical because, according to the Christian doctrine of creation also, God does not create out of necessity but through the overflow of his perfections; creation has no being in itself; what it has is derived being and creation is the effect of the divine thought. Upadhyaya even says that the term Māyā can express the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root creare. We have also noted that regarding the doctrines of Man, Sin, Fall, Grace, Atonement and Salvation, Upadhyaya maintained the traditional Christian position and that he tried to explain the person of Jesus Christ in terms of Vedānta human nature.

When we analyse Upadhyaya’s interpretation of Sat-chit-ānanda, it should be pointed out that nowhere in Śaṅkara’s writings do we find that term as such. The term Saccidānanda perhaps first appears in Tējōbindu Upaniṣad of the ninth or tenth century A.D. Still, as Upadhyaya rightly shows there are many things in Śaṅkara’s writings which indicate Brahman as Sat, Chit and Ānandam. It should also be noted that Śaṅkara interprets Satyam jñānānanantam (not ānantam)
Brahma (Tait. Up. 2.1) as one of the Vedanta statements which gives the essential (svātṛāpa) and non-relational (nirāpeka) definition (lakṣaṇa) of the Absolute, indicating Its true nature. Upadhyaya was one who believed that Śaṅkara should be understood with guidance from post-Śaṅkarite Advaita traditions. Hence there is nothing unusual in his search for support in Śaṅkara’s writings for a post-Śaṅkarite concept. On the whole Upadhyaya’s interpretation of Sat-chit-ānanda can be accepted as true to the spirit of Advaita Vedanta starting from Śaṅkara to the Neo-Vedāntins.

While we study Upadhyaya’s interpretation of Trinity as Sat-chit-ānanda, mention has to be made of the three other persons who did similar work, namely Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884), Swami Parama Arubi Anandam (Fr J. Monchanin) (1895-1957) and Swami Abishiktananda (1910-1973). Keshub Chunder Sen is important because sixteen years before Upadhyaya, in 1882, he was the first one to interpret the Trinity as Saccidānanda.84 Though Monchanin did not make any important contribution,85 his successor Swami Abishiktananda’s interpretation is significant. While Upadhyaya’s Saccidānanda represented God in Himself as unrelated alone, Abishiktananda reinterpreted Saccidānanda: for him the concept signified the inseparable aspects of the mystery of God in himself as well as the mystery of the divine presence in the innermost sanctuary of man’s being.86 Here we would like to point out that by combining the thoughts of both Upadhyaya and Abishiktananda on Trinity as Saccidānanda and further developing them, there is a possibility for arriving at a more complete formulation of the Indian Christian doctrine of Trinity, a Christology and also an Anthropology. Nevertheless, the uniqueness

84 Cf. Keshub Chunder Sen, “That Marvellous Mystery—The Trinity,” Lectures in India, Vol. II, London: Cassell and Co., 1904, pp. 1-48. It should be noted that for Sen Trinity was only a symbol and the three members of the symbol, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were just pointing to the reality of God in different ways; the three members do not represent three persons sharing the same essence but they are just three functions of the same person. Moreover Sen gives only a very brief account of Trinity as compared with Sat-chit-ānanda.

85 J. Monchanin called Trinity Sat-chit-ānanda, but his Sat-chit-ānanda is a mere exposition of the traditional Christian doctrine of Trinity: cf. Swami Parama Arubi Anandam—A Memorial, Tiruchirapalli, 1959, p. 200. What he believed was that the Hindu Sat-chit-ānanda finds its fulfilment in the already formulated Christian doctrine of Trinity.

86 Cf. Swami Abishiktananda, Saccidānanda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience, Delhi: ISPCK, 1974; Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the Cave of the Heart, Bombay/Bangalore: The Institute of Indian Culture/CISRS, 1969. Abishiktananda believed that the Hindu experience of Saccidānanda should be remoulded to attain the Christian experience of Saccidānanda and once that is actualised then the renewed experience of Saccidānanda would be the Trinitarian culmination of advaitic experience.
of Upadhyaya’s interpretation of Trinity as *Saccidananda* lies in showing the fact that they are both exactly the same.

When we study Upadhyaya’s interpretation of the doctrine of creation as *Māyā*, it should be remembered that Śaṅkara preferred the term *ajñāna* or *avidyā* to *Māyā* and it was his later disciples who misinterpreted his teaching as a form of *māyā vāda*. The term *Māyā* is used by Śaṅkara exclusively as a comparative term and not as a technical term of his system. It should also be noted that, while he uses *Māyā*, half of the times he uses it as meaning “creative power (of the Lord)” and, while he uses it with the meaning “magic”, he does so without denying the genuine existence of the world. Hence Upadhyaya’s interpretation of Śaṅkara’s doctrine of creation is correct, though it is true that Śaṅkara won’t use *Māyā* as a technical term to explain the doctrine of creation. Nor would Śaṅkara use the term *vivarta* to explain the doctrine of creation because that term at his time belonged to Śādvaita. It was Padmapāda who first introduced *vivarta* into Advaita Vedānta, distinguishing it from *parināma* and it was Vimuktatman who fully introduced the term *Māyā* into Advaita. It should be noted that *Māyā* in the post-Śaṅkarite tradition could mean world as “total illusion” as well. It is on *Panchadasi* that Upadhyaya depends to be saved from this misinterpretation of Śaṅkara’s Advaita. But we would like to point out that if Upadhyaya had directly depended on Śaṅkara he would not have been in trouble. This is all the more true when we look into Upadhyaya’s misunderstanding that Advaita Vedānta teaches the doctrine that man is God (cf. supra footnote no. 76). This misunderstanding came because he depended on post-Śaṅkarite traditions. Hence the lesson we can learn from Upadhyaya’s experience is that Śaṅkara should be understood through Śaṅkara’s writings alone. We gladly accept in principle Upadhyaya’s formulation of the Indian Christian doctrine of creation as *Māyā*, but we suggest that it would be better for avoiding misunderstandings if, instead of *Māyā*, we put forward Śaṅkara’s theory of causation to explain the Indian Christian doctrine of creation. Credit goes to Upadhyaya for proclaiming the truth that the concept of creation according to Śaṅkara better explains the Christian doctrine of creation than any other existing concept.

In spite of all the limitations of his theological writings, Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya as an Indian theologian rightly deserved the love and respect of all Indian Christians. The limitations of his time (1861-1907) are well evident in Upadhyaya’s writings. Today we no longer consider Hinduism to be a mere natural religion of reason and Christianity alone to be the supernatural religion of revelation. Today no longer do we Indians believe the function of Indian theology to be merely the stitching of a new Vedānta garb for an already formulated Christian theology, but rather, for us, Indian theology is the contrib-

bution from the Vedânta in the very formulation of the human expression of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Until India’s con-
tribution is received “Revealed Truth” has not become “The Revealed Truth” in its possible expressive fulness. That is why one does not have much admiration for Upadhyaya’s explanation of the traditional doctrine of the person of Christ using the garb of a Vedântic understanding of human nature. In his doctrines of Trinity as Saccidâ-
nanda and Creation as Mâyâ, the case is different. True, here also he is following the basic methodology of putting an already formulated Christian theology in Vedânta terms. But, in effect, his effort has accomplished much more than this. The reason for this achievement is that Upadhyaya never tries to reinterpret the Advaita Vedânta con-
cepts Saccidânanda and Mâyâ to produce new clothing for the already formulated Christian doctrines of Trinity and Creation. What he establishes is that Trinity is Saccidânanda and that Creation is Mâyâ. This indeed is a valuable contribution. From such a conclusion the way ahead for us is clear. It is possible for us to bring out new in-
sights on the mysteries of Trinity and Creation from the Vedânta doctrines of Saccidânanda and Mâyâ. Upadhyaya himself has shown that the concept of Mâyâ expresses the doctrine of Creation far better than any existing Christian concept. Upadhyaya has also set forth the person of Jesus Christ as the further clarification and affirmation of God as Saccidânanda. The relation between Jesus and the Father affirms the true relation between Sat and Chit; it also affirms Ānandam, the result of that relation. Christian truths are there already in Vedânta; Jesus Christ is none other than the affirmers of those truths. This position is entirely different from putting the already formulated doctrines of Trinity, Christ and Creation in Vedânta terms. Here Vedânta is, to some extent, receiving authority to formulate an understanding of Trinity in terms of Saccidânanda, of Christ in terms of Chit and of Creation in terms of Mâyâ. Of course Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya has not explicitly proclaimed so. But he has indicated to us the way forward. Inasmuch as he was the first to indicate such a way, he is truly the Father of Indian theology.