CHAPTER IV

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It is said that the world is superimposed on the Brahman-Intelligence by avidyā. Avidyā conceals the Brahman by its concealing aspect (āvarana) and projects the world on it through its power of projection (vikṣepa). Though the world is superimposed on the Brahman, it cannot always be illuminated as there is the concealment of avidyā which is to be overpowered through vṛtti for the revelation of the objects. This avidyā is defined by the old teachers of Advaita as beginningless, positive (bhāva-rūpa) and sublated by knowledge.¹ The non-Advaitins have raised many objections against this definition. But refuting these objections Madhusūdana has reasserted the definition of the old teachers.

The opponent says that this above definition of avidyā is unsound as it cannot include ajñāna which is the concealer of the caitanya conditioned by shell, etc., as it is with a beginning. But this is not true. Ajñāna which is the material cause of shell-silver is also said to be beginningless as it rests on the beginningless Intelligence. It cannot be said

¹ citsukhī, p.97.

anādi bhāvarūpaṁ yat viññānena vīliyate
that ājñāna which is the cause of false absence cannot be positive by character, as if absence has something positive as its material cause, then something unreal can have real as its material cause. But this allegation is baseless, as the superimposed absence can very well have positive ājñāna as its cause. It is to be noted that this superimposed absence is not the same as empirical absence. So there is no difficulty if it has ājñāna as its material cause.²

It cannot be said that in the case of conditional error (aupādhika-bhrama) avidyā persists so far as the upādhi remains present even though there is the contradicting knowledge. For instance, in the case of the reflection of a red flower on a crystal the knowledge that the crystal is white cannot take away the error. Likewise ājñāna persists in the jīvanmukta even after self-realisation. So the definition of ājñāna as sublated by knowledge suffers from avyatīti. But it is not correct, as here upādhi and prārabdha act as hindrance in sublating the error. As there is delay in the negation of the hindrance (pratibandha), there is delay in sublation of error. Even in these cases the substratum cannot be said to be unknown. Though the hindrance is there for which the error persists, the concealment (avarana) of ājñāna is destroyed for which there is no delusion regarding the substratum (adhisthāna). Thus, even in these cases sublatability of avidyā by knowledge remains intact.³

². A.S., p. 544.
³. Ibid.
In the definition of avidyā the adjective 'beginningless' is given to restrict the definition from becoming too wide, so that it does not include the previous knowledge (pūrva-jñāna) which is negated by the latter knowledge (uttara-jñāna). The term 'positive' (bhava-rūpa) is given to exclude the prior absence of knowledge (jñāna-prāg-abhāva) which is negated when knowledge related to it, comes to be. Here the term 'positive' only means that it is not non-existent, but it does not mean that avidyā is real, as avidyā is neither real nor unreal. To do away with such difficulties the Advaitin defines avidyā in a different manner. According to this avidyā is that which is sublatable by knowledge as knowledge itself (jñānatvena sāksāt tannirvartatyavam). The subsequent knowledge does not sublate the former knowledge as knowledge but by virtue of being latter than it. So also the prior absence of knowledge is not sublated by knowledge simply because it is knowledge, but because it is the counter-positive of the former. But knowledge only as knowledge sublates avidyā. Thus this definition is free from the above mentioned difficulties.  

It cannot be said that the superimposed being of the nature of appearance caused by some fault, avidyā cannot be beginningless like the shell-silver. But this is not true, as the apparent object being projected by the ķīva which has a

beginning cannot be beginningless. But avidyā is not projected by any person having a beginning; so it has no beginning. The beginning of avidyā cannot be proved as that of the apparent object like the shell-silver. On the other hand there is scriptural testimony with regard to the beginninglessness of avidyā, 'unborn and one', etc.\(^5\)

It cannot be said that as avidyā is beginningless and different from absence, it cannot be sublated like the self. If by its beginninglessness and its difference from absence, avidyā can be proved to be unsublatable like the self, then by its difference from existence (bhāva) and beginninglessness why cannot it be proved to be sublatable like the prior absence? The fact is that avidyā, is neither positive nor negative. It is said to be positive only to show that it is not of the nature of absence of knowledge (jñāna-bhāva-rūpa).\(^6\) It cannot be said that this definition is violated in the case of posterior absence (dhvaṁśa-bhāva) absolute absence (atyantā-bhāva) and mutual absence (anyo'ntyā-bhāva). According to the Naiyāyikas posterior absence is with a beginning and absolute absence is eternal (nitya). Mutual absence is not at all limited to any relation with time. So they cannot come under this definition. On the other hand, without their substratum no absence can remain unsublated. When the substratum is sublated, the absence is necessarily sublated.\(^7\)

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5. A.S., p.545.
7. Ibid.
It cannot be said that \textit{ajñāna} is unsublatable as it is existent as far as the witness that manifests it exists. The witness being eternal, \textit{ajñāna} cannot be sublated. But this is not tenable, as the objects which are revealed by the witness are not of the same ontological status. So the witness remains there even if \textit{avidya} is sublated. This is said according to the theory that the witness is eternal. But according to another theory the witness is not eternal, as it is the \textit{caitanya} conditioned by the adjunct \textit{ajñāna}. So it is sublated. In this sense, the witness being non-eternal, its adjunct is also sublated. \(^3\)

The Advaitins define \textit{avidya} in another way. It is defined as the material cause of error. It cannot be said that error, being different from existent objects, cannot be caused by a material cause \textit{avidya}, as only existent things have some material cause. If error were real, it would have another real as its cause. But this is not true the Advaitins say, as reality is not the regulating factor of being effected by a material cause (\textit{upādeyatva}) or being the material cause itself (\textit{upādānatva}). To be \textit{upādāna} the cause should follow the effect (\textit{kārya-nvayi}) and to be \textit{upādeya}, the object concerned should have a beginning. Thus, posterior absence (\textit{dhvaniśa}) which is non-existent is said to be endowed with a material cause. \(^9\) It cannot be said that prior

\(^3\) Ibid., pp.545-546.

\(^9\) Ibid., pp.545-546.
absence of knowledge being the cause of error, it is not necessary to conceive of *ajñāna* as different from absence. Prior absence is only capable of producing the counterpositive as the prior absence of the pot gives rise to the pot. So prior absence of knowledge can be the cause of knowledge, but it cannot cause error. ¹⁰

It is evident from the above discussion that the definitions of *avidyā* are free from all faults. The allegations of the opponents are inconsistent and are due to lack of proper understanding of the Advaita-view.

**PROOFS FOR ESTABLISHING AVIDYĀ**

The definitions of *avidyā* are free from all logical faults; besides there are also sound proofs for its establishment. The Advaitins state that perception, inference, postulation and testimony are there to prove *avidyā*. But this is not possible say the opponents, as *avidyā* cannot be grasped by any *pramāṇa* as it is said to be beyond the capacity of the *pramāṇas* (*pramāṇa-ganayā*). It is to be borne in mind that *avidyā* is described by the Advaitins as opposed to all rational ways of explanation (*sarva-nyāya-virodhini*).¹¹ *Avidyā* being sublated by *pramāṇa* cannot be proved by *pramāṇas*.

¹⁰. A.S., pp.545-546.
¹¹. N.S., 3.66.
But this is not correct, as the pramanas only disprove its non-existence. The kind of perception which proves avidya is not psychosis-knowledge, but the witness-perception. The immediate knowledge (pratyaksa) which is said to be proof for avidya is not sense perception but it is the witness (saksin). Valid knowledge which becomes possible through psychosis (vrtti) sublates avidya. But the witness being indifferent to both valid and invalid knowledge, does not sublate avidya but reveals it. Mediate knowledge as inference, postulation, etc., only disproves the notion that avidya is non-existent. So there is no contradiction.

Witness-knowledge which is expressed as "I am ignorant and I do not know either myself or anything else", "I do not know what you say" and the after-knowledge (paramartha) "I slept quietly and did not know anything" are adduced as proof to establish avidya. Though caitanya is the locus of avidya, but not the ego (ahamartha), the latter seems to be the locus of avidya through the relation of resting on the same locus (ekasrayatva-sambandha), as both avidya and the ego rest on the same caitanya. So it cannot be said that concealment of avidya being not possible in the insentient (jada), the cognition "I do not know the pot" refers to absence of knowledge as its object. Though the insentient object is not the locus of avidya.

caitanya conditioned by the object being the locus, such use becomes possible. Mental modes like pleasure, pain, etc., and apparent objects like shell-silver, etc., cannot remain unknown as they are directly revealed by the saksin; and concealment with reference to them is not there.¹³

The opponent tries to prove that such cognitions as "I am ignorant", etc., are due to absence of knowledge. They say that both the cognitive judgements "I am ignorant" and "I have no knowledge" differ only in form but not in kind. So both of them alike refer to absence of knowledge, as both "The floor is without pot" and "The pot is not there on the floor" have absence of pot as their object. But it is not tenable, as absence of knowledge in general cannot be established there being contradiction. The cognition of absence always presupposes the knowledge of the counterpositive (pratiyogin) and the substratum (dharmin), where there is absence. When absence of knowledge is to be established, atman which is the dharmin and knowledge which is the pratiyogin of the said absence are to be grasped. But this will contradict absence of knowledge in general. If on the other hand, they are not grasped, cognition of absence of knowledge becomes impossible, as without the knowledge of the dharmin and the pratiyogin no absence can be established. So the so-called cognition of absence of knowledge really has

positive nescience as its object. Thus, both the cognitions "I am ignorant" and "I have no knowledge" only point to the positive abidya, but not to absence of knowledge.\(^{14}\)

The cognitions "I am ignorant" and "I know nothing" refer to avidya in general. It cannot have generic absence of knowledge as its object as it is contradictory. Absence of knowledge in general is falsified in both the cases where the dharmin and the pratijigcin are respectively known and unknown. This cognition cannot also refer to a particular absence of knowledge (nāna-viśesā-bhāva). It cannot be said that the particular absence in this case has counterpositiveness characterised by the generic quality (sāmānyā-vacchinna-pratiyogitaśka). A particular absence cannot have something limited by a generic quality as its counterpositive, as the characteristic which qualifies (prakārihūta-dharma) the counterpositive in the knowledge of its absence is the limiter of counterpositiveness (pratiyoqita-vacchedaka). Otherwise a generic absence in contrast to a particular absence cannot be established.\(^{15}\)

If a particular absence has an object limited by a generic characteristic as its counterpositive, then there is the possibility of the cognition of absence of a pot in a place where it really exists. So also in the case of knowledge

\(^{14}\) A.S., pp.548-549.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.548.
like "Air has no form (rupa)" the negation of its doubt cannot be achieved. Though one particular absence is understood, doubt can be raised with the help of another particular. But this is not the fact, as particular absence and generic absence are distinct from each other, as they have counterpositives limited by two distinctly different characteristics viz, a specific characteristic and a generic characteristic respectively. For instance, the limiter of counterpositiveness of a particular absence of pot is "this-potness" (etad-chatavan) whereas the limiter of the counterpositiveness of generic absence of pot is the generic characteristic 'potness'.

It is to be noted that the absence of other objects like that of pot, etc., can be conceived with no difficulty. But the absence of knowledge cannot be conceived, as it will be contradicted by the indispensable conditions which make knowledge of absence possible. Thus, the case in question being different from the cognition of absence, the object in the present case needs be different from absence, as without difference in the object cognition cannot differ. Therefore, the object of the present cognition is ājnāna which is positive by character but not absence of knowledge.

A particular absence of knowledge cannot be the object of such a cognition. If a particular absence is accepted as the object of such cognition, even though knowledge of a

17. Ibid., p.549.
particular object is there, there will be cognition of absence of knowledge with reference to another particular. On the other hand, it is conspicuous that the concerned cognition "I am ignorant and I do not know anything" does not refer to a particular absence of knowledge but to the unknownness of all in general.

Now the dualists raise some objections against the Advaita-view. They say that the Advaitins even admit that ājñāna is grasped as antagonistic to knowledge related to both the locus (ādhyātmya) and the object (viśaya). Otherwise opposition between knowledge and ājñāna cannot be established. For instance, when knowledge regarding the pot arises, it sublates ājñāna relating to the pot. So ājñāna is not perceived as itself but only as antagonistic to some knowledge. Likewise, ājñāna without reference to any object being not perceived, its reference to some object is to be explained. If some knowledge revealing the antagonism between knowledge and ignorance be accepted at the time of grasping ājñāna, it will contradict the very ājñāna itself. If no knowledge as such is accepted, the opposition between knowledge and ājñāna cannot be established. If the object referred to by ājñāna is said to be grasped by another knowledge at the time of knowing ājñāna, it will falsify the very existence of ājñāna with regard to it. On the other hand,

if the object is not revealed at the time of grasping ājñāna, how can ājñāna as related to that particular object be established? Thus, the Advaitin also has to face a similar dilemma as the dualist who at the time of grasping absence of knowledge in general faces such a difficulty due to the unfavourableness of the dharmin and the pratiyogin.

But this is not true. Ājñāna which is positive unlike absence of knowledge is grasped by the witness. The latter not only grasps ājñāna but also the object that is related to it, the knowledge that is related to it and the knowledge that determines the opposition of it with knowledge. If right knowledge (pramaṇa) of the object were admitted at the time of grasping ājñāna, there would be contradiction. But the knowledge that grasps ājñāna as well as the object related to it, is not psychosis - knowledge but the witness-knowledge. This witness-knowledge is neither valid nor invalid. So there is no contradiction even though the object is said to be grasped by witness-knowledge. It is to be borne in mind that according to the Advaita-view everything is grasped by witness either as known or as unknown. Here the object is grasped only as unknown.¹⁹

It may be argued, as according to the Advaita-view knowledge of the object as related to ājñāna is said to be of the nature of witness (ākṣi-rūpaṃ), according to the opponents

the knowledge of the object in absence of knowledge is to be accepted as witness-knowledge. So, there will be no contradiction with the knowledge of the dharmin and the pratiyogin. But this is not possible. Positive ājñāna being grasped by the witness, its object as limiter (avacchedaka) of ājñāna is also grasped by the same witness. But absence being only revealed by anupalabdhi (non-cognition), its limiting object (avacchedaka-visaya) cannot be revealed by the witness. The witness is capable of grasping only the existent objects but not the non-existent. So it cannot directly grasp absence and the object limiting that absence.

It is to be noted that non-cognition is not a means of immediate knowledge. So the view of the author of Vedānta Paribhāṣā that absence is directly grasped through non-cognition is severely criticised by the author of Śālabodhini who says that the author of Paribhāṣā following the Naiyāyikas has only accepted the directness of absence. Thus, "I am ignorant" only confirms that its object (visaya) is not absence, as it is caused by the conditions which are different from those required for the knowledge of absence. So its object is not absence of knowledge, but positive ājñāna (bhāva-rūpa-ājñāna). In this way the cognition "I do not know what you say" which is a cognitive judgement regarding a particular ājñāna also confirms it. Absence of knowledge cannot be the object of this knowledge, as "what you


21. Ibid., with Śālabodhini comm., p.1134.
say" is first to be grasped before understanding absence of knowledge regarding "what you say". There is contradiction if we accept either the knownness of it through any valid knowledge or we do not accept it; so absence of its knowledge cannot be established. But in the case of accepting ajñāna as different from absence of knowledge, it can be consistently explained as here the object "what you say" is grasped by the witness. The famous line of Vivarana that everything becomes the object of the witness either as known or as unknown validates such a view.

The after-knowledge (parāmarṣa) "I slept quietly and did not know anything" which bears testimony to the immediate knowledge of ajñāna in deep sleep (sūṣupti) is also the proof for establishing positive ajñāna. It may be said that this so-called parāmarṣa of the Advaitins is really an inference which establishes absence of knowledge in deep sleep. The inference may be like this "I have no knowledge at the time of deep sleep, as the necessary conditions of knowledge are absent in me at that time". But such an inference is not possible, as the hetu cannot be established in the paksā. In this inference "absence of the necessary conditions" (sāmagrī-viraha) is the hetu which is employed to infer the sādhya "absence of knowledge". But absence of the necessary conditions of knowledge which is not immediately known can only be established by another inference through absence of knowledge only. Thus there is the fault of interdependence (anyonyā-śraya-dosa) which invalidates such an
inference of absence of knowledge. Even though inference of absence of knowledge is valid, it is made possible only through positive ajñāna. Here absence of knowledge only means absence of psychosis-knowledge but not absence of the witness which cannot be doubted.

The Advaitins say that paramārṣa is not inference but a kind of remembrance (smarana). It cannot be said that witness-knowledge cannot cause impressions (sāṃskāra) which make remembrance possible as it is eternal. Impression is caused by the destruction of knowledge. Only psychosis-knowledge which is destroyed can cause impression. But this is not correct, as even at the time of deep sleep there is modification of avidyā (avidyā-vṛtti) which causes impression after it is destroyed, though there is no modification of internal organ or psychosis (antahkarana-vṛtti). So paramārṣa of the stage of deep sleep also confirms the theory of positiveness of ajñāna. It cannot be said that at the time of deep sleep absence of knowledge is grasped by the witness but not positive ajñāna. The witness cannot grasp absence directly as absence is not its direct object. It cannot grasp absence through verbal testimony, as it is absent at that time. Non-cognition (anupalabdhi) is not possible at that time, as without the knowledge of the substratum and counterpositive it is not possible to grasp absence. So at that time we are forced to accept positive ajñāna. 23

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22. A.B., pp. 556-557.
23. Ibid., pp. 557-558.
Not only by *pratyaksha* but also by inference positive *ajñāna* can be proved. The inference runs like this:

"Valid knowledge presupposes another positive thing, different from its prior absence in its place, which is sublated by it and which conceals its object, as it manifests the unmanifest like the light of candle brought to a dark room." \(^{24}\) So also the Vedic passages like "concealed by untruth(*anrta*)", "remaining within *avidyā* (*avidyāyām-antare vartamanānāḥ*), etc. are proofs of the positive nature of *ajñāna*. \(^{25}\) It cannot be said that *avidyā* is capable of being known by the witness which is eternal. So *avidyā* is unsublatable. But this is not correct, as the witness being the Intelligence reflected in *avidyā* is itself sublatable. So it is said that *avidyā* is revealed by the Intelligence which is concealed by *avidyā* (*sva-vrta-caitanya-prakāśya*) like Rāhu that becomes known by the moon concealed by it. \(^{26}\) So there is no difficulty if we say that *avidyā* is proved by witness-perception.

**THE LOCUS AND OBJECT OF AVIDYĀ**

According to the majority of Advaitins the *Brahman* which is partless pure intelligence is both the locus(*āśraya*) and object(*visaya*) of *avidyā*.\(^ {27}\) Internal organ which is a product of

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avidyā cannot be its locus, as it is necessary that the locus must not be posterior to it. According to this view saṁsāra is only there for the jīva but not for the Brahman, as dirt of the minor only disfigures the reflection (pratibimba) but not the face which is reflected (bimba) in it. So it is said that adjunct (upādhi) takes the side of reflection (pratibimba-paksapāti). It is not impossible that caitanya which is illumination itself is the locus of avidyā, as psychosis-knowledge is opposed to avidyā but not pure Intelligence. It cannot be said, if pure Intelligence is not opposed to avidyā, it must be inert like other inert things as pot, etc., as pure Intelligence with the conditioning of vyrtti sublates avidyā like the rays of the sun which burn grass with the help of lense though they are themselves the revealer of the latter. 28

Though pure Intelligence is the locus of avidyā, the ego appears as its locus owing to its superimposition on the brahman which is the locus of avidyā. Iron coming in contact with fire that burns seems to burn, though actually it is fire that burns. Likewise ego seems to be the locus of avidyā, as both of them are superimposed on the same Brahman. So the cognition "I am ignorant", which reveals ego (I) as the locus of avidyā becomes possible. In fact, the ego being itself a

product of avidyā cannot be its locus. For this also the jīva cannot be its locus. The Vedic statement "māyā is the primeval cause and he who has māyā is the lord"\textsuperscript{29} also confirms it.

It may be said that ajñāna is there in the knower, as ajñāna regarding things like shell, etc., rests on the same locus along with error (bhrānti) which is its effect. And right knowledge that takes away error also rests there. So ajñāna is there in the knower (jnātr) but not in the Brahman which is pure Intelligence. But this is not correct, as caitanya being also the knower, identity of the location of both ajñāna and right knowledge is also maintained. It cannot be said that there will be the fault of interdependence between ajñāna and knowerness (jnātrtvā), as knowerness is caused by ajñāna requires knowerness for its location. The fact is that ajñāna and knowerness have only identity of location (sāmānā-dhikaranya) but it is not that ajñāna necessarily requires knowerness. That which is necessary for being the locus of ajñāna is capability of illumination (prasakta-prakāśatva) and not being dependent on ajñāna (ajñānā-nāśritatva). Both these conditions are fulfilled by caitanya. It is to be noted that the knower is jīva which is not different from the Brahman which is only caitanya. According to the Vivaraṇa view bimbā and pratibimbā being one, jīva which is the reflection of the Brahman is not different from it.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} S.U., 4.10.
\textsuperscript{30} A.S., p.578.
The opponent argues that the example of reflection which is adduced to prove that only the jīva is entangled with the world (samsāra) like the fault of the mirror disfiguring the reflection is improper, as caitanya which is not an object of eyes (acaksusa) cannot be reflected. If jīva were a reflection, then it would be with a beginning. The sun cannot be reflected in the mirage as in water; so the upādhi avidyā being not of the same ontological status (asamāna-sattāka) cannot reflect caitanya. Also avidyā which is not transparent cannot reflect caitanya.

But, these allegations are due to misunderstanding the Advaita-view. As akāśa which is not perceptible by eyes is reflected in water, caitanya can be reflected in avidyā. The second allegation is also futile, as jīva though a reflection is beginningless, its upādhi where it is reflected being beginningless. The relation of the upādhi 'avidyā' and its bīmba which is caitanya being beginningless, jīva is also beginningless. The third argument that the bīmba and upādhi belong to the same ontological status (asamāna-sattāka) is violated as redness superimposed on crystal (sphatika-laughitya) is reflected in mirror. Here the reflection 'redness' is apparent, whereas the upādhi 'mirror' is empirical; thus both belong to different grades of existence. So there is no difficulty if we assert that caitanya is reflected in avidyā which has a lower ontological grade of existence. The other charge of the opponent that avidyā cannot reflect as it is not transparent, is not tenable. Transparency is not always of the same kind. Thus the transparency which we find in avidyā is not the same that we find in water, etc.
The transparency of avidyā can only be inferred from its result the reflection. So there is nothing to prove that avidyā is not transparent.\(^{31}\)

It is to be noted that the example of reflection is given only to make the position of Advaita intelligible. Reflection of caitanya in avidyā is not literally the same as other reflections like those of the trees in water, etc. So the question whether caitanya is capable of reflection or avidyā is capable of reflecting it does not at all arise. The opponent only makes such allegations owing to lack of proper understanding. It cannot be said that the general vyāpti that upādhi takes the side of reflection is contradicted by the specific vyāpti (viśeṣa-vyāpti) that ajñāna causes error (bhrānti) only in its locus. The ascertenentment of this specific vyāpti must be made on a point which is beyond controversy. But it is not possible, as the Advaitins do not accept it, as according to them pure Intelligence is the locus of avidyā and the Īva the reflection in avidyā is the locus of error (bhrānti).\(^{32}\)

Now it may be asked whether ajñāna is natural or adventitious for caitanya. If the first alternative is accepted, it cannot be sublated like the ātman; if the second alternative is accepted, it needs an upādhi for being related to caitanya.

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32. Ibid., p.580.
If ajñāna itself is said to be the upādhi, there arises the fault of ātmāsraya; if another upādhi is required, it leads to infinite regress. Out of these alternatives the Advaitins admit the first alternative that avidyā itself is the upādhi through which it is adventitiously related to caitanya. But the fault of ātmāsraya does not arise, as it explains itself. The Advaitins say that the dualists accept difference to be self-explanatory which according to them differentiates between two things which are to be differentiated (bhedya) and the difference (bheda) itself. As the fault of ātmāsraya is not admitted here, the same is not there also in the case of avidyā. Even though avidyā is said to be natural (svabhāvika) there is no difficulty as the form of pot (ghata-rūpa) and the prior absence of pot (ghata-prāg-abhāva) which are natural are destroyed. So avidyā can be sublated though it is natural but not adventitious.

Now the opponent ask as to how can pure Brahman which is omniscient (saratva) be the locus of ajñāna. Had it been so, it would not be omniscient. But the Advaitins say that the word 'omniscient' means that Brahman is the revealer of all. But the turiya-caitanya which is the Brahman cannot be omniscient without the relation of avidyā as it is free from all relations (asaṅga). Madhusūdana quotes Citsukha and says that all-knowing capability of the Brahman may be either by its own self (svarūpa) or through

34. A.S., p.581.
the pramanās. In absence of avidyā the Brahman itself has no contact with the objects. The pramanās are made possible by avidyā that causes superimposition. So without avidyā omniscience of the Brahman is not possible. Thus there is no difficulty if avidyā is accepted as resting on the all-knowing Brahman.  

According to the school of Bhamati avidyā rests on the jīva but not on the Brahman. Though the view that avidyā rests on the brahman is accepted by Madhusūdana, he defends all the views of the old teachers as these are various explanations for proving Advaita. Vācaspati says that avidyā rests on the jīva and is not one but as many in number as the jīvas. So when one avidyā is sublated the respective jīva is made free, but not the other.  

But the opponent opposes it. He says that according to the Advaitins the jīva is said to be the reflection of caitya in avidyā or caitya conditioned by avidyā or caitya differentiated by avidyā. Obviously the fault of interdependence is there, as jīva and avidyā depend upon each other.

But these charges are baseless. It is to be questioned whether this alleged interdependence is there in their origination or in knowing them or in their existence (āptau śhitau vā). The first is not possible as both jīva and avidyā are

35. A. S., pp. 583—584.
Citsukhi, p. 578.
beginningless. The second alternative is not tenable as caitanya is not revealed by avidyā though the latter is revealed by caitanya. The third is futile, as both of them being co-existent at the same time (samāna-kālīna) like pot and ākāśa conditioned by it, their interdependence in existence does not pose any difficulty. 37 Thus the view of Bhāmati is also justified.

Not only that avidyā rests on the Brahman, its object is also pure caitanya the Brahman. As the Brahman is not caused by avidyā, it can be the object of avidyā. It is to be noted that without visaya (object) and āśraya (locus) avidyā being impossible, both of them must be admitted at the time of its ascertainment. All others except the Brahman being created by avidyā cannot be its object, as there will be interdependence. On the other hand, the caitanya being self-luminous and also being capable of illumination can be the object of avidyā. But in the insentient the work of concealment of avidyā is not there, as it is not capable of illumination. 38 For instance, in the case "I do not know the pot", the pot is not concealed by ajñāna, as the latter can have no action in the insentient pot. There the caitanya that illuminates the pot only remains concealed by ajñāna but not the pot.

38. Ibid., p.583.
It is to be noted that the Advaita account of the locus and object of ājnāna differs considerably from our ordinary experience. When we say, "I do not know the pot", we think that the ego signified by the term 'I' is the locus of ājnāna and the pot to which the action of ājnāna is apparently directed is its object. But according to Advaita the Brahman-Intelligence is both the locus and the object of it. However the latter explanation has no contradiction with our ordinary experience, as it can very well explain our empirical knowledge. The unknowiness of the pot is due to concealment in the Intelligence that is conditioned by the pot. The ego appears as the locus of ājnāna as it is superimposed on caitanya which is the real locus of it. Thus our empirical knowledge can consistently be explained by the Advaita-view.

Concealment gives rise to such use as "It is not there and it does not manifest" or the absence of such use "It is there and it manifests". It is beginningless which lasts till the attainment of mokṣa (emancipation). It being beginningless and capable of being illuminated by caitanya, there is no interdependence in origination (utpattau), in knowing them (jñāptau) and in existence (sthita). It cannot be said that caitanya being always luminous (prakāśamāna), there cannot be concealment in it. Though it manifests as luminous, its nature as perfect Bliss, etc., remains concealed. Thus, only in this portion concealment is possible. It cannot be asked, how can impartite Brahman have parts,
as superimposed difference is possible in the partless Brahman through the concealment of avidyā. Pure Intelligence is not antagonistic to avidyā but it is its revealer as stated earlier. So there is no difficulty if concealment of avidyā is admitted in the Brahman.

The opponent says that avidyā as concealment may obstruct the relation of caitanya with other objects, thus concealing caitanya for others, but it cannot conceal caitanya for itself. It cannot be said that concealment conceals pure caitanya for the jīva whose difference is superimposed by avidyā, as without concealment the superimposed difference is impossible. Thus, difference is only superimposed after concealment. But this is not true, as both difference and concealment being beginningless there is no question of one succeeding the other in time. The other point of the opponent is that, if pure caitanya manifests at the time of revealing the object, there will be emancipation even by the knowledge of the pot, etc. This point is baseless, as it manifests there with the limitation of pot, etc. (ghatādy-avacchedena) only, but not as perfect, Bliss, etc. (paripurnādy-ākārena). So there is no difficulty, if pure Intelligence is admitted as the visaya (object) of avidyā.

40. Ibid., p.588.
INDESCRIBABILITY OF AVIDYA

This avidya is indescribable by nature. Indescribability (anirvācyatva) does not mean indescribability as such or absence of description in general. It only means indescribable either as real or as unreal or as both. Now it is to be asked, what is meant by the word 'reality' (sattva). It cannot mean the universal reality (sattā jāti), as, if it is accepted, the pure ātman which is free from all such universals will be different from real. It cannot mean unsublatability, as tuccha (absolutely unreal) is not sublatable unlike the false objects. So also the indescribable being sublatable cannot be other than unreal. It cannot mean to be the object of valid knowledge, as valid knowledge being psychosis, its object the world will be real. It cannot mean "being not void" (aśūnya) as it is also there in the world. It cannot mean Brahman-ness (Brahmatva), as according to the dualists difference from the brahman is there in the world. It cannot mean 'reality' as accepted by the dualists, as according to them reality and unreality being mutually exclusive their absence in one place cannot be asserted.

In course of refuting the charges of the opponents Madhusūdana accepts the last definition, namely indescribability.

41. A.S., p.621.
is the absence of reality and unreality in one place even if they are tentatively accepted as mutually exclusive (parasparā-bhāva-rūpa). Now the question arises, in view of this, how can the absence of both these mutual exclusives be asserted in one place. But in fact there is no such difficulty as their combination or their co-absence is not real in the absolute sense (tāttvika). As both reality and unreality in the empirical sense are not absolutely real (tāttvika), both of them can very well be absent in the same place. For example, in the ant-hill (valmīka) both tree and man which are mutually exclusive are absent. It cannot be said that opposites like tree and man are only contrary but not contradictory (parasparā-bhāva-rūpa). In the thread the pot and its prior absence (ghata-tat-prāg-abhāva) which are mutually contradictory are absent. It cannot be said that counterpositive and its absolute absence (atyanta-bhāva) are only contradictory, because there is no regulating factor (niyāmaka) to prove that only the absolute absence and its counterpositive are contradictory. 42

Upto this point the Acārya defends the Advaita view tentatively taking for granted the opponent’s view that reality and unreality are mutually exclusive. But in fact, according to the Advaitins each of them is only the vyāpya of the absence of the other, which is discussed at the time of

42. A.S., pp.621-622.
explaining the definitions of falsity. According to the Advaitins reality is that which cannot be sublated; unreality is incapability to appear as real. So that which appears as real but is sublated afterwards is false. It is indescribable as it cannot be described either as real or as unreal.

Not only the definition of indescribability is free from all logical faults, there are also perception and other proofs for its establishment. Perception gives us such knowledge that the false silver has appeared. It cannot be said that here the word 'false' only signifies unreal. Unreality which is common to human horn, etc. (*nr-srigaṇḍi-sādhāraṇa*), cannot be said to be there in the shell-silver, etc., which obviously appear unlike the former. It is to be noted that when human horn is taken as the example of unreal and shell-silver is taken as the example of false, it does not mean that there is no logical possibility of human horn appearing as such. The example only takes into consideration human horn in so far as it does not appear and it only signifies some non-existing and non-appearing entity. Indeed, the question of logical possibility or empirical possibility which we find in the western thought is altogether a different question. *Advaita* is not concerned with it, as it deals with our common errors and their possibility.

43. A.S., p. 622.

44. Ibid., pp. 626-627.
It is to be noted that the Mādhvas advocate one kind of asat-khyāti. According to them a defective sense organ with the help of impressions grasps the 'this' portion of the shell that is near to it as the unreal shell-silver (asad-rūpyatmanā) so asat-khyāti is to be accepted. Perceptual knowledge such as "The unreal silver has appeared" is its proof. Inference such as "The doubted is unreal like hare's horn as it is different from real" is also another proof. It is to be noted that though both the Mādhvas and the nihilists of Buddhism uphold asat-khyāti, there is much difference between them. The Mādhvas accept some sort of reality as the basis of error, whereas the nihilists do away with it. The aim of the Mādhva theory of error is to show that error is completely unreal, whereas the world in contrast to it is real. On the other hand, the nihilists with the example of the erroneous objects try to prove that the world is as much unreal as the shell-silver. Thus both the forms of asat-khyāti differ from each other in their aim as well as in their content.

Rejecting the Mādhva theory of asat-khyāti the Advaitins say that unreal cannot be the object of perception. Even though reality is accepted as the basis, there cannot be the perception of the unreal. The difference between unreal and false is clarified by Madhusūdan previously. In the inference adduced by the dualists the example "hare's horn" is improper.

45. A.S., pp.645-646.
as this is only a verbal illusion (vikalpa) in contrast to an actual illusion. The former is only cognised through verbal expression, whereas the latter can be presented to consciousness directly which is overlooked by the dualists.46

Though the Mādhvas admit something real as the basis of the perception of the unreal in errors, their view is not different from that of the nihilists in so far as they accept the perceptibility of unreal. It cannot be said that like the view of the Naiyāyikas asat-khyāti of the Mādhvas is distinct from that of the nihilists. Though the Naiyāyikas admit an unreal relation (asat-saṁsarga) between the silver in the shop and the 'this' portion of the shell; unlike the nihilists they admit both the shop-silver and the shell as real. Likewise, a view of the Mādhvas should be differentiated from that of the nihilists. But in fact, the Naiyāyikas must have to admit a relation which is not unreal. Otherwise, they have also to face the same difficulty.47 Actually the theory of anyathā-khyāti is also not possible, as like the unreal, the real that is present else where cannot be an object of direct knowledge. The impressions, memory and other faults cannot satisfactorily explain the direct presentation of the object that exists else where. It cannot be said that it is possible in extra-

47. Ibid.
ordinary perception (alaukika-pratyaksa), as such a fictitious perception is not accepted by others except the Naiyāyikas.\textsuperscript{48}

The obvious difficulty which the Mādhvas have to face in maintaining asat-khyāti is that, if an unreal can appear as real at all, then why not the world which appears to be real be actually unreal. Thus they are ultimately forced to accept the nihilists' view. On the other hand, the Naiyāyikas have also to face a similar problem if they accept unreal relation in error. If an unreal relation can appear, why not an unreal object? Thus the outcome of such a theory is the acceptance of the Buddhist view of nihilism. But such a difficulty does not arise in the case of anirvacanīya-khyāti upheld by the Advaitins, as both the shell silver and its relation are accepted here as indescribable.\textsuperscript{50}

It is to be borne in mind that the shell-silver is referred to as the example in the inference of falsity of the world. From the above discussion it can be concluded that shell-silver can be accepted as indescribable without any difficulty. Its cause ajñāna is established with its form (svarūpa), object (visāya), locus (āśraya) and proof (pramāṇa). The Advaita theory

\textsuperscript{48} A.S., p.647.

\textsuperscript{49} Only the theory of asat-khyāti of the Mādhvas and anyathā-khyāti as related to it have been taken up for discussion by Madhusūdana. The old teachers had already discussed and refuted the other theories of khyāti. So Madhusūdana only refutes the Mādhva theory not prevalent before.
of indescribable or false as different from unreal and real is well explained in view of the acceptance of the three categories viz, real, unreal and indescribable. Though the world is false, its difference from the apparent (pratibhasika) such as shell-silver is well maintained, as three sorts of reality (sattā) are accepted by the Advaitins. The empirical reality can only be sublated by the final knowledge of the Brahman, whereas the apparent is sublated by the empirical knowledge. Thus in the sense of empirical and apparent reality, 'reality' is only superimpositional (adhyasika), whereas in the sense of the Brahman it is absolute (paramarthika). In the empirical and apparent sense, reality is not opposed to falsity. So the world-order is not shattered but consistently explained by the Advaita-view.