4. **MĀYA, THE UNREALITY**  
(TUCCHA MĀYA)

"From science let man learn the philosophic truth that there is no material universe; its warp and woof is māyā, illusion."

Self is described as light, as in the presence of self the sense organs could function. Man experiences ignorance in his consciousness for which it is ascribed that avidyā (ignorance) resides in consciousness. An objection crops up on this point of juxtaposition of two mutual opposites: awareness and ignorance, light and darkness. "How could the self-luminous-self contain ignorance, and without it how could there be obscuring? Such arguments are over turned by one's direct experience."

Experience is stronger than logic for which Ācārya Śankara writes, "na hi śrutisahasreṇa ghatam patayitum śakyate." Logic must be grounded in life. We experience ignorance in our knowledge. Therefore, there arises a drop of logic which must follow one's own experience.

Nescience does not eclipse the self, but clouds the power of discrimination. The Philosophy is studied to know the truth and to eschew the unreal. Out of the three ways, viz. yoga, discrimination between self and not-self, and contemplation on the unreality of the world, the discrimination between the Real and unreal (nityā-nitya-vastuvivekah) has been the prime function of Advaita vedanta.

The vāstavī māyā which influences life, contradicts the doctrine of the eternal Reality. Perception which requires duality, is stronger than all means of knowledge. This is the objection against the rejection
of the reality of the world.' and against upholding the ultimate reality of
the absolute. Thus, the nature of the reality may be refreshed here.

4.1. **Tucchā māyā and the absolutely absolutism of brahmavāda**

The absolute of Kashmir Saivism has the freedom (*svātantryāsakti*)
whereby it functions as the doer, and knower. Without the freedom of
the absolute – as holds the Parādvaita system of Kashmir – the absolute
can never be absolute. This is the essence of *svātantryavāda*. In the
system of Bradley, "appearance must belong to Reality. The bewilder­
ing mass of phenomenal diversity must hence somehow be at unity and
self-consistent, for it cannot be elsewhere than in reality and reality ex­
cludes discord."* Frithjof Schuon comprehends the *svātantrya* from the
stand point of Advaita Vedanta when He writes:

"...the All possibility must be by definition and on pain of contra­
diction includes its own impossibility.... Māyā represents the possibility
for Being of not being... Nothing is external to absolute Reality... thus
the world is the necessary aspect of the absolute necessity of Brahman
put in another way relativity is an aspect of the absolute". *

Relativity, māyā, is the Śakti of the Absolute Brahman. If the ex­
istence of the relativity is excluded from the possibility, the absolute
would not be Absolute.

The doctrine of Bhartrīprapañca’s saprañca, which does not ex­
clude Viśiṣṭādvaita view of reality, has been refuted by Dr. K.B.R.Rao
from Śankara’s stand point. He writes that it is accepted only as a con­
cession at the vyāvahārika level." 'Possibility', for Advaita Vedanta is
nothing more than apparent or non-analogical involvements of the metaphysical reality; for according to the Non-dualistic Vedānta, Absolute is beyond the realm of contradictories and contraries obtainable in the epistemological realm, and hence unaffected in any way by such involvements of the realm of relativity.¹⁰

According to Dr. Rao, the absolute whose logical necessary aspect is relativity, limits the state of the Absolute by making it complimentary to relative, without which the absolute cannot be complete in itself. The absolute, whose logical possibility is relativity, immeasurably enhances the power or potency of the absolute, even while it can make it possible for the impossible (māya) to be.¹¹

An absolute in relation to a relative, is less than the Absolute, which remains "Absolute throughout with no relation to the relative". This is what Śankara conceives of his absolute Brahman.

Though Dr. Rao very aptly establishes the absolute Absolutism of Śankara in contrast with Bradley's, Bhartr prapañca's and Viśiṣṭādvaita's absolutism, yet he has not thought of the Reality of the Absolutism of Parādvaitavāda of Kashmir Saivism. A deep study of this Absolutism with special reference to the svātantrya-vāda of the Saivism and the Absolutism of Bradley, Bhartrprapanca etc. is still needed to be expounded.

4.2. **Tucchā and locus of māyā**

There has been a continued attack on Advaita Vedanta regarding the placement of māyā on Brahman. Vedanta Desika in Sataduṣaṇi attacks on this point. But the attack is the result of not properly under-
standing the contents of tucchā māyā. Māyā is indeed indeterminable not with reference to its ontological status but with reference to its epistemological, empirical or vyāvahāra status. Brahman’s nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss is not conceived from the level of empirical stand point, but it is from the alogical, ontological, unspeakable or unthinkable realm, as It is absolutely Absolute. Therefore, māyā which is indeterminate (anirvacaniya) in the speakable or logical level, becomes determinate “nirvacaniya”, and loses its anirvacaniyatva at the unspeakable or alogical level of Brahman. There is no covering nor projection of māyā at this stage. This is the futility or falsity of māyā which pitifully loses its existence at the realm of Brahman. Not to comprehend it and to argue against its locus, has been a traditional mistake.

4.3. Unreality (tucchatva) from empirical observation

Besides the discrimination of the two levels, viz, Vāstavā and Anirvacanāthyā, the unreality of māyā is established on the following grounds:

(I) The entity which is non-existent before creation (prāgbhāva) and after dissolution (pradhvamsābhāva) is also so even in the present (i.e. during the creation). The effect as well as the world was non-existent before creation and will be non-existent after dissolution. So, in the creation also they are none-existent like the products of a magician. But consciousness being the experience can never experience its own non-existence.

(II) There is a difference between Existence (Brahman) and ether (ākāśa). It is known by different names, ideas etc. Moreover the differ-
ence is known from the role of attribute (*dharma*) and possesor of attribute (*dharmī*). When the substratum or existence is taken away, *ākāśa* for example, will exist no more and whatever will remain will be *māyā*, non-existent. Therefore by meditation, logic and evidence, *ākāśa*, when known to be different from existence (*Brahman*), then it will not appear as real and like *ākāśa* all other, viz., air, fire, water etc. are also known to be unreal. By saying ether to be different from *Sat*, ether is not predicated to have exclusive existence. "Ether consists of two parts, the real and unreal. By sublating the unreal in it, ether is seen to be in appositional relation with *Sat*. But then ether ceases to be ether; for, the *Sat* alone exists. Through "*bādha-sāmanādhi karanyaya*, apposition through sublation", the non-dual state is achieved. It can be illustrated with the following figure where *māyā* stands for ether and air. When these are taken away, the one 'consciousness' remains.

(III) With reference to a cause or substratum, say clay, the power and the product in it become unmanifest and manifest by turns. Therefore they exist by turn and thus cancel each other. Whereas the substratum, earth (cause) persists all along in both. So it is permanently real. Similarly is the case for the substratum "consciousness" which is real and the effect 'māyā' is unreal.
(IV) A product is unsubstantial as it is subjected to change by creation and destruction. It is a mere name, for, when the product perishes, its name continues to be used by men, and also it is destructible. Therefore all products are unreal.

(V) Relation cannot be real, because it is neither the nature of things nor of the attributes. If effect differs from the cause, the effect is non-existent, if it does not differ, there is no question of relation. So all relation between appearance and reality is adhyāsa.

(VI) The world of the creation is opposed to the Reality, for it is ascertained from observation that the world is non-existent, inert and painfull. Whereas Reality or Brahman is its opposite (Existent, Conscient and Blissful). Therefore the whole world (Māyā) is unreal.

(VII) A real can never be negated. That which is negated or sublated is not real.

(VIII) “If effect is unreal and cause is real, then by the knowledge of the cause, say clay, why not the pot is destroyed like the illusions of the silver”? This question is answered as follows: By the knowledge of the shell, silver is destroyed, because this illusion is attributeless (nirupādhika). The shadow of the person in water, being of attribute (sopādhika), it is not destroyed, but is known only unreal by the knowledge of its cause, i.e. the man. So also by the knowledge of the cause, viz. earth, the effect, pot is known to be unreal.

(IX) At the level of the highest reality, there is no effect at all, because without modification or transformation of the cause, there is no effect. Whatever appears as effect, say the world, is non-existent.

(X) It is untenable to hold that the world “somehow” belongs to Brahman. Rope cannot somehow assume the apparent. A snake in all the
three times is negated on the rope. Negation is conceived of nothing but of the locus itself, for, negation negates itself.

(XI) Due to the confusion of the subject with the object, we falsely attribute activity and knowability. All of them belong to the level of negation. Kashmir Saivism also accepts the unreality of the world at the transcendental (pāramāthika) stage. For example, Abhinavagupta admits that.16

(a) "In reality, there is no world at all. Where is the question of bondage?...This world is illusory and false just like the snake on a rope or a ghost on a shadow..."17

(b) "The world is unreal, changing and is in the process of becoming. It is like a dream... where could be the existence of them?"17

(c) "There is no real origin of the world, but appear due to Him(Śiva). Though unreal, it appears as if real for a moment due to illusion."18

4.4. Vāstavī and anirvacanīyā lead to tucchā

The unreality of the world can further be ascertained from the Vāstavī and indeterminate aspects of māyā. A thing, for example, in the illusion of the snake on a rope, if real at one level in the case of Vāstavī and at another level if that thing is both real and unreal (in anirvacanīyā), ultimately that thing becomes unreal, ascertained through proper reasoning. Vāstavīmāyā reveals through experience that Brahman has a power to delude. Epistemological (anirvacanīyā) māyā affirms it through reasoning. In another way, if vāstavī (i.e. ontological in a limited sense of apparently existence) māyā functions as an axiomatic statement,(and
serves as the major premise), and if anirvacaniyā māya serves as the minor premise, then their judgement will syllogistically conclude what here is called tucchāmāya.

Mathematically, the non-existence of māya as tucchā can be shown as follows. From Vāstavī māya it is known that Brahman assumes some form when it comes in contact with māya. By arithmetical linear equation, it can be drawn that māya is something minus Brahman. It results in nothing.

BRAHMAN + MAYĀ = SOMETHING
MAYĀ = SOMETHING —— BRAHAMAN = NOTHING.

i.e. Māya is that (yā) which is nothing (mā).

The problem of Absolutely non-existent (tucchā) and relatively existent (vāstavī) māya are, as Swami Chinmayananda clarifies, the problems of “Is” existence and “Has” existence. In T.R.V. Murti’s language, māya is “In” Being, but not “of” Being. It is contingent but not integral of reality. Had world or māya been real, it would have caused a limitation in the Absolute of Advaita Vedanta.

4.5. Pragmatism is not the criterion of truth

The non-existence of duality is a prerequisite for the non-duality. The more the duality is negated, the clearer it turns the realisation of Brahman. Further, when the duality is negated, it saves from attachment. Attachment gives rise to enjoyment. So, enjoyment and the awareness of the unreality of the world never go together. The world is useful. This does not imply its reality, for, utility or pragmatism is not the criterion of Truth. When an addicted man snatches the ornament from his
wife for his drink's sake, it is not his need nor utility, but his attitude to life and his worldly view which prompts to pursue a way-ward life of four days; whereas a merchant plans his life for some hundred years; a Swami like Vivekananda thinks for forty thousand years and a saint thinks the period of the sun and the earth negligible. Man's sight makes his life. The Śaivite of Kashmir charges Śaṅkara with prachannābuddha and sūnyavādī, because Śri Śaṅkara could grant independent reality neither to power (śakti) nor to its effects. Sincerely being guided by logic, the Vedantin refutes the existence of māyā. He avoids it not out of the fear of duality, as is charged against him; but faithfully being guided by experience. Innocently the Vedantin asks, “You tell, how can I consider power to be existent, independent of its substratum? Since no where power is counted separately, where is the question of duality?”

śrīvāmśa sāktimātrasya na prthaggaṇanā kvacit/
śakti kāryam tu naivāsti dvitiyam sankyate katham?21

Swami Śわहानान्दागives a chance to the opponent to search out any duality in the non-duality of Vedanta. When one finds no room, he says, “Even if the output of an inherent force can be counted as separate, in case of māyā no such result exists, as it is all an illusion and did not exist before creation.”22 Therefore the whole of the creation is only a nurse's story to amuse a child: “O Mighty One! Once upon a time, there were three handsome princes. Two of them were never born...” and the story settled in the child’s mind to be true due to the want of discrimination.23 Whereas to a grown up-

“There is no destruction nor origination nor is there any bondage and no engagement of practice for liberation; no aspirant for liberation and none is liberated”24.
This is exactly what echoes in Abhinava's voice when he recites:

"Where could be then any worship and worshipped...?"

"There is no world at all. Where is the question of bondage? Of whom there is no bondage, the liberation of a liberated one is a false...".

In the *Pratyabhijnāhṛdayam*, Ksemaraja recites,-

"I do not know where the existence of the world is dropped away."

Yogananda says, "As one by one the reassuring props of a physical cosmos crash beneath him, man deceptly receives his idolatrous reliance, his transgression of the divine command: "Thou Shalt have no other gods before Me"."