

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CONCEPT 'MĀYĀ'

1. a) A descriptive account of the development of the concept of Māyā in the Vedas. Indra is said to be mayavi. Māyā in the principal Upaniṣads, e.g. in the Śvetāsvatara. Māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ vidyatmāyinaṁtu maheśvaram. Māyā in the Gītā : māyā is a creative power of the Godhead.
- b) Māyā in the chief schools of philosophical thought particularly those of Vedānta.

The Vedas and the Upaniṣads formed the background of the Vedānta. The Vedānta being an orthodox system of philosophy employ reason in subordination to the authority of the Vedas. Among the Vedas the Ṛg-Veda is the most ancient record of the Indo-Aryan Religious thought. In the Vedic religion the gamut of all later philosophical thoughts can be traced back including polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism. The Vedic thinkers wondered at the grand and sublime powers of nature and clothes them with the glory of supernatural and superhuman spirits akin to mankind. This broke forth into songs in the honour of the Gods of the Sun (Surya), the dawn (Uṣās), the raincloud (paryanya) and the like. One of the Gods Indra holds the earth, the sky, and the heaven. He unites the immeasurable earth and the sky. He is the father of the Maruts, the fire-God. He is the destroyer of enemies

in the battle field. He is the protector of the worshippers. He is the killer of demon Vṛtra.

To understand the significance of the concept of māyā in Indian thought we should discuss first how it occurs frequently in the Vedas specially in R̥g-Veda. The concept of māyā was used generally to recognise the mighty supernatural forces of the Gods like Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra and Agni.

In R̥g-veda Māyā stands for some sort of energy - a power to do something. The later-developed sense of 'magic' - has references in the Vedas specially in respect of cunning and deceptive power of the asuras.

"Ayam loko jālamāsēcchakrasya mahato mahan
Tenāhamindra jālenāmūmstamasābhidadhāmisarvān" ...¹

This world so mighty was the net of sakra; of the Mighty One :
With this, the net of Indra, I envelop all those men with gloom.
Again in R̥g-Veda 7/104/24

"Indra jahi pumāṃsamyātudhāhamtua striyam māyāyāsāsādanam
vigrīvāso mūradevārdantumā te dr̥śant Sūryamuccaraṅtam. .."

Slay the male demon, Indra ! slay the female joying and triumphing in
arts of magic. Let the fools' Gods with but necks fall and perish, and
see no more the Sun when he arises.

This sort of Māyā is basically 'Āsuri māyā' or 'Āsurasya Māyā', a special prerogative to the asuras.

"Samrājā urgrā vṛsabhā divaspatī pṛthivyā Mitra Varuṇa vicarṣanī
Citrebhivabhairupa tiṣṭhathōravam dyām varṣayatho asurasyamāyā..."

Imperial Kings, strong, Heroes, Lords of earth and heaven, Mitra and Varuṇa, ye ever active ones,

Ye wait on thunder with the many tinted clouds, and by the Asura's magic power cause Heaven to rain.²

In fact in Ṛg -Veda there is the reference of two types of Māyā - Māyā which belongs to the Gods Daivī māyā and Adavī māyā, which belongs to the Asuras. The latter is described as a sort of obstructing power - demon Vṛtra possesses it. The Vedic R̥ṣis is various hymns prayed to the Gods to destroy this āsurī māyā.

"Prādevīrmāyāḥ saḥate durevāḥ śīstīto śṛṅge rakṣase vinikṣe" ³

(Lord Agni) He conquers gobbs and malign enchantments, and sharpens both his horns to gore the Rakshas.

"Ime naro Vṛtrahatyēṣu sūrā viśvā adevirabhiḥ santu māyāḥ" ⁴

Let these men, heroes in the fight with foeman, prevail against all Godless arts of magic.

"Prendrasya vocamprathamā kṛtāni pranūtanā Maghavā yā cakāra.

Yadedadivērashista māyā athābhavat Kevalah Somo asya." ⁵

I will declare the earliest deeds of Indra, and recent acts which Maghavan both accomplished.

When he had conquered Godless wites and magic, Soma became his own entire possession.

"Vajrena hi Vṛtraha Vṛtramastaradevasya śúśuvānasya māyāh."⁶

The Vṛtra slayer with his bolt felled Vṛtra; the magic of the godless, waxen mighty.

The adaivī māyā is the root cause of the Universe—something inherent within our mind. It is mainly a part of negative magical deceptive power that should be conquered. This adaivī māyā was destroyed by Lord Indra with the help of His creative Daivī Māyā.

"Yadha taṃ māyinaṃ mṛgam tamu tvam māyayādhērarchannanu svarājyam.."⁷

(For) Thou (Indra) with thy surpassing power smotest to death the guilefull beast, landing own imperial sway.

"Tvam māyābhiranavadya māyinaṃ śrāvasyatā manasā Vṛtramardayaḥ"⁸

(Oh Indra) Thou with magic powers didst rend the conjurer Vṛtra, O Blameless One, with heart that longed for fame.

"Ahimohānamapa āśāyānaṃ pra māyābhirmāyivaṃ sakṣadindraḥ..."⁹

Indra with wondrous powers subdued the Dragon, the guileful lurker who besent the waters.

"Ni māyīno dānavasya māyā apādayat papivānt sutasya."¹⁰

And, having drunk his fill of flowing Soma baffled the guileful Danava's devices.

"Aya ha tyam māyayā vāvṛdhānaṃ manojuvā svatavaḥ parvatena."¹¹

Strong of thyself, thou by this art hast shattered, with thought swift Parvata, him who waked against thee.

Varuṇa is also worshipped as described to subdue the magical māyā -

"Sa hi dyutā vidyutā veti sāma pṛthum yonimasuratvā Sasāda

Sa sanidebhiḥ prasahāno asya bhrāturna ṛte saptathasya māyāḥ ...¹²

He goes to end his work with lighting flashes; wide is the seat his Asura glory gives him.

With his companions, not without his Brother, he quells this Saptathā's magic devices.

Thus Varuṇa the God of Śūnya who destroys its last destitute by his enlightened feet and He himself enters in Viśoka Loka

"Sa māyā archinā padāstranān nākamāruhat."¹³

(Varuna) with his bright feet he overthrow their magic, and went up to heaven.

This daivī māyā is not the creative force of the world creation. This magical power is something which ---

"Na tam vidātha ya imā jajana."¹⁴

It makes destruction to know the Lord the Reality within.

On the otherhand daivī māyā has been described as the energy or power belonging to God's own nature. It is the First Law of the Universe comparable to the notion of 'Dharma' or 'Ṛta'-some sort of prajna. The world is created and sustained through this maya - out of some ānanda.

"māyāvino mamire asya māyayā nṛcakṣasaḥ pitaro garbhama dadhuh."¹⁵

By his high wisdom have the might sages wrought, the Fathers who behold mankind laid down the germ.

"Sa vahiniḥ putraḥ pitroḥ pavitravān punāti dhīro bhuvanāni māyayā..."¹⁶

Son of these parents, he the priest with power to clause, sage, sanctifies the worlds with his surpassing power.

"Adhārayat pṛthivēm viśvedhāya samastabhnānmāyayā dyāmavasrasah."¹⁷

(Lord Indra) First he upheld the earth that nourisheth all life, and stayed the heaven from falling by his wondrous skill.

"Uta sindhum vālyam vitasthānamadhi kśāmi
Pariṣṭha Indra māyayā."¹⁸

Thou, Indra, didst with magic power resist the overflowing stream. Who spreads her waters over the land.

Now, in interpreting the spirit of the Vedic thought the Upaniṣads (principal) should be realised first. The upaniṣads came immediately after the Vedas as the continuation and development of the views of the vedic hymns. The Upaniṣads thus forming the concluding portions of the Veda, are called as Veda-anta or the end of the Veda, which suggests that they contain the essence of the Vedic teaching. The advancement of the Upaniṣads on the Vedas consists in an increased emphasis on the monistic suggestions of the Vedic hymns. It is assumed as clear from the account of the monistic nature of Brahman, that Brahman is the sole and only reality of the world, and its material and efficient cause. "That created itself by itself".

"Yathorṇa - nābhiḥ sṛjate gr̥ṇate ca, yathāpṛthivyām oṣadhayas sambhavantī,

Yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni tathākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam".¹⁹

As a Spider sends forth and draws in (its thread), as herbs grow on the earth, as the hair (grows) on the head and the body of a living person, so from the Imperishable arises here the universe.

It is the oneness or tādātmya between Brahman and the world that is expressed in all such slokas. The external world of everyday experience is not something alien, not something qualitatively different from the Ātman.

It is Brahman who according to the Upaniṣads is the sole source of life and death, creation and destruction acting as the single thread which synthesizes the unity with the whole plurality. Brahman is in the world, though not as the world. There remains the eternal problem of explaining co-existence of plurality and unity. In the absence of specific knowledge of Brahman, philosophers like Śaṅkara generally tend to explain the inexplicable relation with the help of maya. As a matter of fact, in many passages the Upaniṣads declare that the world is only a development of the absolute spirit. Nature is a system of spontaneity or self-evolving autonomy is the manifestive realisation of the Absolute truth. The whole process of creation depends on self expression which is the essence

of the absolute. Activity and force are inherent in Absolute existence. Māyā, in the sense of energy is potentially present in Being.

Some philosophers believe that, the upaniṣads support the doctrine of māyā in the sense of illusoriness of the world. Deussen held such a view that God alone is real and there is no creation at all-this view is supported by the Upaniṣads. The argument urged in favour of this theory of illusion is that, the Upaniṣads assert the sole reality of Brahman, which leads to think that the world is unreal.

In Upaniṣads the origin of the world is traced to creation or emanation. The world springs from Him is sustained by Him, and absorbed in Him, and is founded in Him, "Taddhedam tarhyavyākṛtam ās it tannāmarūpābhyām eva vyākṛīyata".²⁰

The Śvetāśvatara, a later Upaniṣad refers to the creation of the world by God out of māyā or prakṛti, which is constituted by his various powers. God is the Lord of prakṛti and individual souls. He is endowed with maya. God is explained as māyin, who works with His wonderful power and creates the world out of this power. All the works of the world are wrought by Him. The supreme is both transcendent and immanent. It is at the sametime manifest and unmanifest vyāktavyaktaḥ, the silent and the articulate śabdāśabdaḥ real and unreal sad - asat. Māyā is prakṛti. "Māyāṁ tu prakṛtim vidyān māyinām tu maheshvaram".²¹ God

possessed of maya, creates the world. His powers are supreme and various. "Asman Mayē sṛjate visvam etat".²² "Pārsyasaktir vividhaiva srūjate"²³. These powers constitute māyā or prakṛti, which is real. One God creates diverse objects by means of his various powers.

"Yas tantunābha iva tantubhēḥ pradhānajaiḥ.
Svabhāvataḥ deva ekah svam āvr̥ṇot,
Sanodadhād brahmapyayam".²⁴

The one God who according to his own nature, covers himself like a spider with threads produced from pradhāna (unmanifested matter), may He grant us entrance into Brahman. Again, "Ya eko jalavān īśata eśanēbhiḥ".²⁵

The one who spreads the net, who rules with his ruling powers. Samkara-charya identifies jāla or net with māyā.

"te dhyāna yogānugatā apaśyan devātmaśaktim sva-guṇair nigūdhām,
Yaḥ Karaṇāni nikhēlāvi tānikālatmayaktāny adhiṣṭhatyekah."

Those who followed after (were devoted to) meditation and contemplation saw the self power of the Divine hidden in its own qualities. He is the one who rules over all these causes from time to the soul.

Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad also says that, prakṛti or māyā is unborn, composed of sattva rajas and tamas and is mutable. It creates many similar products

out of these guṇas 'Ajam ekam lohitaśukrakṛsnām bahvēh projāh srjamānām sarūpaḥ' - 4/5. 'tsyabhidhyānād yajanāt tattva-bhavad bhuyas cante visva-māyānivṛttih.'

By meditating on Him, by uniting with Him, by reflecting on His being more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world.

Though Brahman is devoid of sattva, rajas and tamas (nirguṇa), they are his power by which he conceals his essential nature, and creates the world. Māyā is the power which moulds forms in the formless. God though is not subject to māyā has control of over it. Though Brahman is logically prior to God though God is taken over into Brahman's transcendental being. This concept of prakṛti or māyā is different from the Sāṃkhya concept of prakṛti, composed of the guṇas is his own power (Svaśakti). He creates the world out of his own power of prakṛti. Prakṛti is the conscious power of Brahman, which can create the world of multiple forms and various objects.

Māyā is also explained as the cosmic nescience. It constitutes the body of Sūtrātma or Īśvara. He is self conscious with Māyā as the non-ego or object of consciousness. While the world is created by the power of maya of Īśvara, the individual soul is bound down by māyā in the sense of avidyā or ignorance. Avidyā is mentioned in the Upaniṣads as the

source of delusion. The Katha Upanisad says that when a person lodges himself in vidyā, wisdom, instead of avidyā, ignorance, he can easily realise the truth i.e. Brahman.

“avidyāyām antare vartamānaḥ, svayam
dhīrah panditammanyamānaḥ
dandramyamānaḥ pariyanti mūḍhaḥ
andhenaviva neyamānāyathāndhāḥ”.²⁶

The cosmic consciousness beyond cause and effect, ego and non-ego, is called Brahman. If we concentrate our attention on Brahman, the Absolute Truth, we feel that the world is not independent of Brahman. Their relation can not be explained. Māyā is on the other hand may be explained as the creative power of Īśvara. The world is explained as real and unreal, sat and asat. Śvetāsvara Upaniṣad says that, God is the magician (Mayin) and māyā is prakṛti. He created the world out of prakṛti and covered Himself in it. "The power of God was Hidden in His own qualities. "God is the Lord of Prakṛti and individual souls (kṣetrajña)" Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 4/10, 6/10, 1/3, 6/16. Here prakṛti or maya is conceived as the power of God. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says "Indra māyābhiḥ pururūpa ēyate" Māyā has been conceived as the supernatural power by which Indra takes various forms. Creation is the manifestation of the power of God.

It is sometimes held by different philosophers that the Upaniṣads supported

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the doctrine of māyā as a mere illusory force. Because the non-duality of the Self or Ātman or Brahman as the sole reality of the universe was emphasised. It is undoubtedly true that according to the Upaniṣads, plurality, succession in time, co-existence in space, relations of cause and effect, oppositions of subject and object are not absolute reality. But this is not saying that they are not existent or mere illusions created by some deceptive power. Regarding the reference of māyā, the Upaniṣads simply try to emphasise that there is some underlying reality in all experienced finite objects. But, it is to be noted that the Upaniṣads nowhere say that the infinite excludes the finite.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan there has been much criticism of the theory of the Upaniṣads under the false impression that it supports the illusory nature of the world. Undoubtedly the Upaniṣads emphasise that there is one Absolute, were there not an absolute, we should be landed in a vacuum, which would be purposeless. But the essential harmony between Being and becoming is also emphasised. Māyāvāda is in no sense implied to support the doctrine of the illusion.

In our religious life the dual aspect of Brahman exerts a great influence. It inspires a man to transcend his own limitations to attain spiritual freedom - though he is bound to live and suffer in this material world of finitude. It is the inherent reliance on the synthesis of sadāst in Brahman which can only help a man to go beyond this asat to reach the sat.

If the world or its creative power māyā were altogether unreal none can proceed from the unreal to the real.

Infact "There is hardly any suggestion in the Upaniṣads that the entire universe of change is a basisless fabric of fancy a mere phenomenal show or a world of shadows."²⁷ The Upaniṣads never teaches us that the world is a barren nothing.

On the contrary Katha Upaniṣad says that the supreme Lord experiences the results of deeds : (11311)

“ ṛtam pibantau sukrtasya lokeguhām
parviṣtan parameparārdhe
chāyā tapau brahma - vido - vadantē
pañcāgnayo ye ca tri naciketaḥ.”

It suggests that we are the images and likenesses of God, and when we experience the result of our deeds, He does also. There is an intimate relation between God and the world of souls. The Absolute is not a metaphysical abstraction. The world of our experience what is subject to change and growth in the world of becoming reaches its fulfillment in the world of the Absolute. The Brahman is not in anyway a cancellation of the world of becoming, but its transmigration. The world is God's revelation of Himself. His joy assumes all these forms. "Ānadarūpam amṛtam yad vibhāti". But there is a proper view which identifies the

Upaniṣad doctrine with an abstract monism, which reduces the world into an empty dream. The root cause of calling the relation between the infinite Brahman and the finite world as māyā lies with its inexplicability.

The Bhāgabat Gītā, which is a part of Bhīṣmaparva of the Mahābhārata, is the most important, most popular and authoritative work of Hinduism. It has several commentaries written by the vedāntists and is called as the Gītā. The metaphysical idealism preached by the Upaniṣads is transformed in the Gītā into a theistic religion, providing room for love, faith, prayer and devotion. The Gītā tends to mould the idealism as acceptable to the daily life of mankind, which upholds an energetic force conception among the active participation of the supreme Lord in this world.

It gives us a conception of God who is real though overcomes the limitedness of finite and unreality of noneternal beings - who coincides within Himself real and unreal finite and infinite. "The Gītā refuses to commit the fallacy of taking distinctions for divisions. It reconciles all abstract oppositions."²⁸

Though the Gītā does not sufficiently explain how the Absolute truth The supreme reality which is originally conceived as non-active spirit becomes the personal, active spirit i.e. Puruṣottma - creating and sustaining

the universe. The concept of māyā is mainly introduced with the aim of explaining the mysterious relation between the Absolute God and the personal God. Logically this mysterious relation may be explained as the sakti or power of the absolute. As the generative power prakṛti it is the source of delusion which hides the true nature of reality from finite beings.

Infact, it is the contradiction which constitutes the main spring of progress. It appears that even God as the creator has the element of negativity or maya though he controls it. The Gītā believes in God of love and divine incarnation. Though He is unborn and infinite, and the transcendent Lord of all creatures, he assumes a human body by limiting his infinitude through His prakṛti or power of māyā.

The Gita says -

"ajo'pē sann avyayātma
bhūtānām Īsvaro'pi san
prakrtim svām adhiṣṭhāya
sambhavāmy ātmamāyaya." 29

The supreme God puts forth His active nature or svam prakṛtim and creates the jīvas, who work out their destines according to their own nature.

The author of the Gītā frequently reminds us that the manifold manifestation is a creation of own mystic power, or yogamāyā.

"na' haṁ prakāśh sarvasya -
yogamāyasamāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho' yam - na' bhijānāti
loko māmajam avyayam".³⁰

Prakṛti or God's māyā is the material cause of the world. It is modified into the world under the guidance of God, who is its efficient cause. God has lower (aparā) prakṛti composed of earth, water, light, air, ether, manas and buddhi - which is the material cause of the physical and biological world and psychical entities. He has higher (parā) prakṛti, which sustains the finite embodied souls. Both of these lower and higher prakṛti are the powers of God. So God becomes both material and efficient cause of the world. Higher and lower māyā are conceived as puruṣa and prakṛti i.e. matter and consciousness.

Prakṛti is God's māyā composed of sattva rajas and tamas. Again, they are the products of prakṛti. Māyā is not an appearance. It is a real power of God. "Daivē hyeṣā guṇamayē mama māyā duratyayā".³¹

"Mayādhyakṣena prakṛiḥ sū yate sacarācaram
hetunā' nena Kauntiya Jagad viparivartate"³²

Prakṛti and puruṣa both are eternal. They are neither created nor destroyed.
"Prakṛtim puruṣimcaiva viddhyanāde ubhāvapi"³³

Gradually māyā comes to mean the lower prakṛti, since puruṣa is said to be the seed which the Lord casts into the womb of prakṛti for the generation of the universe. The divine māyā gradually is conceived as avidyā māyā is the source of delusion to the mortals whereas, to God who knows it all and controls it is vidyamāyā. To human being māyā is a source of trouble and misery.

Since, the world is only an effect of God, who is the cause, and since everywhere the cause is more real than effect, the world as effect is said to be less real than God the cause. There is a constant struggle of opposites in the world of experiences, though the real is above all.

God gives relative freedom to the finite souls by exercising which they do right or wrong actions and earn merits or demerits. When the finite will remain in accordance to the divine will, and is motivated by the divine purpose, it consciously becomes an instrument of the divine will, and acts to realise the purpose of God.

"ēśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānaṃ
hṛddeśe' rjuna teṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni
yantrārūdhani māyayā".³⁴

The world is dependent on Brahman, though the latter is not dependent on the world. The onesided dependence and the logical inconceivability of the relation of the Absolute Reality and the world are brought out by the word, 'māyā'. Māyā does not imply that the world is an illusion - that the world is non-existent absolutely. The Gītā repudiates the view that,

"asatya apratiṣṭhāṁ te
jagad āhuranēśvram
aparasparasāmb hutāṁ
kim anyat kāmahaitukan"³⁵

It is a delimitation distinct from the unmeasured and the immeasurable.

Māyā is sometimes said to be the source of delusion (moha). Deluded by these three guṇas, God is veiled and becomes unmanifested to our mortal vision. The evil doers cannot attain to the supreme, for their mind and will are not instruments of the spirit but the ego, "māyayā paṛtajñānā āsurāṁ bhāvam āsritāh."³⁶ The world is said to be deceptive because God hides Himself behind his creation.

The individuals are subjects to māyā, or delusion, when they are lost in outer appearances. We get individuality when we transcend māyā and realise our true status. From the standpoint of absolute truth, their individuality is dependent upon the object element. In this world those

acts indicative of distinctive individuality are not due to the actionless puruṣa, but are derived from the forces of prakṛti, "kāryate hy avasah karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ."

**Maya in chief schools of philosophical
Thought particularly those of Vedānta**

We have already examined that the concept of māyā as conceived in the Vedas, the principal Upaniṣads and the Gītā. The Advaitins think that their theory of māyā can offer a proper explanation of all the fact of Māyā.

The concept of māyā is most important thesis of the Advaitavāda. Advaitavāda is so dependnt on the concept of māyā that it may be called as māyāvāda. Śaṅkarāchārya, emphasized (as generally understood) on the concept of māyā as some deceptive magical power.

In the BaudhaPhilosophy "māyā" was latently present as the concept of Śūnyavāda of the Mahāyāna Philosophy. The mādhyaṃikas regard subject and object of thought a relative and conditional, and therefore essenceless. They posit the reality of the Śūnya which is the eternal and absolute reality. It is predicateless.

Nāgārjuna, one of the chief exponents of Mahayāna school, believes in two degrees of truth or knowledge. The Śūnya is the absolute truth (paramārtha satya). The relative world of phenomena is conventional

or relative truth (saṃvṛti satya). Saṃvṛti is the veil of ignorance (avidyā). The mādhyaṃika does not deny the relative truth of the empirical world of phenomena, which has been admitted to be real by common people, but he denies its absolute truth. He affirms the absolute truth of the śūnya or the Absolute which explains the world of phenomena.³⁷

All the elements have relative and contingent reality. Only the Śūnya has absolute reality. When the concept of śūnyatā was used in the sense of relative reality, the relative has been branded as unreal like an illusion, a reverse, a dream, a magic show and the like, yet it has some reality. It has contingent reality which can serve the practical purposes of our life. It has empirical reality. Still it is unreal in relation to the Absolute (śūnya). It cannot be called śūnya or asūnya, or both or neither, but it is called śūnya in order to indicate its nature (prajñāptyartham).

The mādhyaṃika denies the ontological reality of external objects and subjective cognitions on the ground that they are relative and contingent, and affirms the ontological reality of śūnya or absolute. But this Absolute is transcendent, and cannot be related to the relative and phenomenal. The Advaitins on the contrary made māyāvāda dependent on the concept of the Brahman, The Absolute truth-the self luminous consciousness. It is obvious that the latter doctrine is influenced by the Mādhyaṃika doctrine. It is specially Gauḍapāda who assimilated all the Buddhist Śūnyavāda and Vejñānavāda teachings, and thought that these held good

of the ultimate truth preached by the Upaniṣads and thus he led the foundation of the revival of Upaniṣad studies on Buddhist lines.

In the Upaniṣads it was contended that the Brahman is the supreme reality. It was Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkarāchārya's teacher Govinda's teacher, who raised most probably for the first time the question regarding the relation of the Absolute Brahman and the relatively true world of our everyday experience. Gauḍapāda rejected the view that, the world is a mere illusion or a dream, he declared that "devasyaisa svabhāve yam" - it is the inherent nature of the shining one. Somehow Gauḍapāda's view was realistic. Gauḍapāda uses the word 'māyā' in the sense of some power, as some svabhāva or nature of the Supreme Ātman. Māyā is also considered as a power which hides the Brahman though inseparable from it. Māyā is said to be the beginningless cosmic power principle through which the Ātman imagines himself by himself. The absolute, together with this principle of nature i.e. māyā is the Īśvara. Anyhow Gauḍapāda has his attention fixed on the supreme reality, he declares that the world is not only a dream or an illusion, and that the differences are only apparent. ☺

The word māyā is not used by Gauḍapāda with any strict principle. It is used sometimes to mean the inexplicability of the relation between the Ātman and the world. Sometimes be wanted to mean māyā as the nature or svabhāva of Īśvara. Though Gauḍapāda denied the view that

the world is here dream or illusion, the apparent dreamlike character of the world is explained by him as māyā. The ātman, says Gauḍapāda is at once the co-gniser and the cognized, the world subsists in the ātman through māyā.

It was also said that appearances (dharma) are produced only apparently, not in reality; their coming into being is like māyā, and that māyā again does not exist. Everything has a beginning and an end and is therefore false. The existence of all things is like a magical or illusory elephant (māyāhasti) and exists only as far as it merely appears or is related to experience. It is only the consciousness which appears only to perceive and to be perceived.

Śaṅkara carried on the work of his teacher Gauḍapāda and by writing commentaries on the ten Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras tried to prove that it is only the absolutist creed which was preached through the Upaniṣads and the Bramhasūtras. Throughout his whole works he was contending against the philosophers who upheld dualism such as Sāṅkhya concept of prakṛti. He showed that the Upaniṣads held that the pure self as pure being, pure intelligence and pure bliss is the ultimate truth. This being accepted the world as it appears could not be real. It must be a mere magic show of illusion or māyā. If only the self is the ultimate reality, the necessary conclusion is that all else is mere illusion or māyā.

Brahman according to Śaṅkara is the cause from which (proceeds) the origin or subsistence and dissolution of this world, which is extended in names and forms. Brahman is the self of us all. Brahman is according to Śaṅkara the identity of pure intelligence, pure being and pure blessedness.

All creation is illusory māyā. But accepting it as māyā it may be conceived that God (Īśvara) created the world as a mere sport. From the absolute point of view there is no God who creates the world, but from the vyābhārika point of view this world exists and the God exists. It is emphasized that in reality, all creation is illusory and so also the creator. "Saṁvṛtiḥ avidyāviśayo laukikavyāvahāraḥṭayā Saṁvṛtya jāyate sarvam. Paramārthaśabdhāven, tu aḥam sarvam ātmaiva".³⁸



Śaṅkara borrowed the concept of Saṁvṛti from Nāgārjuna and converted it as māyā. Brahman the self, is at once the material cause (upādānakāraṇa) as well as the efficient cause (nimittakāraṇa) of the world.

The Upaniṣads held that reality or truth was one, and there was "no many anywhere and Śaṅkara explained it by adding that the "many' was merely an illusion, and hence did not exist in reality and was bound to disappear when the truth was known. The world appearance is māyā (illusion). In fact there is no real association of the māyā with Brahman. "Na hi sadasatoḥ sambandah".³⁹ The question of how they are related

is illegitimate. Māyā or avidyā has an apparent existence as soon as the truth is known it dissolves. The world is māyā, since it is not the essential truth of the infinite reality of Brahman.

The world somehow exists and its relation to Brahman is indefinable (anirvacanēya) Śaṅkara takes up different attempts at explanation and finds them all unsatisfactory. It is difficult to conceive how the infinite comes out at a particular instant of time under the necessity to become finite Śaṅkara envisages Gauḍapada's theory of ajāti, or non-evolution. The world is non-different i.e. ananya from avyātērikta (non-independent) of Brahman. Brahman is manifesting Himself in the finite, but Śaṅkara would say that it is wrong to hold that the finite manifests the Absolute. We should remind that it is impossible to draw a distinction between the being of the Absolute and its expression. No analogy which depends on temporal succession can explain their relation. Śaṅkara does not accept the view of transformation or pariṇāma. Neither as a whole or being portioned Brahman can be explained as transforming into this world. Śaṅkara advocated vivartavāda which signifies the appearance of the Absolute Brahman as the relative world of space and time. The relation between this finite world and the infinite spirit is a mystery for human understanding and every attempt ends in failure. Here the 'māyā' is applicable, which points out our limitation and airvacanīya characteristic of the relation.

Śaṅkara compares magician's power to produce an apparently real object

before us from out of nothing with the inexplicability of māyā. The world is illusory the production is illusory, as soon as we know the magical power as mere magic its spell vanishes. Śaṅkara took different illustration of the rope and the snake, the shell and silver, the desert and the mirage to emphasise on the inexplicable one sided relation between Brahman and the world appearance.

Māyā and avidyā these two terms were used by Śaṅkara synonymously "Avidyā lakṣaṇa anadimāyā"⁴⁰ Māyā has two functions of concealment of the real and the projection of the unreal. Avidyā is false knowlege. It is the absence of true knowlege. Avidyā veils the nature of the Ātman or Brahman. "Avidyādoṣeṇa vidyamānasya atmanas tiraskaraṇat."⁴¹ The jēva subject to avidyā cannot know its inner self, Brahman, within it. "Avidyayā saṁvṛtaṁ sat (brahma) na lakṣyate"⁴² Brahman conditioned by māyā is Īśvara. Māyā is his power or energy (Śakti). It is the source of the names and forms which are modified into the phenomena of the world. Though they are neither real or unreal but indefinable, they constitute the nature of Īśvara. "Īśvarasyātmabhute iva avidyākālpite nāmarūpe tattvanyatvabhyam anirvacanīye saṁsaraprapancabejābhute ēśvarasya māyā śaktih prakṛtir iti,"⁴³ Īśvara depends upon the limiting adjuncts of these names and forms which spring from avidyā or māyā. "Avidyā-kṛtanāmarūpopādhyānurodhēśvaro bhavati". Īśvara is the omniscient knower - his omni science and omnipotence depend on the manifestation of the seeds of the world in the form of names and forms which are of the

nature of avidyā. 'Avidyātmakanāmarūpabī; janyakaranāpekṣatvāt sarva-
jñatvāsyā'⁴⁵ His Lordship depends on the limiting adjuncts produced
by avidyā. He knows (even before its production) creates and rules over
the empirical world of names and forms, which are of the nature of
avidyā. "Avidyātmakopādhiparicchedāpekṣam ēśvarasya ēśvaratvaṁ sarva-
jñatvaim sarvaśaktitvañca'.⁴⁶ Īśvara himself imagines different forms
through His own māyā. Īśvara, endowed with māyā, is active or inactive.
'Īśvarasya mahāmāyatvat pravṛtṭyapravṛtṭi",⁴⁷ One eternal, immutable
Brahman appears to be the manifold world owing to māyā. Māyā is
called mahāmāyā and Īśvara as mahāmāyine Sarvajñaṁ Sarvaśakti mahā-
mayāñca tad Brahma'.⁴⁸

Māyā does not exist 'māyayā janma tat māyopamam. Māyā nāma vastu
tarhi? Naivam, sā ca māyā na vidyate'.⁴⁹ Māyā is neither being (sat),
nor non-being (asat), but indefinable (anirvacanīya). Brahman the ontological
reality is formless. Māyā is not an independent principle like Sāṁkhya's
prakṛti. It is Īśvara's energy (śakti). It contains the unmanifest seeds
of names and forms, which are transformed into the subtle essences
and the gross elements. Still there is no other conscious principle than
the eternal and immutable consciousness or Brahman, either. Īśvara or
the jīva.

Since māyā cannot be defined as real or unreal it is avyakta - "Avyakta
hi sā māyā tattvānyatvanirūpanasya aśakyatvāt".⁵⁰ It is called avyakta

also because it consists of subtle essences of the elements. They exist in an unmanifest condition in it. Māvā is the subtle condition of the world prior to creation. Māyā is sometimes called akṣara or the indestructible. It is the nature of avidyā. "Avidyatmeka hi sa bējaśakṭeḥ".⁵¹ Māyā consists of sattva, rajas and tamas. Pure sattva, not overcome by rajas and tamas, is the adjunct of Īśvara. Māyā is deep sleep, as it were or cosmic nescience.

The later Advaita Vedāntists distinguished between māyā and avidyā. Mahadevānanda Sarasvati defines ajñāna as positive nescience, composed of sattva, rajas, tamas, neither real nor unreal, but indefinable, and capable, of being annulled by right knowledge. Ajñāna is twofold, māyā and avidyā. Māyā is made of pure sattva. Avidyā is made of impure sattva. Māyā is the adjunct of Īśvara. Avidyā is the adjunct of the jīva. The twofold power of activity i.e. power of veiling (āvaraṇaśakti) and power of projecting (vikṣepaśakti) are activated by Maya and Avidya. Maya has predominance of the power of projecting plurality of appearances. Avidya has predominance of the power of veiling the nature of Brahman'.⁵²

Sadānanda who defined ajñāna in the same manner, divides nescience into collective (samāṣṭi) and individual (vyaṣṭi). Collective nescience predominant with pure sattva is māyā. the individual nescience with impure sattva element predominant is avidyā. Māyā is the adjunct of

Īśvara and avidyā is the adjunct of the jīva. Māyā is cosmic nescience while avidyā is individual nescience. Ajñāna has āvaraṇaśakti and vikṣepaśakti which hides the reality and makes projection of false appearances. Prakāśātman agrees with Śaṅkara that avidyā is another name of māyā. But he holds that power of projecting is predominant in Māyā while power of veiling is predominant in avidyā. "Ekasminnapi vastuni vikṣepa-prādhānyena māyā ācchadānapradhānyena avidyā iti vyāvahārabhedah."⁵³

Vācaspati recognises two types of avidyā, mulāvidyā and tulāvidyā, Mulāvidyā, the positive nescience is the cause of the world. Individual nescience the locus of which is the jīva is tulāvidyā⁵⁴. Brahman, the object of nescience subsisting in the jīva, is perverted into the world with the aid of materiality of maya subsisting in Brahman.

Vidyāraṇya in Pañcadaśī regards māyā as made of pure sattva, and avidyā of impure sattva. Īśvara is the reflection of Brahman in māyā. The jīva is the reflection of Brahman in avidyā. Māyā and avidyā are one. Māyā produces depending on[⊗] the will of Īśvara. It has excessive power of veiling the nature of Brahman and the projection of appearances.

In the perception of nescience in the form of 'I am ignorant', 'I do not know myself nor anybody else' etc. - negation of knowledge is not perceived. Here, no negatived object is implied - the general nescience

is to be apprehended. In dreamless sleep general nescience is perceived. Its impression being revived in the waking after, is perceived in the form 'I did not know anything during deep sleep'.

CONCLUSION

The Vedānta, being an orthodox system of philosophy employed reason in subordination to the authority of the Vedas. Vedas formed the philosophical background and basis of the later philosophical schools (Orthodox) viz. Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Mīmāṃsā - Vedānta etc. The Vedas represent different phases of religious thought manifested in their concept of polytheism, henotheism, monotheism and monism. The different Gods to whom the Vedas convey prayers are personifications of the different powers of nature. The Vedic thinkers wondered at the grand and sublime powers of nature and regarded them as supernatural and superhuman spirits akin to human spirits. Various Gods like, Surya, Uṣās, Indra etc. were worshipped. Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra or Agni were endowed with various super natural forces among which māyā was conceived as one.

The Vedas specially the Ṛg - Veda, bear frequent references of māyā. However māyā was conceived as Daivī and Adāivī. The former was employed by the Gods like Indra to protect from the evil power of Āsuri māyā. The latter was associated with the name of Vṛtra - the demon. It was described as a sort of obstructing power. Perhaps in later development these two were merged in a single concept of māyā mainly a deceptive power of producing this world of illusion. Māyā we have already noted was originally envisaged as creative, sometimes as comparable to the notion of 'Dharma', 'Ṛta' i.e. 'prajñā', skill.

The Upaniṣads came immediately after the Vedas as the continuation and development of the views of the Vedic hymns. They bear the essence

of the Vedas and consists in an increased emphasis on the monistic idea of Absolute Truth. It is named as Brahman - the transcendent and immanent cause of the world. It is attributeless, ultimate which is to be described by the method of negation, neti, neti.

There remains the eternal problem of explaining co-existence of plurality and unity. As a matter of fact, in many passages the Upaniṣads declare that the world is only a development of the absolute spirit. Nature is the manifested realisation of the Absolute. There is no suggestion in the Upaniṣads, specially in Śvetāsvatara,, of the illusory character of the empirical. There are varied accounts of creation which hold that māyā is a creative force out of which the world is being produced.

It is sometimes held by different philosophers that the Upaniṣads supported the doctrine of māyā as a mere illusory force. Because the non-duality of the Self or Ātman or Brahman as the sole reality of the universe was emphasized. It is undoubtedly true that according to the Upaniṣads, plurality, succession in time, relations of cause and effect are not absolutely real. But this is not to mean, that they are not existent or mere illusions created by some deceptive power. Regarding the reference of māyā, the Upaniṣads simply try to emphasize that there is some underlying reality in all experienced finite objects. But, it is to be noted that the Upaniṣads nowhere indicate that the infinite excludes the finite. The inconsistency of the eternal reality of Brahman and the temporal

reality of the world was attempted to be reconciled by holding that this world is not beside him but it has come out of him, sustained in him and it will return to him.

It is noteworthy that Vedic conception of nature - worship which resulted initially in polytheism of personified dēities was developed towards a replacement of the idea of manyness by organised monism, then monism. The problem of explaining the many with One, diversity with Unity began to develop, which led monism to be idealistic monism. Idealistic Monism of Vedānta, specially of later Vedānta to save their idea of One - Absolute, tried to explain the world as illusory. But the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā even the Vedānta in its earlier phase employed the eternal Absolute not as exclusive of temporality but as something inclusive of all the finite and limited existences.

The Gītā is an important religious treatise of the Hindus. It is part of the great epic Mahābhārata. It teaches theism and regards God as the supreme Parā Brahman. The author of the Gītā frequently reminds us that the manifold manifestation is a creation of God's own mystic power or yogamāyā. It is also described as prakṛti, the material as higher and lower which are to be conceived as successively puruṣa and prakṛti, i.e. matter and consciousness. Both of them are eternal. However, gradually māyā comes to mean the lower prakṛti and the source of delusion.

The individuals are subject to māyā, or delusion when they are lost in outer appearance. All things partake the duality of being and non-being from Puruṣottama downwards. Though God has the element of negativity or māyā he can control it. Cosmic process is the interaction between the two principles of being and non-being. We can establish individuality when we transcend māyā and realise our true status. In this world those acts indicative of distinctive individuality are not due to the actionless puruṣa, but are derived from the forces of prakṛti.

In this context we may refer to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's view regarding the use of the word Māyā in The Gītā ⁵⁵. He has opined that 'māyā' was not used by the author of the Gītā as an inexplicable mystery. Though this meaning might be traced as implied in various slokas. Again, Māyā is the power, Śakti or energy of the personal God i.e. Īśvara, combining sat and asat, being and non-being produces mutable nature. Māyā and Īśvara, both of them are in this sense, beginningless. Thirdly, māyā is said to be able to produce this world, matter and consciousness as higher and lower. Gradually 'māyā' was used as to mean only the lower prakṛti. Māyā as the source of delusion hides the Real from the vision of the finite beings. It is in that avidyāmāyā but for God it is eternally vidyāmāyā. Lastly māyā and its product world being an effect of God is likely to be understood as less real than God i.e. the cause.

We have already discussed that the concept of māyā as conceived in the Vedas, the principal Upanisads and The Gītā. In this connection

we may conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of the Advaitins' concept of māyā.

Māyā is one of the basic tenets of the Advaita Vedānta philosophy. It was highly influenced by the Śūnyavāda of Mahāyāna School. Śūnya was envisaged as the absolute truth distinct from the relative truth of the phenomenal world. In the sense of relative reality, the phenomenal reality might be called as Śūnya or aśūnya, or both or neither, It was specially Gaṅḍapāda who raised the question regarding the relation between the Absolute Brahman and relatively true world of our everyday experience. He used the notion 'māyā' as some power or energy as svabhāva of the Brahman. Though he emphasized on the supreme reality, still he declared that the world is not only a mere dream or an illusion. His view in this regard was realistic. The world subsists in ātman through māyā.



Śaṅkara carried on the work of his teacher and tried to prove that it is only the absolutist creed which was preached through the Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras. Brahman according to Śaṅkara is the cause from which proceeds origin, subsistence and dissolution of this world of names and forms. Śaṅkara identifies Brahman with pure intelligence, pure being and pure blessedness. If only the self is the ultimate reality, the necessary conclusion is that all else is mere illusion or māyā. Śaṅkara compares magician's power to produce an apparently real object before

us from out of nothing as the projecting and hiding activity of inexplicable māyā. It is neither being nor non-being, but indefinable.

The later Vedāntists distinguished between māyā and avidyā. Māyā is made of pure Sattva, Avidyā is made of impure Sattva. The former is the adjunct of Īśvara while the latter is the adjunct of the jīvas. The power of veiling and the power of projecting are activated by Māyā and Avidyā. Mahadevananda Sarasvati, Sadānanda defined ajñāna as positive nescience, composed of Sattva, rajas and tamas - which is because of its real and unreal characteristics becomes indefinable. Māyā is the cosmic nescience, while avidyā is individual nescience. Prakāśātman, Vacāspati and Vidyāraṇya also followed the description of māyā and avidyā in this respect. Māyā as avidyā is to be experienced in deep sleep as general nescience. Its experience being revived in waking state after that, "I did not know anything during deep sleep".

NOTES

1.	Atharva Veda	8/8/8
2.	Rg - Veda	5/63/3
3.	Ibid	5/2/9
4.	Ibid	7/1/10
5.	Ibid.	7/98/5
6.	Ibid	10/111/6
7.	Ibid	1/80/7
8.	Ibid	10/147/12
9.	Ibid	5/30/6
10.	Ibid	2/11/10
11.	Ibid	6/22/6
12.	Ibid	10/99/2
13.	Ibid	8/41/8
14.	Ibid	10/82/8
15.	Ibid	9/83/3
16.	Ibid	1/160/3
17.	Ibid	2/17/5
18.	Ibid	4/30/2
19.	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad	1/1/7
20.	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad	1/4/7
21.	Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad	4/10
22.	Ibid	4/9
23.	Ibid	6/18
24.	Ibid	6/10
25.	Ibid	3/1
26.	Katha Upaniṣad	1/2/4



27. Indian Philosophy by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vol I, London : George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940 ... P 186
28. Indian Philosophy by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vol. I, P 539
29. The Gitā 4/6
30. Ibid 7/25
31. Ibid 7/14
32. Ibid 9/10
33. Ibid 13/19
34. Ibid 18/61
35. Ibid 16/8
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37. Mādhyamika Kārikā Madhyamika-Karikavrtti 24/8/10
38. Māndūkya Karika, Śaṅkara Bhāṣya 4/57
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41. Īśopaniṣad, Śaṅkara Bhāṣya
42. Ibid 3/1/7
43. Brahmasūtra, Śaṅkara Bhāṣya 2/1/14
44. Ibid
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47. Ibid 2/2/4
48. Ibid 2/1/37
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50. Ibid 1/4/3
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53. Pancapaidikāvivarāṇa ... Ibid P'530
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