CHAPTER 1

AN EXPOSITION OF APPEARANCE AND REALITY IN ŚAṆKARA’S PHILOSOPHY OF ADVAITA VEDĀNTA
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I, in this chapter, am going to elaborate the nature and status of appearance and reality in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta in the framework of ontology, metaphysics, epistemology and psychology. Appearance, in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, contains ābhāsa, mithyā, bhrama, māyā, avidyā, ajñāna, adhyāsa, vicāra, vikāra, anya, prātiḥśāsa, vyāvahāra, bhāvābhāvavilaksana, sadasadanirvacaniya, prapaṇca, jagat, pratyakṣa, anumāna, śabda and so on. And Reality comprises of Satya, Vāstava, Yathārtha, Paramārtha, Param Puruṣārtha, Citt, Ānanda, Jñāna, Ananta, Bhūmā, Brahman, Ātman, Śākṣin, Mokṣa, Tatvā, Tūrīya, Ananya, Nitya and so on. However, in appearance also, there is an element of reality but it is regarded by Śaṅkara as reality of lower level. Likewise between Paramārtha and vyāvahāra, there is no separation in terms of reality and appearance. But there is difference in terms of degrees of reality. Vyāvahāra is less element of reality more of appearance, whereas, Paramārtha is more of real but is less in term of appearance. In order to explain the nature and status of appearance and reality, I, in Śaṅkara’s ontology, would like to explain the ontological status of Reality in terms of Paṇca Kośas (five sheaths), i.e., Annamaya Kośa, Prāṇamaya Kośa, Manomaya Kośa, Vijñānamaya Kośa and finally Ānandamaya Kośa. Śaṅkara’s metaphysics contains the nature and status of Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat, Citt, Ānanda and Satya, Jñāna, Ananta. In Śaṅkara’s epistemological situation, we come across appearance and reality into his position on antahkaraṇa, pramāṇa-vicāra, anirvacaniya khyātivāda and vivartavāda. Śaṅkara explains the status of consciousness as reality in terms of avasthātraya, i.e., jāgrat, svapna and susūpti. This could be regarded as psychological framework. Besides these doctrines, I would also like to discuss the doctrine of jīvan-mukti which is also in term of Reality and three different levels of reality, i.e., prātiḥśāsa, vyāvahārika and
Paramārthika sat. Before go into the detail of these issues, I would like to explain methodology of Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta.

2.1. METHODOLOGY OF ŚAṄKARA:

Śaṅkara adopts various method in his philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. These are known as Adhyāropa and Apavāda, hermeneutics, dialogue, dialectic, deferring, analogies and so on. Here, first of all, I shall discuss Śaṅkara’s method of Adhyāropa and Apavāda.

Śaṅkara has certainly been inspired by Gauḍapāda, his paramgurū, and the traditional method invoked by him. “Śaṅkara makes use of the method is known as Adhyāropa (projection) and Apavāda (refutation).”¹ This is known to Vedantins even before Gauḍapāda. Maṇḍana Miśra in Vimalśiddhi has reffered to this method. Adhyāropa is natural propensity of man to formulate a view of that which is observed. It precedes observation, because observation is not possible without Adhyāropa. Śaṅkara calls it by the name of adhyāsa and explains it in term of being natural, beginningless and firmly established in common sense. What is Śaṅkara’s prime interest in philosophy? Though, Śaṅkara is a Brahmavādi, he is primarily interested in jīva, its existential problems and of the worldly life-lokavyāvahāra. It is to find out what human being is what he thinks and experiences as an agent of action involved in the day- to- day life and activity. Therefore, Śaṅkara looks at the Vedānta text in order to identify the causes of human problems and to make the way out to resolve human problems. Unlike other Vedāntins who started their thought with the interpretation of first Sūtra, i.e. Athāto Brahma-Jijñāsā, Śaṅkara does not go to this Sūtra to start with. He begins with an introduction to the Sūtra and his introduction is known as adhyāsavākya. To understand Śaṅkara’s

Advaita is to understand the problem of adhyāsa. Adhyāsa provides a foundation to Śankara’s Brahmaśūtrabhāṣya, Upaniṣadbhāṣya and Gītābhāṣya.

How does Śankara begin in the doctrine of adhyāsa? The theory of adhyāsa begins with day-to-day life and experience, a kind of naiveté of outlooks containing certain elements of truths and untruths. This is a kind of power of discrimination. “Every proposition contains a truth content and a falsity content. So it is natural for every seeker of truth to undertake the work with critical evaluation. When he finds the view contains more untruths than truths, he rejects it and accepts another view, which has a greater degree of truth than the previous one. This rejection is known as apavāda, which literally means discordant view and that it does not accord with the reality any more.”

Advaita Vedānta maintains that there are views, which accord with the reality more adequately than others. Śankara, for example, prefers, Sāṅkhya to Vaiśeṣika and some of his later followers prefer Śaktism to Śaivism. Now, let us discuss the method of hermeneutics which is a system of understanding, an interpretation and an attempt to find the hidden meaning of a text.

Hermeneutics has been used by the Mīmāṃsakas and Vedāntins probably from the first century BC. There are so many statements in the Upaniṣads that are so paradoxical, puzzling, symbolic, suggestive and aphoristic that we cannot understand them without interpretation. For example, Īśāvāsya Upaniṣads says, “That moves, That does not move; That is far off, That is very near; That is inside all this, and That is also outside all this.”

It is in this context that hermeneutics has been used to clarify the obvious paradoxes. Śankara comments on this text thus: “The meaning of the

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text is that, though in itself It (Supreme Reality) is motionless, It seems to move. Moreover, That is far off- That seems to be far away, since It is unattainable by the ignorant even in hundreds of millions of years; That is very near indeed, to the men of knowledge; It being their Self, It is not only far off, but is near too. That is inside; of all this- in accordance with the Vedic text: ‘The Self that is within in all’ (Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 3.4.1.), of all this world consisting of name, form and activity. That is outside all this, because It is all-pervasive like space; and It is inside, because It is extremely subtle.”⁴ Now, we come to Śaṅkara’s method of dialogue that has been continuously used in the different Upaniṣads.

A dialogue is a process of conversation, argumentation and mutual supplementation of ideas between two individuals. With dialogue a method has evolved in which the encounters with other thinkers are essential. It is opposed to a monologue, which can formulate nothing but a dogma. We come across several dialogue in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad- such as between Satyakāma and his mother Jabālā; between Yama and Naciketā; between Ghora Angirasa and Kṛṣṇa; between Nārada and Sanat Kumār; between Prajāpati, Indra and Virocana; between Śvetaketu and Uddālaka and between Āruṇi and Śvetaketu- and some others in Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad- such as between Prajāpati and his sons and between Yājñāvalkya, Maitreyi and Katyāyani. Now, let us take up Śaṅkara’s dialectical method.

Dialectical method has been used in almost all the dialogues available in the Upaniṣads. Dialectic has been operating at two levels:

(a) It is a mode of argumentation to bring out a contradiction in the views of the other party. This process is generally known as the pūrvapakṣa, the khaṇḍana and finally the uttarpakṣa.

(b) It resolves/dissolves/sublates the contradictions at higher levels.

In such dialogues as between Uddālaka and Nāciketā, we find that the dialogue begins with empirical experiences, the vyāvahārika sat. In order to resolve the contradictions at the vyāvahārika level, we go to the Paramārthika level. Like in a dialogue between Nārada and Sanat Kumār, we find examples of Parāvidyā and Aparāvidyā. The method of questioning as an enquiring act also plays a vital role in Śankara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta.

The Kena Upaniṣad consists of an older prose section and more recent verse with which it begins. The word ‘Kena’ means “by whom” and is the first word in a series of questions asking by whom is the mind projected, by whom does breathing go forth, by whom is speech impelled? What god is behind the eye and ear? The answer to these questions points to a mystical self that is beyond the mind and senses but is that God by which the mind and senses operate. Now, let us go towards the method of deferring.

Deferring is a method used by the sages to show active and passive movement that consists in deferring by means of a delay, délégation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement and reserving, etc. Very often the seers are absolutely pertinent and do not illuminate anything except the one which is before them by taking into account the capacity of the learner. We come across such an instances in the celebrated dialogue between Prajāpati, Indra and Virocana in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. The preceptor does not disclose the wisdom at once but defers it and reserves it for some other occasions. It thus happens that Virocana is completely satisfied with the first answer of Prajāpatī but Indra is not. Indra proposes the preceptor again and again for
the solution of his difficulties. Deferring helps Prajāpati to understand and appreciate the capacity of the learner. At the end, Prajāpati discloses the secret of his philosophy and supplies us with an excellent example of the method of Deferring employed in the *Upaniṣads*. Now, let us discuss analogical approach which is an inference making it possible to draw conclusion about the similarity of objects in certain of their properties on the basis of the similarity of other properties.

Analogical approach has been used at many places in the *Upaniṣads*. For example, the sage Yājñavalkya introduces the analogy of the drum, the conch or the lute in order to explain the process of the apprehension of the Self, or when again Āruṇi introduces the analogy of the juices, which in constituting honey ceases to be different from it, and so on. All the analogies are used to show the identity and difference between the individual soul and the universal soul by means of analogies alone.

2.2. STATUS OF REALITY IN PAŃCA KOŚAS:

Reality, as the evolution of consciousness, has been explained in terms of *Pańca kośas* (five sheaths), i.e., *Annamaya kośa*, *Prāṇamaya kośa*, *Manomaya kośa*, *Vijñānamaya kośa* and *Ānandamaya kośa*. The first level is that of matter or food-sheath (*Annamaya kośa*). Śaṅkara says, "The body is a product of food. It constitutes the food-sheath. It exists because of food and dies without it."⁵ *Annamaya kośa* is regarded as Reality because all beings that rest on the earth are born verily from food. Besides, they live on food, and at the end, they get merged into food. Regarding the Reality of *Annamaya kośa*, Śaṅkara says, "Since food is the source of all the other creatures beginning with those made of food, therefore all living beings originate from food, live on food, and

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merge into food.”

This self, which is made of food, has another inner self which is made of air or life (Prāṇamaya) and therefore, it is taken as Reality. So next is the Prāṇamaya kośa (vital air-sheath or life sheath).

Reality as the manifestation of life in the physical body, which expresses itself in the gross body as the activities of the five organs of action, is called the Prāṇamaya kośa. The Annamaya kośa is completely pervaded by the Prāṇamaya kośa. Owing to the Prāṇamaya kośa and its dynamism alone all the activities of the body take place. Hence, Prāṇamaya kośa is taken as Reality because it is considered as the soul of the Annamaya kośa. In this regard, Śaṅkara says, “The Prāṇa along with the five organs-of-action, constitutes the vital-air-sheath, pervaded by which the food-sheath (physical body), performs all its activities as though it were living.”

The Prāṇamaya kośa is a modification of air (vāyu). As long as it is in the body, all the activities of the body go on. But once it leaves the body, all the activities of the body stop. When this air is inside the body, it is called Prāṇa and when it is outside, it is called the atmospheric air. All human beings and animals act by the vital force (Prāṇa). Since on the vital force depends the life of all creatures, therefore it is called Reality as the life of all (sarvāyuṣa). According to Śaṅkara, “...those that are human beings and animals, they become active through the function of breathing. Hence, also, it is not simply by possessing the limited self in the form of the body build up by food (Annamaya) that are creatures become dowered with selves...Human beings and others are endowed with their selves by virtue of possessing a vital body within each physical body, which former is common to, and pervades, each physical body as a whole...the vital

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6 "Atho api jatā annenaiva jīvanti prāṇāndhārayanti vardhanta ityarthāḥ. Athāpyenada annamapiyantyapi gacchanti." Śaṅkara’s commentary on Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 2.2.1 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.1, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.324.

force is the life of creatures, therefore, it is called the life of all."8 The self, which is made of air or life (Prāṇamaya) has another inner self constituted by the mind. It is Reality which is known as Manomaya kośa (mental sheath) in Advaita Vedānta.

According to Śaṅkara, “Manah means the internal organ comprising volition etc. That which is constituted by mind is manomaya.”9 The mind along with its senses, constitutes the Manomaya kośa. The sense-organs are in the body, but when the mind is engrossed elsewhere, we do not perceive the things though they are within the range of our senses. This is because the sense-centres are in the body but when the mind is not available, no perception is possible. The sense-organs by themselves cannot perceive. When the mind flows through the sense-organs and reaches the place where the pot is than the experience of, “this is a pot”, is generated. The theory of perception in Advaita Vedānta is that the consciousness, riding on the mind as citta, flows out through the sense-organs to reach the pot-place (ghatta-deśa) and contacts the existence (Sat) of the pot. Thus, I become conscious of the pot: the consciousness of the pot is the “knowledge of the pot.” “I-ness” and “my-ness” are born in and maintained by this Manomaya kośa. This is the powerful force which creates all the apparent differences in the world of pluralistic experiences and in this sense, it is considered as Reality in Advaita Vedānta. Wherever there is no plurality, there is no mind. Hence, mind alone is the cause for all plurality- the plurality of names, forms, qualities, activities and utilities. Where the mind is not, nothing is. The Manomaya kośa fully pervades the preceding kośa, i.e., the Prāṇamaya kośa and thus, it is connected with


9 “Mana iti satkalpaṇāmyātmakamantāḥkaraṇāḥ tanmaya manomaya yathānāmayaḥ.” Ibid., 2.3.1, p.331.
Reality. In this regard, Śaṅkara says, “The organs of perception along with the mind form the mental-sheath which is the sole cause for the “I” and “mine” diversity of things. It has the essential faculty of creating differences of names etc...It pervades the sheath preceding it- the vital-air-sheath.”\(^\text{10}\) When the mind is destroyed, all pluralistic perception and the sense of mortality ends. When it is projected, the entire world gets projected. “Apart from the mind there is no ignorance (avidyā). The mind itself is the ignorance which is the cause for the bondage of rebirth. When the mind is destroyed, everything else is destroyed. When the mind manifests, everything else manifests.”\(^\text{11}\) In the dream state, the mind creates a world of its own which has an appearance of Reality, so too, the Reality of the universe, perceived in the waking world, is but a projection of mind. All that we see around, is a projection of our mind. In Śaṅkara words, “In the dream-state, even though there is no contact with the outside world, the mind alone projects the entire dream-universe of enjoyer etc. Similarly, the waking-state is no different. All this (world of pluralistic phenomena), is but a projection of the mind.”\(^\text{12}\) During deep-sleep when the mind is completely dissolved, the experience of the individual is that there is nothing. Thus, when the mind is not there, there is no world perceived. Śaṅkara says, “In deep-sleep, the mind is reduced to its causal-state and nothing perceivable exists as is proved by the universal experience of all people. Therefore, man’s world of change is just the creation of his own mind and has no objective Reality.”\(^\text{13}\) This inner self, which is constituted by mind, has another internal self constituted by valid knowledge. It is recognized as Reality in term of Vijñānamaya kośa (intellectual-sheath).
The *Vijñānamaya kośa* is the sole monopoly of human being. “The intelligence-self exists within the mental-sheath”\(^\text{14}\) and therefore, it is comprehended as Reality. Reason becomes self-consciousness only at this state and this fact distinguishes human beings from lower animals. The empirical trinity of knower, knowledge and known has been evolved. Śaṅkara says, “It is without beginning, is of the nature of the ego and is called the *jeeva*, which carries out the entire range of activities on the relative plane...The waking, dream and other states, and the experiences of joy and sorrow, belong to this intellectual-sheath.”\(^\text{15}\) Reality, in term of *Vijñānamaya kośa*, constitutes the intellect, the sense-organ of perception and all the different modifications of the intellect. It controls the organs of perception. He says, “The intellect with its modifications along with the organs of perception from the intellectual-sheath (*Vijñānamaya kośa*). It has the characteristics of “the agent” (or doer), which is the cause for trans-migration.”\(^\text{16}\) Of the preceding (mental) self, this (cognitive) self is verily the embodied self. This self (*Vijñānamaya kośa*), which exists within *Manomaya kośa* (mental sheath), has another internal self constituted by bliss (*Ānandamaya*). It is also identified with Reality.

Regarding the Reality as *Ānandamaya kośa*, Śaṅkara says, “The *Ānandamaya kośa* (bliss-sheath), is that modification of Nescience (*tamoguṇa*) which is kissed by a reflection of the *Ātman*, which is Bliss Absolute.”\(^\text{17}\) In the commentary of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara writes, “Ānanda (bliss) is an effect of meditation and rites, and *ānandamaya* is constituted by that bliss. And this self is more internal than the cognitive self, since it has been shown by the


\(^{15}\) “Anādiikālayamaharṣvabhāvo jīvāḥ samastavyavoahāravoḍā...Asyaiva vijñānamayasya jāgrat- swapnāyavasthāḥ sukhadul̄khabhogāḥ.” in Talks on Śaṅkara’s *Viveka Choodamani*, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., Stanza 186-187, p. 225.

\(^{16}\) “Buddhirbuddhindriyāḥ sārdham savyttīḥ kart fluoride syātputrāḥ satsārakāraṇam.” Ibid., Stanza, 184, p.222.

\(^{17}\) “Ānandapratibimbacumāntanāyottistamojyabhidhā syādānandamayah priyādiguṇakah sveṣṭārthābhodeyāḥ.” Ibid., Stanza 207, p.243.
Upāniṣad to be indwelling the cognitive self which is the cause of sacrifices etc. In as much as the fruit of meditation and rites is meant for the enjoyer, it must be the inmost of all; and the blissful self is the inmost as compared with the earlier ones. Further, this follows from the fact that meditation and rites are meant for the acquisition of joy etc.; indeed, meditation and rites are prompted by (the desire for) joy etc. Thus since joy etc., which are the fruits (of rites and meditation), are nearer to the Self, it is logical that they should be within the cognitive self; for the blissful self, revived by the impression of joy etc., is perceived in dream to be dependent on the cognitive self.”¹⁸ When we are in dreamless deep-sleep, we are in the bliss-sheath. In the dream and waking conditions, it manifests only a little, when-ever one perceives things that are pleasant. Śaṅkara says, “The Ānandamaya kośa is fully manifest in the deep-sleep state. While in the dream and waking states, it is only partially manifest depending upon the sight of pleasing objects etc.”¹⁹ For Śaṅkara, Reality is Brahmān in term of Bliss because for from Bliss, all these beings originate, having been born, they are sustained by Bliss; they move towards and merge in Bliss. He, who realizes this knowledge, terminates in the Supreme (Bliss). Śaṅkara, on considering the Reality in term of Ānandamaya kośa, says, “This is knowledge...commencing from the self constituted by food, culminates in the Supreme, non-dual Bliss...And body else, too, who realize the Bliss that is Brahmān by entering through this very process and through concentration alone as his aid-that man, too, in consequence of his knowledge culminating thus, gets established in the Bliss that is the Supreme Brahmān; that is to say, he becomes Brahmān Itself.”²⁰


²⁰ “...vidyā parame vyomanāśayādyākāśaguhāyārḥiḥ param ānandadebude pratiṣṭhitā parisamāṇāṁśānāmayādāśīmanauātipraśīnaḥ. Ya evamanyoapi tapasīyamī sādhūnānenaiva...
Now, I shall explain the metaphysical status of Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat, Cit, Ānanda and Satya, Jñāna, Ananta in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta.

2.3. STATUS OF REALITY AS BRAHMAN:

Śaṅkara, to establish his metaphysical system, explain Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat, Cit, Ānanda and Satya, Jñāna, Ananta. In Advaita Vedānta philosophical tradition, metaphysical Reality in term of Brahman has been mentioned in many ways like the Supreme Reality, the Supreme Soul, the Absolute Reality, the Ultimate, the Permanent Reality, the Highest Being, the Self (Ātman). However, the word ‘Brahman’, first time, is used in the Rg Veda (c.2900-1900BC) but not in the sense of Absolute Reality or Supreme Being. “The term ‘Brahman’ first appears in the Rg Veda...in the close connection with various sacred utterances that were thought to have a special magical power. Originally, then, the term may have meant ‘spell’ or ‘prayer’; an utterance that was used for the magical attainment of worldly wisher and other worldly desire. Later, in the Brāhmaṇas, Brahman comes to signify that which stands behind the gods as their ground and source, and in the Upaniṣads generally it becomes the unitary principle of all being, the knowledge of which liberates one from finitude.”

So far as Śaṅkara is concerned, he derives the term ‘Brahman’ from the root word ‘Bṛḥ’, which means “to grow”. It means that wherever we have growth or development, we have Brahman. Śaṅkara says, “That indeed, that Self in its true nature, you know, as Brahman-(so called) because of its extensity (or unsurpassability) - that which is all surpassing and is called..."
Bhumā, great.”22 There are several examples of Reality in term of Brahman, like, Annam Brahman, Śabdam Brahman, Rasam Brahman, etc. Where there is orderliness, purposiveness, motion or creation of some specific form, there is the hidden presence of Brahman. The awareness, of the growth and the purposivenesss, etc., involves the existence of a conscious being or Ātman. Growth and the awareness of the growth cannot be separated. Hence, Ātman and Brahman are in perpetual unity. This has been the prime concern of Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara defines Reality in term of Brahman as such, “Brahman does exist as a well-known entity- eternal, pure, intelligent, free by nature and all-knowing and all-powerful.”23 Brahman manifests itself in two forms: Nirguṇa Brahman or Parā Brahman and Saguṇa Brahman or Aparā Brahman. The former is indeterminate or attributeless (Nirguṇa), unqualified (Nirviśeṣa), transcendental or acosmic (Nisprapanca) and indescribable (Anirvacaniya). And latter is determine (Saguṇa), qualified (Saviśeṣa) and immanent or cosmic (Saprapanca). From the transcendental point of view, it is Nirguṇa and transcendental Reality. From the empirical point of view, it appears as Saguṇa Brahman and it is empirical Reality. Actually, when Brahman associates with its own power of māyā, it is called Saguṇa Brahman, who is referred as Īsvara. Śaṅkara says, “Brahman is known in two aspects- one as possessed of the limiting adjunct constituted by the diversities of the universe which is a modification of name and form, and the other devoid of all conditioning factors and opposed to the earlier.”24

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24 “Dvīrūpaṁ hi brahmānmogamyaṁ nāmarupāvīkārahābhedopadivāriśtam tad viparītaṁ ca sarvopadivāriśtaṁ” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkara, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 1.1.11, p.62.
For exact knowledge of an existent, it is necessary to be aware of the methodology of characteristics (lakṣaṇa). Śaṅkara is conscious about this methodology when he discusses Reality as the concept of Brahmā. In his view, there are two types of characteristics, namely, tattastha-lakṣaṇa and svariṣṭa-lakṣaṇa. Former distinguishes an existent from all other existent while latter indicates the essential nature of existent. To explain the state of Brahmā, Śaṅkara has adopted both the methods.

Through the method of tattastha-lakṣaṇa, Śaṅkara describes Brahmā as the cause of the creation, preservation and dissolution of this universe. He says, “That omniscient and omnipotent source must be Brahmā from which occur the birth, continuance, and dissolution of this universe that is manifested through name and form, that is associated with diverse agents and experiencers, that provides the support for actions and results, having well-regulated space, time, and causation, and that defies all thoughts about the real nature of its creation.” Śaṅkara points out that the above Sūtra refer to the text of the Taittiriya Upaniṣad which says that “from which all these beings take birth, that by which they live after being born, that towards which they move and into which they merge. That is Brahmā.” Brahmā is the material cause as well as the efficient cause (nimitta kāraṇa) of this universe. There can be no other cause except Aparā Brahmā or Isvara. Śaṅkara argues that Brahmā is not “dependent on any other cause...for it is by nature eternal...Brahmā is surpassingly subtle, there is nothing else whether subtle or screened or remote or past, present or future which can be unknowable to it. Therefore, Brahmā is omniscient.”


Through the method of svarūpa-lakṣaṇa, he describes his metaphysical status of Reality as Brahman in terms of Satya (truth), Jñāna (knowledge) and Ananta (infinite). At another place, he has characterised this Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat (existent or Pure Being) Cit (Pure Consciousness) and Ānanda (bliss). Here, first of all, I would like to discuss the status of Reality in terms of Satya, Jñāna and Ananta.

The three terms, i.e. Satya, Jñāna and Ananta, contain three different meaning of Reality and separate among themselves. But they are related to Reality as Brahman and show his characteristics. As Śaṅkara argues, “The word ‘satya’ etc. are unrelated among themselves, since they subserve something else; they are meant to be applied to the substantive only. Accordingly, each of the...words is related with the word ‘Brahman’, independently of the others, thus: satyam brahma, jñānam brahma, anantam brahma.”28 Reality is Brahman in term of Satya. The phrase ‘Real’ and ‘unreal’ are used in their Absolute sense in Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara says, “As for satya a thing is said to be satya, true, when it does not change the nature that is ascertained to be its own; and a thing is said to be unreal when it changes the nature that is ascertained to be its own. Hence a mutable thing (vikāra) is unreal (mithyā)...So the phrase satyam Brahman (Brahman is truth) distinguishes Brahman from mutable thing.”29 To say, Reality is Brahman in term of knowledge (Jñāna), it means we should know the cause of the phenomenal world. Brahman is the material cause. In favour of this, Śaṅkara says, “Brahman is the (material) cause (of all subsequent changes); and since a material cause is a substance, it can be an accessory as well, thereby becoming insentient like earth. Hence it is said that Brahman is Jñānam. Jñāna means knowledge,

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28 “Satyādiśabdā na parasparāt satibhadhyante parāthtoṭā, viśeṣyārthā hi te. Āta ekaiko viśeṣanāśabdādah parasparān nirapekṣo brahmaśabdādena satibhadhyate satyāt brahma jñānāt brahmanāntāt brahmēti.” Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 2.1.1, in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, Vol.1, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.308.

29 “Satyamiti yadrūpeta yaṁ niścitāt taddrūpān na vyabhicarita tatsatyaṃ. Yadrūpeta niścitāt yattadṛpān vyabhicaradantāntamityucyate. Āta vikāroanṛtam...evaṁ sadeva satyamityavadhāraṇāt. Atāḥ satyāt brahmēti Brahman vikārāṇnivartayati.” Ibid., 2.1.1., pp.308-309.
consciousness. The word Jñāna conveys the abstract notion of the verb...along with truth and infinitude.”

Brahman is infinite (Ananta). To establish this situation of Reality as Brahman, Śaṅkara says, “from the phrase, Jñānam Brahmat, it may follow that Brahman is limited, for human knowledge is seen to be finite. Hence, in order to oviate this, the text says, Anantam, infinite.”

Brahman, as the metaphysical status of Reality according to Śaṅkara, is the fullness of Sat (pure existence), Cit (pure consciousness) and Ānanda (pure bliss). Reality, in term of Sat, is Brahman which is “ever existent and the unreal is never existence- regarding the two, the Self and the non-Self, the real and the unreal is always present before the minds of those who attend only to truth, to the real nature of the Brahman, the Absolute, the All...”

Regarding the status of Reality as Brahman in term of Cit, he says, “Prajñā is consciousness that is the same as Brahman...therefore consciousness is Brahman.”

Consciousness is self-revealing and is not dependent on any other factor for the revelation of itself or of others. It is the one reality in which all phenomenal things end, just as the superimposed snake etc. end in their bases, the rope etc., after the dawn of knowledge. “Consciousness is the support (pratiśthā) of the whole universe.”

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30 “. . . Karanatvartha praptaḥ brahma-yaḥ karanāṣya ca kārakata-vṛti vastutānam-āvatadācādārapatā ca praptaḥ idamucyate jñānaḥ bhramet. āpāśajñānaḥ jñāṇaṭiravabodhaḥ bhāvāsādhano jñānasabdo na tu jñānakartr bhramaniśatra vatsatyānāntābhīyān sah.” Ibid., 2.1.1, p.309.

31 “jñānaḥ bhrametvāc ācānāḥ prāptaṃ manastvā svākhyātāḥ.” Ibid., 2.1.1, p.311.


Please see also, Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.1.1 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.I, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.307.

33 “Pratijñāptiḥ prajñā ta ca brahma-tvaḥ...tasmāt pratijñānaḥ Brahma” in Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Aitareya Upaniṣad, 3.1.3 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.68.

Please see also, Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.1.1 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.I, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.309.

34 “Lokāḥ prajñā pratiśṭhā saroṣasya jagataḥ” in Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Aitareya Upaniṣad, 3.1.3 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.68.
highest Reality, and which consists in the realization of the Truth that is the Self, is located in one's own Self (svastham); quiescent (sántam), characterized by the absence of all evil (Sanirvānam), coexistent with cessation, i.e. liberation; and it is indescribable (akathyam), as it relates to an absolutely unique entity; it is the highest happiness (uttamam sukham). It being unsurpassable and open to the vision of the Yogis alone. It is unborn (ajam), unlike objective happiness. And since this happiness, in its true nature of omniscience, is identical with the unborn (ajena); (with the) thing to be known (jñeyena); therefore the knower of Brahman (Paricaksate) call it; the omniscient one, Brahman Itself.”

Here, we should remember that the three terms of the characterization of metaphysical status of Reality as Brahman, i.e. Sat, Cit and Ānanda, are not synonymous (aparyāya). Although they all denote, not connote, one and the same entity, i.e., metaphysical Reality of Brahman. The difference between them is not verbal; each denotes Reality as Brahman differently. The thing excluded, or the mode of approach (vyāvarta), is different in each case; Sat excludes asat (non-being); Cit (will or intelligence) excludes jaḍa (matter); Ānanda (bliss) excludes dukhāḥ (pain). “Sat-Cit-Ānanda (absolute Existence, absolute Consciousness, absolute Bliss) constitute the very essence or svarūpa of Brahman, and not just Its attributes.”

Thus, I would like to conclude that these characteristics are not three but one. And these are not concepts or predicate, nor qualities, nor essential attributes, nor even aspects or phases of Brahman itself, but the very nature of Brahman or rather Brahman itself. In this way, I can say that whenever we refer to Brahman as Sat, Cit and Ānanda, it must be recognized that the other term necessarily included.


The characteristics of Brahman as Sat, Cit and Ānanda is described via positive and it is not final. Basically, Brahman is indescribable because it is beyond our senses, thought and language. Śaṅkara says, "Brahman is beyond speech and mind; it cannot be classed with object of knowledge." Therefore, the best description of Brahman is via negative; ‘Not This, Not This’ (neti-neti). Negative description reveals Brahman as attributeless. Neti-Neti does not negates Brahman, but negates only the characteristics of Brahman which is ascribed by thought. By negating all description of Brahman, it reveals Brahman as Ultimate Reality. In this regard, Śaṅkara says, “Since there is surely nothing besides this Brahman, therefore Brahman is called ‘Not So, Not So’. It does not mean that Brahman Itself does not exist...Because there is no other (and more appropriate) description than this, therefore it is called ‘Not So, Not So’.”

Nirguna Brahman, according to Śaṅkara, has no name and no form. He says, “Brahman cannot be named by any word, nor can it be described as having any form in any way; thus it is also without name and form (anāmakam arūpam).” It is stated by the Vedic text also, “From which words turn back.” Having focused on the nature of Nirguna Brahman, Śaṅkara says, “That which is described as soundless, touchless, colourless, undiminishing and also tasteless, eternal- that is the undecaying Brahma. That which is possessed of sound etc., diminishes. But this one, being soundless etc....does not diminish, does not decay; and because of this, It is eternal. What ever decays is non-eternal; but this one does not decay, therefore it is permanent.

37 “vārtmanasaññiṣṭhānaṃ avāyāntaḥ pātipratyaṣātmabhūtaḥ nityaśuddhabuddha muktasvabhāvān” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkaraçārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 3.2.22, p.625.
38 “Nahyetaṁ brahmaṇāḥ vyayātikasatītyato neti netiṣṭhāya na punaḥ svayaṃ eva nāstītyarthāḥ...tasmād brahmāvāsānoṣayāḥ pratiṣṭedho nābhūvācaśāna ityadhvayavasyāmān.” Ibid., 3.2.22, p.627.
For this further reason, too, It is eternal: that which has no cause or beginning (ādi), is beginningless (Anādi). That which has a cause, is impermanent, because it is an effect and it merges into its cause, as for instance earth etc. But this one being the cause of all, is not the effect; and because It is not an effect, It is eternal; It has no cause into which It can merge.”  

Further he says that Nirguna Brahman is “all-pervasive, like space...pure, bright, i.e., resplendent...taintless, devoid of the dirt of ignorance...self-existent.”

The distinguishing factor between Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman is that the latter is associated with the power known as māyā, whereas the former is not. Īsvara or Saguna Brahman represents one reality, and that is personal God who is supposed to be all-knowing, omnipresent, as well as the originator, destroyer and the sustainer of the world whereas Nirguna Brahman represents the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute. In Nirguna Brahman, all distinctions are obliterated and overcome; in Saguna Brahman they are integrated, a duality in unity is present here. Nirguna Brahman is a state of Real knowledge (Jiñāna); Saguna Brahman is a state of devotion or vital loving awareness (bhakti). Nirguna Brahman is conceptually an objectification of spiritual experience without distinction or determination (Nirvikalpa Samādhi); Saguna Brahman is an objectification of determinate spiritual experience (Savikalpa Samādhi). Nirguna Brahman is known or realized through the pure intuition (Anubhava); Saguna Brahman is the subject of worship which is necessary for the purification of heart. Here, we should be remembered that the difference between Saguna and Nirguna Brahman is not Absolutely real.

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42 “Sukraḥ sūdhartho jyotiśmādviśayānityarthaha. Akātyasāriro lingāśarirāvarjita ityarthaha...sūdhartho nirmalamādviśayānityarthaha...svayambhūh svayameva bhavatī.” Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Īśa Upaniṣad 8, in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, Vol.I, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.17.
Actually, these are the two phases or poises of the same Real. They appear two to our mental view; in fact they are one.

2.4. APPEARANCE AND REALITY WITH REFERENCE TO ANTAHKARANA:

Antahkaranas receive and arrange what is conveyed to it through the senses. Through the function of the antahkaraṇa and its modification, i.e. vṛtti-jñāna, we move from the sphere of appearance towards the sphere of reality. It makes possible for a person to come in contact with the world around him, i.e. vyāvahārika jagat.

Śaṅkara undertakes to enumerate the different faculties of our personality that together constitute the subtle body. These faculties, in their aggregate, express through the gross body and establish the individual’s contact with the world of objects around from where he gains his own experiences of the world. Śaṅkara points out the five organs of knowledge (jñānendriya), and the five organs of action (karmendriya). To perceive the stimuli (viṣaya) reaching us and to respond to them, together constitute the expression of life through us.

The inlets, that allow the stimuli (viṣaya; knowledge of the objects) to reach us, are called the organs of knowledge because they perceive the world around us. These, the sense organs, are the ears, skin, eyes, nose and tongue.

When the knowledge of objects are received, we respond to them through our motor-organs of action, the hands, the legs, the anus and the genital organ. Since these are the points at which the individual explodes into action while expressing his responses, they are called the organs of function or action. Śaṅkara says, “The ears, skin, eyes, nose and tongue are organs of knowledge, for they help us to gain knowledge of objects (stimuli, vishayas).
The organ of speech, hands, legs, the anus and the genital organ are the organs of action since they have a tendency for work.”

After the description of the instruments of perception and action, we logically proceed to the subtle factors that constitute the internal organs (antahkaranas). It is evident that the eyes do not see by themselves: the eyes are the instruments of seeing for the inner person. The internal organ has differences. In fact, one and the same mental stuff, the internal organ, has different functions and so different names. Of course, they are all constituted of thoughts only.

When a doubtful cognition of an object arises due to its function, then it is called mind (manas). In other words, when the thoughts are in a state of chaos and agitation, with doubts and despairs, they constitute the ‘mind’ (manas). If it produces definite knowledge of an object, then it is called intellect (buddhi). When the mind has determined its perceptions with reference to its memories of similar or dissimilar experiences in the past, in that condition of relative quietitude caused by such determination, it is called the ‘intellect’ (buddhi). Willing, wishing, desiring, judging etc. are the functions of the intellect.

To have a doubt regarding any outer phenomenal factor and to come to a decision about it are the two equal yoke-fellows in the process of intelligent living. The continuous process of this dual function gives us the experience of intelligent living which man alone is capable of. In this process, it is not very difficult for us to detect that the doubts and the decisions must belong to one and the same individual in order to create in him the experience of intelligent living. That is, the doubt must be mine and the ultimate understanding must also be mine, so that I may experience the disappearances of my doubt. This

vanity of the individual that arrogates to itself both the doubts and the
decisions as its own is called ‘the ego’ (ahatkāra) which expresses in terms of
‘I’ and ‘mine’. In short, when there arises the sense of ‘I’ from its functioning,
it is called ego (ahatkāra).

Our doubts and our decisions constantly singing their breathless duet
constitute an unbroken experience of intelligent living and this not possible
unless we are continuously aware of our doubts, conscious of our decision
and unless we fully experience them as our doubts and our decisions. In short,
we must be aware of the mind, the intellect and the ego. This Awareness or
Consciousness, playing upon the mind-intellect-ego, is called ‘citta’. In its pure
state, unconditioned by these three, the ‘citta’ becomes the pure
Consciousness, the Infinite (Cit). Citta is that which constantly illumines my
personality constituted of my ego, my mind and my intellect
(svārthānusandhāna). In other words, when it recollects the past, it calls by the
name of memory-stuff (citta). In this regard, Śankara says, “The ‘inner organs’
are called, according to their functions as mind, intellect, ego and Chitta; mind
from its doubts and hesitations; intellect from its function of determining the
truth of things; the ego in its identification with both these and chitta from its
function of constantly illumining the things of its interest.”

These four factors, manas, buddhi, ahatkāra and citta constitute the
internal organ, whose play through the organs of perception and action,
makes it possible for a person to come in contact with the world around him.
Therefore, as a contrast to the outer equipments (bahir karaṇa), these are called
the inner equipment (antahkaraṇa).

According to Advaita Vedānta, vṛtti is the modification of the internal
organ (antahkaranasya pariṇāmaviśeṣo vṛtti), so far as the internal organ or the

44 “Nigadyateantahkaraṇam manodhirakṣṭiścittamiti suvaśtibhiḥ. Manastu satkalpa
vikalpanādiśivibuddhiḥ padārthādiyavasāyadharmaṃ. Atrābbhimānādahamityahahkṛteḥ.
Swārthānusandhānagunena cītām.” Ibid., Stanza 93-94, p.120.
antahkaraṇa is concerned. It is not like outer senses, because it has got the
power of direct perception. The Vṛtti can be experienced at the time of the
experience of ‘Aham Brahmaśmi’, while the outer senses cannot perceive an
object without the internal organ even if it is very much before them.
Generally, the function of the antahkaraṇa is to receive and arrange what is
conveyed to it through the sense. Though the antahkaraṇa is unconscious
(jaḍa), basically, it is transparent and it has the power to reflect objects, to
become conscious of them. The above mentioned power is acquired by the
antahkaraṇa through its reflection to Ātman, i.e., Consciousness. Again it is to
be kept in mind that though the internal organ is said to shed its lustre on the
objects and to reflect them, it is actually consciousness that reflects it. Here,
the Vedāntic view is similar to the Sāṅkhya which accepts that buddhi, manas etc.
are in themselves unintelligent and they derive the power of intelligence from
their proximity to Puruṣa. In Advaita Vedānta, Ātman takes the place of Puruṣa.
In fact, Ātman is the illuminator and by means of it, the antahkaraṇa becomes
the perceiver of the objects. Ātman is the ultimate consciousness and all
pervading and it takes its modification into pramāṇa caitanya, pramāṇa caitanya
and the viśaya caitanya. The antahkaraṇa undergoes changes or modification of
forms, when it comes into contact with objects. Thus the functional
modification of the internal organ, which reveals objects, is called vṛtti-jñāna.

2.5. APPEARANCE AND REALITY IN PRAMĀṇA VICĀRA:

Pramāṇas are required to justify what is in the appearance, what is in
reality and what is in both. Through the function of pramāṇas, we can
transform appearances into reality. That which we call Absolute Reality is
comprehended by means of pramāṇas and that which we call appearance, from
the Absolute point of view, is also comprehended by means of pramāṇas. In
other words, the world of appearance and Absolute Reality are known
through the function of pramāṇas. Therefore, pramāṇas are applicable for both
appearance and reality.
Śaṅkara begins his philosophy with the inquiry into the pramāṇas, pramāṇa vicāra to establish the metaphysical system. Śaṅkara says that existence and non-existence of a thing can only be established by means of pramāṇa. How do we know that something exists here or that something does not exist here? We know it only though pramāṇa. Śaṅkara says, “...knowledge arises from its valid means (e.g. perception, inference, etc.); and the valid means apprehend the things just as they are.” Śaṅkara starts with the world given in day-to-day life. To start with, Śaṅkara does not talk of the illusoriness of the world. In the Śūtras, Śaṅkara asks how do we decide that something is and something is not. If the world is proved by all the pramāṇa, we cannot say that it does not exist. But there is a pramāṇa vyavasthā, “every pramāṇa operates in a particular area, it has its own subject matter. What one pramāṇa comprehends another pramāṇa cannot, just as what one sense organ comprehends another sense organ cannot.” In Śaṅkara’s words, “One means of knowledge does not contradict another, for it only tells us about those things that cannot be known by any other means.”

On the basis of pramāṇa vyavasthā, Śaṅkara repeatedly points out in his writings that there is absolutely no conflict between a Scripture on the one hand and other pramāṇa on the other. If pratyakṣa has validity so far as empirical world is concerned, Scripture has validity to what is transcendental. Śaṅkara says that an object which has got certain quality (guna), generic feature (jāti) is involved in action (karma), has some kind relation with something else (sambandha) or which has name and form (nāma-rūpa). That is all about empirical world. There is a complete breakdown of language in the case of Supreme Reality because it does not have jāti, guna etc. It does not even

45 “Jñānāṁ tu pramāṇajanyam pramāṇam ca yathābhūtvavastuviśayam” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Saṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc, 1.1.4, p.34.
47 “Na ca pramāṇārth pramāṇāntaretarārintarāntaratam āniḥ pramāṇāntarāntarāntaratam jñāpayati.” in The Bhadārāyaka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Saṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Madhavanand, etc., 2.1.20, p.209.
have a name. These are simply the contextual forms that are required to convey what ordinarily cannot be conveyed. "The Śārīra-kabhāṣya says that wherever there is orderliness, purposiveness, motion or creation of some specific form, there is hidden presence of Brahman. This can be explained only by śruti, other pramāṇa cannot explain it." Thus, we would like to conclude that "the means of knowledge are powerful in their respective spheres." Before considering the function of pramāṇas, which are valid means of our knowledge, we would like to explain the theory of knowledge in Śaṅkara’s Advaita. Let us begin with knowledge of lower and higher.

The Advaita Vedānta mentions two kind of knowledge: lower knowledge (Aparā vidyā) and higher knowledge (Parā vidyā). Śaṅkara says, "...two kinds of knowledge are to be acquired...the higher, the knowledge of the Supreme Self; and the lower, the knowledge of virtue and vice and their means and ends." He distinguishes between these two kinds of knowledge and says, "Rg-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sāma-Veda, Atharva-Veda—these are the four Vedas. Śikṣā, the science of pronunciation etc; Kalpa, the code of rituals; Vyākaranam, grammar; Niruktam, etymology; Chandah, metre; Jyotiṣam, astrology—these are six auxiliary parts of the Vedas. These constitute the Aparā (lower) knowledge" and Parā or higher knowledge, by which he means "the Aksaram, the Imperishable... is (realized, i.e.) attained." The distinction of lower and higher knowledge is made on account of the difference in their results; the former leading to mere worldly exaltation

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50 "Dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma...parā ca paramātmavidyā. Aparā ca dharma adharma sādhanataphala viṣaya." Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Munḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.1.4 in Eight Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.79.
51 “Rgvedo Yajurvedo Sāmaavedo Atharvaaveda ityete catvāro vedāḥ Śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇāṁ niruktaṁ chando jyotiḥsamityuvāṁ šade śāparā vidyā... aksaramadhyagamye prāpyate...” Ibid., 1.1.5, p.80.
(Abhyudaya) and latter to Absolute bliss (Nīsṛṣreyasa). Higher knowledge is trans-empirical, subject-objectless consciousness. Lower knowledge is the sphere of empirical consciousness. Now let us consider on the function of pramāṇas.

Śaṅkara admits of six pramāṇas or the means of obtaining valid knowledge. They are: "perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāṇa), comparison (upamāṇa), verbal testimony (Śabda or Āgama), presumption (arthāpatti) and non-apprehension (anupalabdhi)."52 Now let us go to elaborate the function of first pramāṇa, i.e., perception (pratyakṣa).

Pratyakṣa or Perception, according to Śaṅkara, is a pramāṇa in which "a thing is cognized only by the mind and the senses."53 It is defined "as the unique cause (karaṇa) of valid knowledge. The sense organs constitute the karaṇa."54 We cannot get knowledge of Brahman through the pratyakṣa pramāṇa. Therefore, it is strictly limited to the phenomenal world. Śaṅkara says, "...Brahman relation with anything cannot be grasped. It being outside the range of sense-perception. The sense naturally comprehends objects, and not Brahman."55 He also says, "... the means of knowledge are powerful in their respective spheres."56

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52 Please see, Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.12 in Eight Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, Vol.II, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.103. See also, The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, trans. by Swami Madhavanand, etc., 3.3.1, p.304.


54 “Karaṇavaiśeṣa nibandhanameva jñānānāṁ pratyakṣatvam” in Dharmarāja Adhvarin, Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. by Dr. Gajananasastri Musalagavakara (Varanasi, Chaukhambha Vidya Bhavan, 1963) Pratyakṣa Paricheda, p.32. Quoted it from hindi edition and here, the translation is mine.


56 “Soa viśaya sūrāṇi hi pramāṇāni.” in The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, trans. by Swami Madhavanand, etc., 2.1.20, p.217.
According to Advaita, when the eternal consciousness (Ātman) is determined by an empirical object, it is called object-consciousness (viśayacaitanya or prameya). When it is determined by internal organ (antahkarana), it is called subject-consciousness (pramātra-caitanya or pramātā). The empirical self (jīva) is the subject consciousness. When it is determined by the mental mode of internal organ, it is called knowledge consciousness (pramāṇa-caitanya). Here, the consciousness is one, i.e. eternal consciousness, but designated by different names whose contextual significance cannot be ignored. So, there is an involvement of the subject, the object and the means of knowledge, i.e. tripūti-jñāna, in our knowledge situation.

In our external perception, our mind goes out to an empirical object through a sense-organ, and is modified into its form. This mental mode, assuming the form of the object, is called uttī. So, in our perceptual knowledge, "the knowledge-consciousness or consciousness determined by the mental mode coincides with the object-consciousness. There is identification of the apprehending mental mode with the object." The mental mode conforms to the empirical object. In external perception, the mental mode and the object occupy the same position in space. This mark distinguishes perception from inference. In inference, the mind only thinks the inferred object but does not go out to meet it. In perception, the given object and its mental mode are welded together in a unity, while in inference they are kept distinct. The perceptive process and the object occupy the same point of time. They occupy the present time. The memory of pleasure is not perception. Memory is a present mental mode. But pleasure remembered is past. Here, the apprehending mental mode, i.e. memory, and the apprehended object, i.e. pleasure, occupy different time-positions.

57 Dharmarāja Adhvarin, Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. by Dr. Gajananasastri Musalagavakara, etc., Pratyakṣa Pariccheda, p.37.
In external perception, the object should be capable of being perceived. Fitness (*yogyatva*) for being perceived is a mark that distinguishes perception from scriptural testimony, which apprehends super-sensible objects like merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*). In the bare perception of an object, there is only identification of the knowledge-consciousness with the object-consciousness. But in the perception of the object as object, there is not only identification of the knowledge-consciousness with the object-consciousness but also identification of the knowledge-consciousness with the subject-consciousness. The apprehending mental mode is referred to the empirical self and identified with it. In internal perception of pleasure, the apprehending mental mode is identified with the mental mode of pleasure, or the knowledge-consciousness coincides with the object-consciousness.

Perception is indeterminable (*nirvikalpa*) or determinate (*savikalpa*). These are not two kind of perception, but the earlier and the latter stage of our perception. When we see a white moving object at a distance and when it comes near, we see it as white cow. Here, the ‘white moving object’ is indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*) and the perception of ‘white cow’ is determinate perception (*savikalpa pratyakṣa*). Indeterminate perception presents the bare object without its characterization but in determinate perception, we establish the relationship between object and its attributes.

Perception is either sensuous or non-sensuous. Perception through the sense-organs is sensuous. Mental perception is non-sensuous, since the *manas* is not a sense-organ. In sensuous perception, the mind goes out to an external object through a sense-organ, and is modified into its form. In mental perception, the mind does not go out to an object. Mental modes of pleasure, pain and the like are perceived in it. Perception, again, refers to an object (*jiñeya*) or a cognition (*jiñapti*). An object is perceived through the medium of a mental mode. A cognition is directly perceived by the self without an intervening mental mode. Perception is, again, divided, into perception of the
witness Self (Jīva-Sākṣin) and perception of the Divine witness (Īśvara-Sākṣin). The eternal consciousness (Brahman) limited by the internal organ is the jīva. When it is conditioned by the internal organ, it is the Jīva-Sākṣin. The eternal consciousness limited by māyā, is Īśvara. When it is conditioned by māyā, it is Īśvara-Sākṣin.

Second pramāṇa is anumāna or inference. The objects, which come in the coverage area of our senses, is known through perception but, such objects, which are not close to senses, is known through inference. “Inference is not valid when it contradicts perception, for it depends on the latter...”58 Thus, “inference cannot stand against perception.”59 Inference, according to Advaita, is a pramāṇa through which we arrive at truth not by direct observation, but by means of the knowledge of vyāpti or a universal relation between two things. It is knowledge (māna) which arises after (anu) other knowledge. It is inference that we derive the knowledge of fire on the hill, though we see there, not fire, but only smoke, which acts as a sign of fire. Inference, thus, only yields indirect and mediate knowledge and arises through a ‘mark’; the middle term (liṅga or hetu or sādhana) and major term (liṅgī or sādhya).

Advaitins defines inference as such: “Inference is produced by the knowledge of invariable concomitance (vyāpti) of the middle term with the major term as such. The knowledge of vyāpti is its instrumental cause (karana). The residual impression of it is the intermediate function (vyāpāra) which generates inference.”60

Vyāpti is the invariable association of the middle term with the major term. Inference is the knowledge of the presence of the major term in the

59 “Na cānumānarth pratyakṣāvirodhe pramanasyam labhateḥ.” Ibid., 2.1.20, p.216.
60 “Anumiti kāraṇath anumānarth anumitiśca vyāpti jñānajanyaḥ.” Dharmarāja Adhvarin, Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. by Dr. Gajananasastrī Musalagavakara, etc., Anumāna Pariccheda, p.135. See also, “Tatsaṅskāro avāntara vyāpāraḥ” Ibid., p.137.
minor through the middle which resides in the minor and is invariably associated with the major. It is known by observation of concomitance of the middle term with the major term, and non-observation of their non-concomitance. Concomitance may be observed once or many times. Observation of concomitance only is the ground of inference. \textit{Vyāpti} does not depend upon the agreement in absence between the middle term and the major term. “Inference is of one kind. It is \textit{anvayi}.” \footnote{Ibid., p.148-149.} It depends upon the agreement in presence between the middle term and the major term. It is founded on their positive concomitance. It is not \textit{kevalānvayi}, like the inference ‘this pot is knowable, because it is nameable.’ The \textit{Navya-Nyāya} calls it as \textit{kevalānvayi} inference, because there is no agreement in absence (\textit{vyatireka-vyāpti}) between the middle term (e.g., nameable) and the major term (e.g., knowable). Concomitance between ‘not-nameable’ and ‘not-knowable’ cannot be ascertained, because the terms do not stand for existents. There is no \textit{anvaya-vyatireki} inference, which is said to be based on agreement in presence and agreement in absence between the middle term and the major term, since knowledge of \textit{vyatireka-vyāpti}, agreement in absence, is not a cause of inference. There in no \textit{kevala-vyatireki} inference, since knowledge of negative concomitance of the absence of the major term and the absence of the middle term cannot generate inference. ‘Where there is no fire, there is no smoke.’ This is \textit{vyatireka-vyāpti}. Concomitance of the absence of fire and the absence of smoke cannot produce the existence of fire from the existence of smoke. What is called \textit{kevala-vyatireki} inference is presumption (\textit{arthāpatti}). Thus, \textit{Advaita Vedānta} rejects the three kinds of inference, \textit{kevalānvayi}, \textit{kevala-vyatireki} and \textit{anvaya-vyatireki}, recognized by the \textit{Navya-Nyāya}.

There are two kinds of inference, inference for one self (\textit{svārtha}) and inference for others (\textit{parārtha}). The former is generated by the impression of \textit{vyāpti}. The latter consists of three members only inspite of five, that are: proposition (\textit{pratijñā}), reason (\textit{hetu}) and example (\textit{udāharana}) or example,
application (*upanaya*) and conclusion (*nigamana*). “Three members can show *vyāpiti* and existence of the middle term in the subject of inference. The two other members of the Nyāya syllogism are redundant.”  

The Advaita Vedānta agrees with the *Mīmāṃsā* in advocating the three-membered syllogism in *parārtha-anumāṇa*.

It should be noted here that “Śaṅkara some times uses five members in his syllogism.” As for instance:

1. the unreality of objects seen in the Waking state.  
2. ‘Being perceived’  
3. like an object seen in a dream  
4. as (object perceived) there in a dream, are false; so also are they false in the waking state.  
5. Therefore, falsity is admitted of objects in the waking state as well.

Śaṅkara does not necessarily use these five members. At many places, he uses first three inspite of five.

Comparison (*upamāṇa*) is third *pramāṇa*. “Comparison is the means of the knowledge of similarity. A person, who has perceived a cow in a town, goes to a forest, and perceives a wild cow. He has an apprehension ‘this animal is similar to a cow’ owing to the intercourse of his eyes with the

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animal. Then he has an apprehension ‘my cow is similar to this animal.’ This knowledge of similarity of a cow with a wild cow is acquired by comparison. The knowledge of similarity existing in a wild cow with a cow is the instrumental cause. The knowledge of similarity existing in a cow with a wild cow is the result.” 64 Therefore, we can say that “this knowledge of similarity can neither be acquired from perception nor inference.” 65 It is not acquired from perception because the cow is not present to the eyes. Nor can it be acquired from inference, since similarity existing in a wild cow with a cow cannot serve as a mark of inference (liṅga). The Advaita Vedānta contends that the reason or mark (liṅga) must exist in the minor term (pakṣa), but that the reason ‘similarity existing in a wild cow with a cow’ does not exist in the minor term ‘my cow.’ Therefore, it cannot prove the existence of the major term ‘similarity existing in my cow with a wild cow.’ Therefore, the knowledge of similarity existing in my cow with a wild cow cannot be acquired from inference. It is acquired from comparison, which is neither perception nor inference, but a distinct means of valid knowledge.

The Advaita Vedānta accepts the Mīmāṁsā view. Both regard comparison as the knowledge of similarity of the remembered cow with a perceived wild cow. The Nyāya, on the other hand, holds that comparison is the knowledge of similarity of an unfamiliar object (e.g., a wild cow) with a familiar object (e.g., a cow).

Verbal testimony (Śabda or Āgama) is the fourth pramāṇa. Verbal testimony is the means to the knowledge of the Absolute Reality, viz. Brahmā, which is transcendental. It is knowledge derived from the authority of the impersonal (Apaurūṣeya) Veda. Śaṅkara says, “...one cannot impart

64 “Tatra sādṛśyaārāgānugamopyātānām. Tathā hi prátyaṁs (nāgāḥ) dṛṣṭagopānāsya purūṣasya vanagatasya gavayendrisannikarṣe sati bhavati prájitiryaḥ pivo gosādṛśa iti tadanantarāḥ ca bhavati nācayo anena sādṛśi madāya gaurit. tatrānvaśayātirekāhyāḥ gavayamāṇaśādṛṣyaḥ jñānāśc karatāḥ gontiṣṭhavāya sādṛṣya jñānaḥ phalam” in Dharmarāja Adhvarin, Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. by Dr. Gajananaasatri Musalagavakara, etc., Upamānā Pariccheda, pp.226.
65 “Na cedath prátyaṁs annaṁ sāmbhavati, gopōdāsya tadendriya sannikarṣāt...” Ibid., p.231.
knowledge about the highest with the help of...means of valid knowledge as
the evidence of the senses; but the knowledge can be produced with the help
of traditional authority (Āgama).” 66 It is also termed Śruti. It is statement of a
trust worthy person (Āpta-vākya) and consists in understanding its meaning.
“Vedic words... are eternal.” 67 According to Advaita, Śruti is the ultimate and
the only means of knowing the Ultimate Reality as it is eternal, impersonal
and infallible. The other sources of knowledge aim at only perceptual and
conceptual knowledge.

A sentence is defined as a collection of words and a word is defined as
that which is potent to convey its meaning. A sentence refers to an objective
relation. That sentence is a valid source of knowledge, which refers to an
objective relation, which is not contradicted by any other means of valid
knowledge.

A sentence must fulfil four conditions in order to convey a meaning. “It
must have syntactical connection (ākāṅkṣā) among its essential parts.” 68 The
verb must demand a subject, a transitive verb an object, and the like. “A
sentence must have fitness (yogyatā) or compatibility of meaning among its
contradiction. It must be harmonious. “He wets the ground with fire.” This
sentence is meaningless. The objective relation, conveyed by it, is self-
contradictory. “A sentence must have proximity of its parts (āsatti).” 69 If the
word ‘bring’, ‘a’ and ‘cow’ are uttered at the interval of one hour each, they do
not form a sentence, and convey any meaning. They must be uttered in close
succession to form a sentence. A sentence must have an objective intention
(tūtparya). ‘Saindhavam ānaya.’ It means either ‘bring a horse’ or ‘bring salt.’ If a

66 “Pratyakṣādibhiḥ pramāṇerā pariḥ pratyāyayitum : sakyatā āgamena tu sakyate eva
pratyāyayitum” Śaṅkara’s commentary on Kena Upaniṣad, 1.4, in Eight Upaniṣad : with the
67 “Vedaśabde nityatoamapi pratyetavayam” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya,
trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc, 1.3.30, p.217.
68 “Padārthānāṁ paraspara jijñāsa viśayatva yogyatvamkārṇkṣa,” in Dharmarāja Adhvarin,
Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, trans. by Dr. Gajananasastri Musalagavakara, etc.Āgama Pariccheda, p.171.
69 “Āsattīścā avyayadhānenaḥ pada janyapadārthopā sthitīḥ.” Ibid., p.183.
person utters the sentence while taking his meal, it obviously means 'bring salt.' Fitness is the formal compatibility of meaning. Intention (tātparya) is compatibility in a material reference. "It is correspondence of the subjective intention of the speaker with the objective relation conveyed by the sentence." 70

Presumption (arthāpatti) is the fifth pramāṇa. Presumption aims at reconciliation of two seemingly contradictory facts, by assuming something which explains both. It may, thus, be described "as the postulation of what explains (upapādaka) through the knowledge of what is to be explained (upapādyā)." 71 In other words, it is the assumption (āpatti) of a fact (artha) to account for another inexplicable fact. It is presumption, postulation or implication. "The knowledge of the fact is to be explained (upapādyajñāna). It is the instrumental cause (karana). The knowledge of the fact that explains is the result (phala). A person is known not to eat in the day time, and yet gets stout. His stoutness is to be explained (upapādyā). It cannot be explained without postulating his eating at night. In the absence of his eating at night, his stoutness cannot be explained. Eating at night explains the unintelligible fact (upapādaka). This assumption (kalpanā) of a hypothesis is called arthāpatti." 72 It is the supposition of a cause. The effect is given. The cause is assumed.

The Advaita Vedānta agrees with Kumārila's view that arthāpatti is assumption of some unperceived fact to account for some inconsistency in perceived facts. Prabhākara maintains that there must be an element of doubt as to the truth of the two inconsistent facts perceived. Presumption removes the element of doubt. We know that a person is alive, and perceive his absence from his house. This perception generates a doubt whether he is alive or dead. The doubt is removed by the presumption of his living somewhere else. This

70 "Tatpratiti janana yogyatvarī tātparyam." Ibid., p.227.
71 "Tatropapādyā ... rātribhojanaṃ upapādakaṃ." Ibid., Arthāpatti Pariccheda, p.307.
72 Ibid., p.307-309.
view is wrong. If the person’s living be doubtful, his going out of his house cannot be assumed. If his living is certain, then only the presumption is made.

Presumption cannot be regarded as an inference, since the universal major premise cannot be based on positive concomitance (anvaya-vyāpti). Negative concomitance (vyatireka-vyāpti) is not admitted by the Advaita Vedānta. The kevala-vyatireki inference based on negative concomitance is nothing but presumption.

Sixth pramāṇa is Non- apprehension (anupalabdhi). Non-existence (abhāva) is known by non-apprehension or non-cognition. It cannot be known by the other pramāṇas. “Non-apprehension is the unique pramāṇa which cognizes negation or non-existence.” The non-existence of a jar on the ground is known by non-apprehension. When the jar is removed from the ground, we perceive the ground as the locus (adhirāraṇa) of the non-existence of the jar, but we do not perceive the non-existence itself. Though the locus of non-existence is perceived, the non-existence itself is not perceived. Non-existence is known by non-apprehension. It can never be known by perception. The perceptive process is directed only to the locus of the non-existence, but not to the non-existence itself. The non-existence is known by appropriate non-apprehension (yogyānupalabdhi). The object of abhāva must be capable of being perceived. The object, which is absent, must be fit for being perceived. If it is not capable of being perceived, its non-existence cannot be known by non-apprehension. A jar is capable of being perceived. If the jar had been present, it would have been perceived. “Merit (dharm) and demerit (adharm) are super-sensible. They cannot be perceived. So their non-existence cannot be known by non-apprehension.” The thing, that is absent, must be of the same order of reality as its locus which is perceived. The negation must

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73 "Jñānārañjanyā bhāvānubhāva śādhāraṇa kāraṇamanupalabdhi.” Ibid., Anupalabdhi Pariccheda, p.288.

74 “Dhārmādharmaṁ anupalabdhi satvācapi tadbhāva aniscayena ayogyānupalabdhere abhāvagrahakatvāt.” Ibid., p.293.
not be Absolute negation, but it must be the negation of something perceptible.

Prabhākara maintains this view that the non-existence of a thing is non-different from its bare locus (adhikarāṇa). The non-existence of a jar on the ground is nothing, we perceive the ground as related to the existence of the jar. But when the jar is absent, we perceive the bare ground only. The Sāṅkhya also holds the view that non-existence of a thing is identical with its bare locus. Perception of the mere locus is erroneously called non-apprehension. It is not non-cognition. The Advaita Vedānta, like Kumārila, contends that if the non-existence of a jar on the ground were identical with the bare ground, it would be perceived even when the jar is present on the ground. The Advaita Vedānta regards non-existence as non-different from its locus. It considers the world-appearance to be non-different from Brahman, its locus. But it maintains that non-existence is known by non-apprehension, and that it is not known by the perception of its locus.

2.6. STATUS OF APPEARANCE AND REALITY IN VIVARTAVĀDA:

In order to account for the rise of the world of appearance, Śaṅkara advocates the theory of vivārta (causation). According to this theory, the cause is real and the effect is appearance. The cause (kāraṇa) produces the effect (kārya) without undergoing any change in itself. In the context of Advaita Vedānta, the world (jagat) is only appearance of Brahman. The world has no independent existence apart from Brahman. Brahman appears as the world, and being the substratum of the world of appearance, it is a transfigurative material cause.

Śaṅkara’s theory of causation depends on both scriptural and logical basis. It is based on the teachings of the Upaniṣads. A careful study of the Upaniṣadic view of causation reveals the systematic study of causation, which
has been elaborated by Śaṅkara. As regards the logical basis, he has criticises *asat-kāryavāda* and *parināmavāda* and on the basis of this critic, he establishes *vivartavāda*.

According to *asat-kāryavāda*, the effect is not contained in its cause and it is non-existent (*asat*) before its creation. This theory is also known as *ārambhavāda* because it advocates that the effect is a new creation. This theory is held by *Nyāya-*Vaiśeṣika school and *Hīnayāni* Buddha also comes very close to it. Śaṅkara agree with the *Śāṅkhya* in repudiating *asat-kāryavāda*, though his arguments are different from *Śāṅkhya*. He urges that since the effect, i.e. appearance, can exist independently and outside of the cause, i.e. Reality, neither before nor after its manifestation, it does not mean that the effect does not pre-exit in the cause. Śaṅkara says, “...the effect (universe) has existence only in identity with its materials cause (Existence-Brahman), so it had its existence in that very way even before creation.”

He further contends that though the effect, i.e. appearance, and the cause, i.e. Reality, are non-different, yet it is the effect, which exists and depends on the cause. He says, “...Creation does not exist independently of the self that is its material source... the existence of the product as the cause before creation is in an indistinguishable form.” For example, curd is made from milk. Had it not been so, any effect could be produced from any cause. This clearly proves that the effect pre-exists in its material cause. Again, according to *asat-kāryavāda*, prior to production the effect is *asat*. If we admit this, then the cause and effect can have no connection, because connection is possible only between two existent entities and not between an existent and non-existent entity or between two non-existent entities. None can ever say that the son of a barren woman was a king. Thus, prior to production the effect cannot be said to be *asat*. Therefore, Śaṅkara concludes, “…the effect, possessed of sound etc., does

75 “Yathaiiva hidanipādāḥ kāryaḥ kāraṇātmānaḥ sadevam prāgupṭpattarapīta gamyate” in Brahma-Sūtri-Bhāṣya of Śrī Sāṅkhacaryā, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 2.1.7, p.316.
76 “Nahidānipādām kāryaḥ kāraṇaṭmānaṃantareṇa svatantramvāṣti...kāraṇātmānaḥ tu satvaḥ kāryasya prāga utpattaraviśiṣṭam.” Ibid., 2.1.7., p.316.
not certainly exist separately from its self, the material cause, either before creation or now. Thus it cannot be said that the effect is non-existent before its creation.”

Śankara also opposed to the view of parināmavāda which is held by Sāṁkhya and Rāmānuja and treated it as a form of sat-kāryavāda. According to this theory, the effect is a real modification or transformation of its cause, which continues into the effect and the relation between the two is that of substantial identity. Śankara criticises this view and shows that causation is a category of thought and therefore an appearance, not reality. As change, difference, objectivity are due to transcendental illusion or avidyā, the cause cannot undergo real modification and the effect can be treated as its appearance only. There can be no real creation. Vivartavāda is a denial of real causation and, at the same time, an affirmation of its empirical validity. Śankara emphasises the fact that the Upaniṣads do not preach the Ultimate Reality of creation, for there are many other texts which clearly deny the reality of creation and censure all duality and plurality in unmistakable terms tracing it to transcendental illusion, and propound the essential unity of the Self (Ātman) with Brahman. Śankara’s words, “Yet the Vedic statement of creation does not relate to any Reality (Paramārtha), for it must not be forgotten that such a text is valid within the range of activities (vyāvahāra) concerned with name and form called up by ignorance, and it is meant for propounding the fact that everything has Brahman as its self.”

Thus we can conclude that creation is valid only for empirical life. The texts declare the reality of the cause alone and treat all effects as appearance of the cause which are ultimately false. The effect is declared to be a mere name (nāmadheyam), a mere verbal expression (vācārambhanam), only an appearance (vikāra) which is dismissed as finally false, and the cause alone, which is the ground of

77 “Natu śabdādīmatkāryaṁ kāraṇatmanā hiṁsar prāguppattairiddānāṁ vāsti, tena na śakyate vaṅkuraṁ prāguppattasesatkāryamati.” Ibid., 2.1.7., p.316.

78 “Naceyāṁ pāramārthavisayāḥ sṛṣṭi śrutiḥ, avidyā kalpita nāmarūpa vyāvahāra agocaratoḥ, Brahmātmamanabhoja pratipādana paratoṣcetetadapi naivā vismartavyaṁ.” Ibid., 2.1.33., p.361.
appearance, is admitted as real. Śaṅkara says, “A modification has speech as its origin and exists only in name. A modification, e.g. a pot, plate, or jar etc., originates from speech alone that makes it current by announcing, ‘It exists.’ But speaking from the standpoint of the basic substance, no modification exists as such (apart from the clay). It has existence only in name and it is unreal.”

It is important to note here that in pre-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta and even by Śaṅkara himself the term ‘vivarta’ is not specifically used for the theory of appearance. Gaudāpada uses the term ‘māyā’, ‘avidyā’ and ‘ajñā’ and Śaṅkara himself uses the term ‘māyā’, ‘avidyā’, ‘ajñāna’ and ‘adhyāsa’ for appearance. The philosophical terms, ‘pariṇāma’, ‘vikāra’ and ‘vivarta’ acquired their present connotation only in the post-Śaṅkara period.

Hence, in pre-Śaṅkara period and by Śaṅkara himself, the terms ‘vikāra’, ‘pariṇāma’ and ‘vivarta’ are treated as synonyms and used in the general sense of ‘change’ (anyathābhāva). Similarly, the verbs ‘vikṛyat’, ‘pariṇāmate’ and ‘vivartate’ are used as inter-changeable to mean ‘causal change’. It has to be found out from the context and from the intention of the writer or the spirit of the system whether this change is meant to be real modification or mere appearance. For example, Vasubandhu (5th century) uses the term “pariṇāma”80 in the sense of vivarta and gives the simile of water and waves. Śaṅtarakṣita (8th century) uses “pariṇāma and vivarta”81 as synonyms. Even Śaṅkarācārya uses the verb ‘vivartate’ along with the term ‘vikāra’ for the real modification undergone by Śaṅkhya Prakṛti.”82 So, if the texts use the word

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79 “Vācārambhātath vikāro nāmadheyaṁ vācaṁva kevalam āstīt yāraḥbhyaṁ... nanu vastuvṛttena vikāro nāma kaścidasti, nāmadheyaṁātrah hyetadanātāṁ mṛtyukṣyeyevam satyamāti.” Ibid., 2.1.14., p.327
82 For detail, please see “Pradhāṅattā mat vadd ... vikāratmāna Vivartate,” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 2.2.1., pp.367-370.
'vikāra' (for example, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.1.4) it does not mean that they preach real modification.

As we stated earlier, Brahman is the cause of the world. But it is not the cause in the ordinary sense of cause. It is indeed a cause but in the sense in which a rope is the cause of a snake. In the state of illusion, when we perceive a snake in a rope, the rope is not the cause of the snake in the sense that it creates it, but it is the cause in the sense that it is the basis of the superimposition of the snake. The rope is there as it is; there is no change in it. It has not turned itself into snake. But we do see snake there. The snake, therefore, is simply appearance, it has an illusory character. It is a vivarta, i.e., illusion or unreal transformation. Similarly, this world is a superimposition on Brahman. In other words, it is a vivarta or an unreal transformation of Brahman. Thus, the phenomenal world is neither produce, nor can be developed but merely appears to us. Śaṅkara says, "This appearance of the Supreme Self in identity with the three states is a mere superimposition, as in the case of the rope appearing as a snake etc." Thus, the world of plurality of the Advaita hypothesis is neither created by Brahman, nor is it a transformation of Brahman. It is illusory manifestation of Brahman. The Advaita appears as Dvaita only through māyā which account for the appearance of the world of plurality in the non-dual Brahman.

Śaṅkara’s theory of Ananyatva of cause and effect also leads to vivartavāda. Advaita states that effect is non-different from cause. However, cause is different from effect. This principal is called kārya-kārana ananyatva. In Śaṅkara’s words, "cause and effect are not different (Ananya), the effect has the nature of that cause not vice versa...The effect is recognised to be equally non-different from the cause."
However, the effect is a modification of its cause but it is not different from cause. He says, “Though a pot is a modification of clay, it is not any different from it. In essence, the pot is the same everywhere. So why call it a pot. It is merely a false and fancied name.” 85 We cannot separate the essence of the effect from its cause. Effect is merely a apparent entity and imagined different from the cause due to ‘māyā’. In this regard, Śaṅkara states, “No one can show by demonstration that the essence of a mud-pot is other than the mud. Therefore, the pot is merely imagined through delusion and mud-aspect alone is the enduring Reality in the mud-pot.” 86

In this way, we would like to conclude that the world is effect and Brahman is its cause. The world, in reality, is nothing but Brahman. He says, “…The entire universe, being the effect of the Real Brahman, can be nothing other than It. It is of the essence of That and it cannot exist apart from That.” 87

Śaṅkara holds the view that the effect or super-imposed attribute has no reality apart from its cause or substratum. Therefore, “This universe is Brahman alone, for a superimposition has no existence independent of its substratum.” 88 He does not regard qualities of a substance as different from the substance. “The world does not exist independent of the Supreme Self and like ‘qualities’ the notion or its separateness is false.” 89

Śaṅkara’s theory of Ananyatva can be explained in two different points of view: from the vyāvahārika or empirical and from the Paramārthika or transcendental. The common people of the world consider that the successive

87 “Sadbrahmakaryatāḥ sakalatāḥ sadavatā taṁmatātrametana tato anyadaśi.” Ibid., 230, p.266.
88 “…tasmainaḥ brahmamānātraḥ hi viśvām na dhishthanad bhinnataḥ apiḥ apiḥ.” Ibid., 235, p.270
89 “…āropitaśyāstā kimārthavattā adhiśśīḥānamabhati tathā bhramena.” Ibid., 235, p.270.
changes, as produced, are self-subsisting entities—existing separated or divided from their cause. In their view, the clay has transformed it-self as mṛccūrṇa (fragments of clay) and the mṛccūrṇa totally transformed it-self in to mṛtpiṇḍa (lump of clay) and mṛtpiṇḍa into the ghaṭa or the pot. One form changes into another and so on. One is destroyed and another is produced. The preceding forms are looked upon as the cause and the succeeding ones as the effects. This is the vyāvahārika standpoint and our practical life is bound up with this view. According to this view, the cause or the causal reality is distinct from its effects, or its successive changes or modifications. In this state, effects are independent from their cause and they are real. Śaṅkara says, “For earlier than the realization of the identity of the Self with Brahman, all activities can justly be true like the activities of dream before waking up. So long as the oneness of the true Self is not realized, nobody entertains the idea of unreality when dealing with the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge and the results.”

From the Paramārthika standpoint, Śaṅkara holds that the cause is no doubt distinct from and independent of its effects or the emergent change; but the effects or the successive changes cannot be separated from their cause and regarded as independent and self sufficient 'things'. The effect "has non difference from That (Brahman)." The effects are called Ananya to their cause. Mṛccūrṇa, piṇḍa, ghaṭa etc. are not, according to this view, so many self-subsisting entities, but only successive manifestations of one causal reality-mṛttikā, which is lying hidden behind it. Here, the identity of the cause is not lost but present in each successive change or difference. It does not itself change with the changing forms; nor does it, in assuming these forms, become something else or anya. Thus, from the Paramārthika view-point, the effects are

91 "Paramārtika abhiprāgyata tadanyatvamityāh." Ibid., 2.1.14, p.335.
called by Śaṅkara as *Ananya* to their cause. From the *vyāvahārika* stand-point, the effect is different (*anya*) from the cause.

*Sāṅkhya* philosophers hold that cause and effect are identical because it is the potentiality that comes in to actuality. But Śaṅkara does not agree with *Sāṅkhya* rather he refutes the view that the cause and effect are identical (*Abheda*). To him, it is neither completely different, nor identical, it is *Ananya* or non-dual. Therefore Śaṅkara’s position, at a one hand, stands in opposition to the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* systems which hold that the effect is separate and independent entity. On the other hand, Śaṅkara refutes *Sāṅkhya* view which accepts that the effect and cause is identical.

Actually, by *Ananya*, Śaṅkara means that the effect has no being of reality apart from the cause. If the cause and effect are different, we fail to trace out any causal link between two separate, independent and different entities. Thus, according to Śaṅkara, the effect does not possesses the same amount of being as the cause. This is also transformation but a new form of transformation, i.e., manifestation. The effect is a mere appearance and valid only empirically from the phenomenal point of view.

Śaṅkara proves the world of appearance by the theory of *vivartavāda*. But for describing the rope-snake or shell-silver analogy, which is seen only by the person who is concerned at the time of illusion, he proposes the theory of *anirvacaniya khyāti*. Let us take up this situation.

2.7. **ANIRVACANIYA KHYĀTIVĀDA; IN TERMS OF SAT AND ASAT:**

*Anirvacaniya khyātivāda* is known as the theory of error in *Advaita Vedānta* philosophical tradition. It has been described in terms of being neither *Sat* and *asat*. As for as *anirvacaniya khyātivāda* is concerned, *Advaita Vedāntins*, on many places in this theory, uses the phrases *ābhāsa, mithyā, bhrama, māyā,*
avidyā, sadasadanirvacaniya and so on for the term ‘appearance.’ It is some
times pointed out that Śaṅkara does not clearly advocate the classical Advaita
theory of error, i.e., anirvacaniya khyāti which is rather coined by the Post-
Śaṅkaraites. It is, however, true that the term anirvacaniya is used by Śaṅkara
himself in several places. But in the adhyāsa-bhāṣya of Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya, he
neither mentions the term ‘anirvacaniya’ nor the term ‘khyāti’. He has only
made a reference to the rival accounts of error and has not elaborately
discussed those different accounts. It is mainly the later Śaṅkaraites who have
elaborately discussed the anirvacaniya khyātivāda and have tried to establish it
over the other rival theories.

The classical theory of anirvacaniya khyāti is found in its detailed
expression in the writings of Suresvara (675-733 AD), Padmapāda (9th century
AD), Prakāśātman, Vimuktatman, Śrīharśa (all 12th century AD) and
Citsukhācārya (13th century AD) to name a few later Advaitins. Of course,
here, it is also to be marked that the anirvacaniya khyātivāda, while interpreted
and analysed by the later Advaitins, is found to have gone under many
changes and ramifications. In some cases, it is found to be nearer to
anyathākhyāti (especially in the works of the Bhāmati school) while in others it
is having an altogether different turn (especially in the works of the Vivaraṇa
School). Even though Śaṅkara does not raise the question about the locus of
error there is found to be a hot discussion about it among the later Advaitins.
While the Bhāmati School argues that avidyā has the Brahman as its object
(viśaya) and the jīva as its ground (āśraya), the Vivaraṇa School tries to justify
that Brahman is both the support and the object of avidyā. Again a distinction is
made between māyā and avidyā by some later Śaṅkaraites while Śaṅkara
himself is silent about all these. Now let us discuss the nature and status of
erroneous cognition in reference to anirvacaniya khyāti.

Śaṅkara raises the problem of knowledge and error in the opening
lines of his well-known adhyāsa-bhāṣya. He says that manifested universe is
possible due to \textit{adhyāsa} and it "is perceived by all persons."\footnote{"Sarvaloka pratyakṣaḥ." Ibid., Introduction, p.6} Common people fail to distinguish between two opposite concepts (pratyaya), viz., the subject (viśayin) and the object (viśaya). Error (bhrama) consists in the superimposition of one thing upon the other or the qualities of one thing upon that of the other, is due to avidyā. Since all type of ordinary knowledge (loka-vyāvahāra) are based on the superimposition of Self and not-self (Ātmanātmanoh). Śaṅkara says, "'You', 'I', 'this', 'that' - these concepts are fancied in the Supreme Self which is Absolute and non-dual, due to inherent defect of the intellect."\footnote{"Tvamahamidamitiyam kalpanti buddhido$tit prabhavati paramātmanyadvye nirvise." in Talks on Śaṅkara's Vivekachoodamani, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., stanza 355, p.111.}

Śaṅkara, in the introduction of \textit{Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya}, defines \textit{adhyāsa} in three different ways but these definitions express the same thing. Śaṅkara says that \textit{adhyāsa}, "is an awareness (avabhāsa), similar in nature to memory (smṛtirūpa), that arises on a different (foreign; paratra) basis as a result of some past experience (pūrva dṛśta)."\footnote{"Smṛtirūpaḥ paratva pūrovadṛśāvabhāsah" in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., Introduction, Section I, p.2.} The definition presents three factors in error:

1. There is a ground, present before us (paratra) and real, on which some other thing is superimposed;

2. The object of our past experience (pūrva dṛśta) which is itself may be real, but now is not before us and in this sense, it is not real and it is the object which is superimposed due to its impression revived like a memory-image (smṛtirūpa); and

3. the fact of appearance (avabhāsa) it self which is terminated by subsequent right cognition of the ground.

When these three things connect each other systematically, our erroneous cognition takes place.
Further Śaṅkara says that adhyāsa is the appearance of "the attributes of one thing on another." 95 It means that error is an 'illegitimate transference' of the 'what' of something to the 'that' of something else. The third definition is that adhyāsa is the "cognition of something as some other things." 96 This shows that error is wrong cognition or misapprehension due to superimposition of something on something else. These three definitions are different ways of expressing the same thing and all imply the three factors mentioned above.

In the case of rope-snake illusion, the snake is not real because it is sublated when the rope is known as its ground; and it cannot be unreal because it appears to us as snake as long as illusion lasts. It is, therefore, called anirvacaniya (indescribable) either as real or as unreal. Śaṅkara says, It is "neither existent nor non-existent, nor both ...most wonderful it is and beyond description in words." 97 Illusion occurs due to avidyā. It hides the nature of the rope and makes it look like snake. Avidyā has two aspect: negative and positive. Negatively it covers ropeness (āvarana) and positively it projects (vikṣepa) snake on it.

The different theories of error, in Indian philosophy, hold that the object of error is either Sat or asat. While the Prabhākara's akhyāti, the Naiyāyika's anyathākhyāti, Kumārila's viparītakhyāti and Rāmānuja's satkhyāti hold the view that the object of erroneous cognition is sat, the Buddhists of the Mādhyamika and Dvaitina's abhinava-anyathākhyāti maintain that the object of erroneous cognitions is asat, i.e., totally non-existent. But advaita theory of error is neither Sat, nor asat, nor both but is anirvacaniya. Hence, the Advaita theory of error is altogether different from the other theories. According to the

95 "Anyasya anyadharmāvabhāsāh" Ibid., p.2.
96 "atasmīn tadbuddhiḥ" Ibid., p.5.
97 "Sannāpya asannāpyubhāyātmikā no...mahādhubhātā anirvacaniyarūpa" in Talks on Śaṅkara's Vivekachoodamani, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., Stanza 109, p.137.
Advaita, every cognitions, whether veridical or erroneous “is entirely determined by things.”\textsuperscript{98} In other words, it has an objective reference.

In the case of perceptual error the object, which is apprehended, is not mediate, but immediate. The object, which is mediate, does not admit of direct perception; the rope-snake, however, is directly perceived. When a person sees the rope, which is in front as snake, the object of his cognition, viz. snake, is immediate: and this rules out the possibility of its being an object of memory. It is well known that in the case of memory, its object is not immediately present. In so far as the object of error is cognized, it is not unreal (asat) for what is unreal, e.g. sky flower, can never be an object of perception. Nor can it be real (Sat).what does not suffer contradiction by latter experience, alone is real. Since the object of erroneous cognition suffers sublation by the subsequent cognition, it cannot be real. It cannot also be both real and unreal, for it amounts to predicating contradictory qualities of one and the same entity at the same time in violation of the law of contradiction. So, the object of erroneous cognition is ontologically different from the both Sat and asat (sadasad-vilakṣaṇa). Since it is indeterminable as either real or unreal, it is said to anirvacaniya. Such an entity cannot be but false (mithyā) or an illusiory appearance (mithyāvabhāsa).

According to Advaita, perceptual error can take place only if there is an object which serves as the substratum or ground (āśraya or adhiṣṭhāna) on which an object (viśaya), which is false, is superimposed. The rope, which is cognized only in a general way as ‘this’, is the ground on which the false snake is superimposed. The ‘this’, which is the ground, is perceived at the time of erroneous cognition as well as at the time when correction takes place through the sublating cognition. In the process of sublation, we do not sublate to the ‘this’ but sublate only to the silver which is falsely predicated of the

\textsuperscript{98} “Jñānaṁ...kevalaṁ vastutantra-eva.” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya,, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 1.1.4, p.34.
'this'. The ground of the illusory object, i.e. rope, is real but not the snake falsely superimposed thereon.

_Advaita_ holds the view that the object of error cannot be taken as unreal because it must be credited with a degree of reality lower than that of the ground on which it is superimposed. Further, there are two terms involve in the erroneous judgement: the subject and the object. Former is empirically real and latter is imaginary real. The relation between the subject and the predicate of an erroneous judgment, i.e. between the ground and the superimposed object, is false (mithyā), because the relation, here, do not have the same degree of reality. The relation that obtains between what is real and what is false must necessarily be false. Since the object of error is false, it follows that the resulting cognition is also false.

In the case of erroneous cognition, the cognitum and the cognition are co-extensive: the object, e.g. rope-snake, exists only at the time of its perception; and only because of its perception, it is said to be existent. The erroneous and valid cognitions differ in two important respects. First of all, while the object of erroneous cognition is real only for the person by whom it is apprehended. In this sense, we can say that the scope of the reality of the object of erroneous cognition is limited. But a valid cognition is open to perception by different individual at the same time, and it is perceived practically in the same way by all of them. Secondly, while the object of erroneous cognition exists only at the time of its perception, that of a valid cognition has a more enduring existence. In order to bring out the difference in the nature of reality between the object of error and that of a valid cognition, _Advaita_ labels the former as imaginary (prātibhāsika) and the latter as empirical (vyāvahārika). It may be added here that, according to _Advaita_, the objects which possess empirical reality, though more enduring than those which possess only imaginary reality, get sublated at the time of _Brahman-

realization, Brahman for which there is no sublation at any time, is Absolutely Real (Paramārtha sat).

When the object in front is only rope, how is it that there is the appearance of snake thereon? Advaita answers this question in term of avidyā. According to Advaita, avidyā is the cause of error. It is conditioned by some circumstances such as defective vision, want of light, similarity etc. These circumstances are variable contribute to the occurrence of error in its own way. Advaita explains the rope-snake cognition in the following way. In a given situation the rope in front is perceived as ‘this’ in a general way through sense-object contact; and this cognition is obtained through the mental mode of internal organ (antahkarana-vṛtti). Avidyā has the two fold power of rejection or concealment (āvarana) and projection (vīkṣepa). Through the power of concealment, avidyā conceals the nature of rope and through the power of projection, it projects the snake upon the rope. In our erroneous cognition, both non-apprehension (ajñāna) and mis-apprehension (mithyā-jñāna) are involved. Erroneous cognitions is non-apprehension of the rope and miss-apprehension of the snake.

Under the influence of conditions such as similarity between rope and snake, avidyā operates itself in four ways:

1. Avidyā located in the rope-delimited consciousness.
2. transforms itself as snake.
3. rejects the ropeness of the ‘this’.
4. projects itself as snake in unity with the ‘this’.

Advaita maintains that “the object (viṣaya, e.g. snake), seen in the ground (āśraya, e.g. rope), is newly originated at that time by avidyā.”

Corresponding to the newly created snake in the rope, the mode of avidyā (avidyā-vṛtti) is located in the witness-consciousness and assumes through the modification the form of snake. When the newly originated snake and the mode of avidyā, which has assumed the form of snake, remain identified, there takes place the direct perception of snake.

The point to be emphasized here is that, since avidyā has reference to a particular person and a particular object outside, the illusory object projected by avidyā and it is seen only by the person concerned at that time in that place. Here the witness-consciousness illuminates the imaginary snake in front through the vṛtti of avidyā, in the same way as it illuminates the dream objects through the vṛtti of avidyā which are also imaginary. An object, which is imaginary (pratibhāsika), is coterminous with its cognition. It means that in erroneous cognition as well as in dream both the cognitum and the cognition, which are due to avidyā, appear as well as disappear together. The object of error as well as its cognition is mithyā, because avidyā, which is their source, is mithyā.

2.8. STATUS OF REALITY AS CONSCIOUSNESS:

Śaṅkara describes the status of consciousness as reality in terms of avasthātraya, i.e., jāgrat, svapna and suṣupti. This could be considered as psychological framework. Consciousness illuminates all the object though it may be appearance or it may be reality, whether it is in waking stage or dreaming stage, even it is present in deep sleep stage in which there is no object. Therefore, it is interpreted as Reality in terms of avasthātraya.

The doctrine of consciousness has been discussed by the Upaniṣadic seers, not only in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad but also in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, in the famous dialogue between Yājñavalkya and King Janaka. There is also an in-depth study of consciousness in the commentaries by
Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and others. The discussion that we come across in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad is very much complemented by all succeeding works of the kind. Here I will be basically concerned with Śaṅkara’s analysis of consciousness. For Śaṅkara, to get into the problem of Reality as consciousness is to begin with the three states of consciousness- the avasthātraya- in the Vedāntic tradition. Whenever we come across the problem of consciousness, we not only have a reference to human being alone but also to Brahman which is Sat, Cit and Ānanda- particularly the Cit svarūpa of Brahman.

To begin with the consciousness of the human being, we have to begin with the human body, i.e., the vital force, the sense, the antahkaraṇa- the internal organ, popularly known as mind (manas), intellect (buddhi), ego (ahāṅkāra) and memory-stuff (citta). Consciousness does not only operate pramāṇas but also guides our senses and internal organs (antahkarana). Since everything other than Reality in term of consciousness is material, the internal organ too, which is different from consciousness, is material. As we know, light as such cannot reveal things or generate the knowledge of things though it facilitates the organs to know things. Similarly, the mind and the senses, which are material, cannot, generate the knowledge of the object. It is consciousness alone that has the power of illumination. Therefore, it is taken as Reality. It is the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge. Consciousness becomes intentional only because of its presence and functioning. The functional modification of the internal organ are called vṛtti; and each of these vṛtis, when illumined by consciousness, is called vṛtti-jñāna.

In the German idealist tradition, there is no such distinction between the ego, mind, spirit, self or consciousness. These terms have similar meanings. However, Husserl has drawn a distinction between Ego, cogito and cogiteta. These are tripartite stages involved in Husserl’s phenomenology-descriptive stage, transcendental stage and egological stage. In the descriptive
stage, issues are raised, everything around us is an object of consciousness. It is because of consciousness that we are aware of the objects or ideas and so on. What is so fundamental at this stage is that a distinction has been drawn between consciousness and the objects of consciousness. Husserl and Kant also assign several functions to consciousness; such as, consciousness objectivates, identifies, supplements, unifies, etc. Husserl has made a distinction between pure ego and empirical ego, between transcendental ego and the psychological ego. But there remains a fundamental difficulty, i.e. the distinction between consciousness, ego, mind, etc. have not been clearly defined in the German idealism including Husserl’s phenomenology. But this problem no longer exists in the Vedānta. The functions that Husserl and Kant assign to consciousness like objectifying, unifying, etc. are all the functions of anthaḥkaraṇa under the witnessing act of consciousness in the Vedānta tradition. The anthaḥkaraṇa is material and it requires the witnessing act of spiritual force, i.e., consciousness.

The sense organs can work properly under the close relationship with the anthaḥkaraṇa, which is turn has to be guided by the consciousness. In his commentary to Brahma-sūtra, Śaṅkara refers to the 1/Thou problem in the adhyāsabhāṣya i.e., “asmat/yusmat problem,”100 asmat is the self and yusmat is other than the self in which comes the mind, senses, body and things of the world. “Any claim regarding affirmation or negation made for anything in the world presupposes evidence provided by the consciousness by means of the pramāṇa. Not only that even the ultimate presupposition of all pramāṇa-perception, inference, verbal testimony, is provided by consciousness but also given the consciousness, all pramāṇas operate, absence of consciousness, no pramāṇa can operate.”101

100 Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., Introduction, p. 1.
To understand antahkarana, we have to go into the details of the three stages of consciousness - jagrat, svapna and susupti. Related with these three stages of consciousness, there is the problem of intentionality and self-consciousness. One of the Vedântins, Râmânuja, for instance, regards these three states as double intentional: on the one hand, it is intentional towards the subject; on the other, it is intentional towards the objects. But the other Vedântins including Śaṅkara believe that consciousness by its nature is not intentional, but it becomes intentional because of its association with the mind. According to Advaita philosophy, “the self or consciousness, which is one, is pervasive in all the three stages of experience, for the purpose of analysis, designates it as viśva in the walking state, as taijasa in the dream state and as prâjña in the sleep state.”\(^\text{102}\) Just as one and the same person is called head of the family, chairperson of the department and supervisor of a research team depending on his status in different contexts, even so one and the same consciousness is called by three different names in three different situations. So these three terms must be understood contextually.

Consciousness in our waking experience is always consciousness of something. When we reflect on our consciousness, we know it to be intentional as the consciousness of this or that object. The intenred object, in this state, may be physical like a table or a tree existing in the external world. Or, it may be one’s own subjective state like pleasure or pain. In short, viśva, i.e., waking-consciousness, is intentional. The mind and the sense, with function in this state, are the instruments through which viśva experiences all kinds of external ‘gross’ objects. It is “bahiṣ-prajña.”\(^\text{103}\)


Please see also, Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 1.1.9., pp. 58-60.

\(^\text{103}\) Agama-Prakarana of Gautapada’s Mandukya Karikā, 1.1, in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentaru of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p. 185.
In the state of dream, though the senses do not function, the mind functions as a result of which consciousness becomes intentional. In dream the impression of the experience of the object of the waking state, which are stored up in the mind, come out of it as ‘real’ objects even though they are nothing but the state of the mind. The objects of this state do not exist in real space and time. That is why Upaniṣad says that taijas experience ‘internal objects’ (“antah-prajinah”\textsuperscript{104}), i.e., impressions projected by the mind, which are subtle.

In both the state of waking and dreaming, there is ‘knowledge-situation’ characterized by three factors - cognizer (jñātā), cognitum (jñeya) and cognition (jñāna) - due to the cogitations of the mind. The knowledge situation involving the three factors is known as tripūti-jñāna.

As distinguished from waking and dream states, there is the state of deep sleep in which a person does not experience any object, external or internal, gross or subtle. When he wakes up from sleep and recollects the nature of experience he had, he reports, using the first person singular, ‘I did not know anything at that time and I slept happily’. It means that no objects were presented to him as objects of his consciousness in that situation. The absence of objects does not mean the absence of consciousness at that time. If consciousness too were absent at that time, recollection to the effect, ‘I did not know anything at that time’, would be impossible. The point is that consciousness reveals objects if they are present; and when objects are not present, it reveals their absence. Its role is comparable to a light which reveals the presence as well as the absence of the objects as case may be. It follows that, since consciousness is present as a witness to the absence of objects in sleep, it is not intentional whereas it is intentional in the other two states.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 1.1., p. 185.
revealing the objects which it is conscious of. Consciousness, in this state, is called "prājña."\textsuperscript{105}

As stated above, consciousness is uniformly present in all the three states of experience. The body and the senses are present at the waking level, but these are absent at the dream level, even the mind is absent at the deep sleep level, but consciousness is present at all the three levels of experience. Consciousness is the witness of all the three episodes. Śaṅkara designates this consciousness, which is uniformly present in all the three stages of experience, as Śākṣin who is the witness self. Śākṣin is the logical presupposition of knowledge. In our view, it is logical because knowledge between the stage of pre-sleep and post-sleep is associated by Śākṣin. If we cannot accept the witness self in these stages, we would not have any logical ground who associate the knowledge between pre-sleep and post-sleep. So when we awake, we feel enjoying sleep. On this basis, we can conclude that Śākṣin is the witness self presents in deep sleep level like waking and dreaming stage. "Beyond all the fluctuations, beyond all the physical and psychical condition... the self maintains our identity."\textsuperscript{106} The self is always existing and unchanging entity. In this sense, it is accepted as Reality.

According to Śaṅkara, Reality, in term of Śākṣin, is pure eternal consciousness, self-luminous and self-proved being the presupposition of all knowledge and experience. It is the pure subject and unknowable as an object because categories cannot grasp it. It is called the witness self, a disinterested looker-on illuminating itself and everything presented to it as an object. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad declares that "Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, cling to the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 1.1., p. 185.
tastes, and the other looks on without eating.” The looker bird is Sākṣin. It is the witness of knowledge. It is the pure subject (Suddha jñāna), a disinterested looker-on, associated with but uninvolved in upādhi (anāthakaranaopahita- Caitanya). Though the witnessing consciousness arises with the experience of object, it is not the result but the presupposition of this experience. Sākṣin is the self-luminous and illuminates all objects presented to it. Everything, known or unknown, is an object for Sākṣin (Sarvam vastujñātatayā ajñātatatayā vā sakṣin caitanyasya viṣeyatā). Swami Vidyārānya, in Panḍadasi (X-11; X-14), compares Sākṣin with the lamp burning on the stage which illuminates equally the stage-manager, the actress and the audience and shines even in their absence.

As we stated above that the witness-consciousness, i.e. Sākṣin, is the witness of all the three episodes. But consciousness as such cannot be known under the knowledge-situation just as tongue cannot taste itself. This is the fourth state, the nameless, i.e., Turiya. It is the state where consciousness is left to itself, trans-empirical, trans-rational, trans-linguistic. At the most we can describe it negatively. There is no other than anything outside, no other than anything inside, is the way that Turiya state is described. Then question arises how does Turiya state differ from the susupti state? Turiya state could be a mystical state, through mediation, etc., which if one has it, one has it, one does not have it, one does not have it. It is “Adṛṣṭam, Avyavahāryam, Agrāhyam, Alakṣanam, Acintam, Śāntam, Śivam, Advaitam” etc. It is at this state that Ātman is to be entirely identified with the Brahman. In other words, If I am the Ātman and Ātman is Absolute then, it follows syllogistically, that I am the Absolute. I am Brahman. Aham Brahmasmi.


2.9. STATUS OF REALITY AS JĪVAN MUKTI:

Śaṅkara advocates the doctrine of jīvan-mukti which is also known in term of Reality. According to Advaita, avidyā is the cause of our worldly bondage (bandhana). It is avidyā that causes jīva to identify himself with the not-self (anātma). When he comes out of the worldly bondage, he realizes his true nature and is liberated from all the pangs of evils and sufferings. It is the stage which Advaita calls as Reality in term of Mokṣa or Jīvan-mukti (liberation from worldly bondage). Thus, Mokṣa is the attainment of the true knowledge of the self.

Śaṅkara brings out the nature of Reality in term of Mukti as such: “This one is all-pervasive like space, devoid of all modifications, ever content, partless, and self-effulgent by nature. This is that unembodiedness, called liberation, where the idea of the three periods of time does not exist and virtuous and vicious deeds cease along with their effects (happiness and sorrow).”

In Advaita Vedānta tradition, Brahman, Ātaman (self), Jñāna (knowledge) Paramārtha (Absolute Real or Ultimate Reality) and Mokṣa (liberation) are identical term. Mokṣa, for Śaṅkara, is the immediate experience of the real nature of the Self. It is Absolute and eternal freedom (Śvatantrya). It is not freedom from something to be given up (heya), e.g. this world, nor it is freedom to gain something worth achieving (upādeya), e.g. Mokṣa, nor it is freedom for someone, e.g. the empirical self; it is freedom itself, pure and eternal. There is no ‘becoming’ in Mokṣa; the individual self does not really ‘become’ Brahman for he always is Brahman himself. There is nothing to be left or acquired here (heyopādeyaśūnyatvam). Thus, Śaṅkara identifies Mokṣa with

Brahman and therefore, it is taken as Reality. He says, "Anyone, who in this world, knows that supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed."\(^{110}\) It means that Brahman cannot be known by finites thought as an object, but is to be experienced directly by realising one’s unity with him.

The Vedic Rśis expressed their vision of Mokṣa or the Absolute or the Ultimate Reality in the form of hymns, evoking responses at the varying levels of self-realization, worshipful devotion or ritual sacrifices. The Upaniṣadic saint tried to impart the knowledge of the Absolute to his pupil through the method of a dialogue. An example of this is found in the Bhadāranyaka Upaniṣad in the dialogue between the sage Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī who ask him question about the way to realize the Absolute or the Ultimate Truth. As the dialogue proceeds, Yājñavalkya convinces her that it is the Ātman or self that should be known, and when this knowledge is achieved, everything in the Universe is known, because there lies an identity between Ātman (Self) and Brahman (the Ultimate Reality). The five Mahāvākyas or great teaching (literally, Great Sentences), express this vision from different Upaniṣads in the following:

(i) Prajñānām Brahma, “Consciousness is Brahman” (Aitariya Upanisad, 3.1.3)

(ii) Aham Brahmiṣmi, “I am Brahman” (Bhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.10)

\[Aham eva idam sarvōsmi, \text{ “I indeed am this whole Universe”}.\]

(iii) Tattvamasi, “That Thou art” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.8.7)

(iv) Ayam Ātman Brahma, “This Ātman is Brahman.” (Bhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 2.5.19, Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 1.5.)

\(^{110}\) “Śa yo ha vai tatpramāṇi brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati.” Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.9 in Eight Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.163.
Śaṅkara says, " "That Thou Art"...establishes the identity of Brahman and jīva, indicated by the term "That" (Tat) and "Thou" (Tvam) respectively, then stripping these terms of their relative associations (lakṣaṇārtha), their implied but not literal meanings are to be inculcated."\(^{111}\) Actually, the Mahāvākyas, express the different paths for the realization of the Absolute. The statement ‘Prajñānāṁ Brahman’ directs the seeker to meditate on the Chittsvarūpa (Pure Consciousness form) of Brahman, leading to the merger of the individual consciousness in the Universal and the attainment of Mukti (liberation from the worldly bondage) and the state of Supreme Bliss (Paramānanda). ‘Ahaṁ Brahmaśmi’ is an endeavour to make the pupil engage in deep meditation (upāsanā) to realize the Absolute, in the ‘Tattvamasi’ the teacher is trying to make his pupil realize that his innate Being is part of the Absolute, ‘Ayam Ātāṁ Brahma’ also accomplishes the same thing. Śaṅkara says, “Men of wisdom should give up contradictory elements on both sides and recognise the identity of Īśvara and jīva, carefully noting that the essence of both is Knowledge Absolute.”\(^{112}\)

As for as Reality in term of Mokṣa is concerned, Śaṅkara sketches the following three characteristics of Mokṣa which really have the same meaning:

(i) **Mokṣa** is the realisation of Brahman. In his words, “Liberation is the state of identity with Brahman.”\(^{113}\)

\(^{111}\) "Tattvaṁ padābhyāṁ abhidhiyamānayo brahmātmanoḥ ṣodhitayoryadītham...ekyarth tayorākṣitayornavācyayo...", in Talks on Śaṅkara’s Vivekachūḍamani, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., stanza 241-242, pp.276-277.

\(^{112}\) “Śrīlakṣya cinmāratayā sadāttmanor akhaṇḍabhāvah parichyate budhayai. Evath mahāvākyaśatena kathitayate brahmātmanorākhyamakhāṇḍabhāvah.” Ibid.,stanza 249, p.287.

\(^{113}\) “Brahmabhīvōścā Mokṣaḥ.” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 1.1.4, p.34
(ii) Mokṣa is the removal of avidyā. Śaṅkara says, "...the cessation of ignorance alone is commonly called liberation, like the disappearance of the snake, for instance, from the rope when the erroneous notion about its existence has been dispelled."\(^{114}\)

(iii) Mokṣa is eternal "unembodiedness." \(^{115}\)

Realisation of Brahman and removal of avidyā are the same for both reveal the Absolute as eternal consciousness and bliss. Unembodiedness means the utter unrelatedness of the self with the three type of bodies, gross ("sthūla")\(^ {116}\), subtle ("sūkṣma") \(^ {117}\) and causal ("kāraṇa").\(^ {118}\) It is not the absence of the body but the absence of the relationship with the body. Hence, jīvan-mukti is admitted. In order to explain such a state of Reality in term of Mukta (jīvan-mukta), Śaṅkara gives "two analogies"\(^ {119}\) in his Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya, that is,

(i) As a potter’s wheel keeps on revolving for sometimes, even after the propelling stick has been taken away. In the same way, the body of a jīvan-mukta may continue to persist for sometime even after the realization of Supreme knowledge.

(ii) Śaṅkara refers on the analogy of double moon-vision. As a man seeing two moons instead of one, due to his eye-disease, continues to see it even after he is convinced that there is only one moon and not two, similarly even after realizing the


\(^{115}\) See also, Talks on Śaṅkara’s Vivekachoodamani, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., Stanza 197, p.234.

\(^{116}\) "Nityaṁ asārāravat mokṣākhyānt" 1.1.4 in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkara, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.28.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., Stanza 96-101, pp.122-127.

\(^{118}\) Ibid., Stanza 120-121, pp.151-152.

\(^{119}\) "Asārāt ca tasminkulakalacakrat pravṛttavega sya antarāre pratibandhaśaṁbhavābhada bhuvati vegakṣayapratipālanam...Dvicaṅkṛtaśaṁbhavāsāt kāraṇātmanuvartat eva" in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkara, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 4.1.15, p.840.
unreality of the world’s appearance, the saints continue to witness the illusion of the world-appearance, though internally they remain unaffected by it.

Reality as Mokṣa, for Śaṅkara, is not an effect of anything. It is eternal reality and therefore cannot be produced by anything. It cannot be the result of action (karma) or meditation (upāsanā or dhyāna). "The knowledge of the unity of the Self and Brahman is not a kind of meditation" and role of Karma and upāsanā, in the achievement of Mokṣa, is subsidiary. However, they prepare us in urging to know the Absolute Reality by purifying our mind (sattva śuddhi). In this regard, Śaṅkara says that Mokṣa “is not to be achieved through purification...apart from knowledge alone, there cannot be the slightest touch of action here.” If Mokṣa is achieved by action or meditation, then it would be certainly perishable (anitya). And ‘perishable Mokṣa’ is a contradiction in terms. He says, “All who believe in liberation admit it to be eternal (Nitya).” Hence, Mokṣa cannot be produced by action or meditation and “it is not mental action like meditation or thought.” It cannot be treated as an effect produced by knowledge of Brahman. Immediate realisation of Brahman does not generate Mokṣa; it simply removes avidyā which obstructs the revelation of Reality in term of Mokṣa. Śaṅkara says, “The result of the knowledge of Brahman is nothing but the removal of the obstacles to liberation.”

Cancellation of avidyā, realisation of Brahman and achievement of Reality in term of Mokṣa happen simultaneously and are one and the same. Time is not an intervening factor between immediate knowledge of Brahman and cancellation of avidyā, which obstructs Mokṣa. He says, "Vedic texts show

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120 "Na cedari brahmātmaikatva vijñānāthi sampadrūpam." Ibid., 1.1.4, p.29.
121 "Tasmāna saṁskāryoapi mokṣaḥ...tasmājñānānena mahā mokṣaḥ kriyāyā gandhamātrasya apyanupraveśa iha nopapadyate," Ibid., 1.1.4, p.34.
122 "Nityasca mokṣaḥ sarvairmokṣa viḍībhurabhupagamyate." Ibid., 1.1.4, p.28.
123 For detail, please see, "Dhyānāno cintanāno yadyapi mānasam ...“ Ibid., 1.1.4, p.34.
124 "Mokṣapratibandhā-nivṛttināmā me vairajñānānas ṇamas." Ibid., 1.1.4, p. 29.
liberation as coming immediately after the knowledge of Brahman; and thereby they deny any activity in the interval."¹²⁵ He also says, "...the realisation of Brahman, consists in the mere cessation of ignorance ...the result of the attainment of Brahman, immediately follows the knowledge ...the very moment that one has knowledge of the Supreme Self, ignorance regarding It must disappear. Hence, the effect of ignorance being impossible in the presence of the knowledge of Brahman, like the effects of darkness in the presence of a lamp."¹²⁶

Reality, which is identified with Mokṣa, cannot be regarded as something to be attained (āpya). It is the eternal nature of the Self. It is not a new acquisition (aprāptasya prāptih), but the realisation of one’s own nature (prāptasya prāptih). The statement ‘Mokṣa is achieved through the realisation of Brahman’ is “figurative one.”¹²⁷

Jīvan-mukti, for Śaṅkara, is real liberation (Mokṣa) because it is not reserved for the dead. Reality, which is known as Mokṣa, is to be obtained here and now. We must enjoy it in this very life. In this reference, Śaṅkara says, “since embodiedness is the result of a false perception it is established that the enlightened man has no embodiedness even while living.”¹²⁸ Thus, Mokṣa is the unembodied nature of the Self and it can be realised even this life. The self is really ‘unembodied’ even when housed in a body (Aśariraṁ śarīreṣu).

Reality, in term of Mokṣa, is the cancellation of avidyā by immediate experience of the Self. When a person realises Brahman, avidyā along with its

¹²⁵ "Śrutayo brahma-vidyānantarāṁ mokṣaṁ dāṛṣṭayat yuḥ madhye kāryāntaraṁ vārayanti." Ibid., 1.1.4, p.28.
¹²⁶ "Avidyā apagam mātratvād brahma-prāptiphalasya...vidyā kālaṁantarita/tvād brahma-prāpti phalasya...Evamātmāvāyañāṁ vijñānaṁ yatkālaṁ, tatkāla eva tadvāsaṁśayāṁ āṇaṁ tīrthāvāṁ syat. Ato brahma-vidyāyaṁ satyāṁ avidyā kāryāntaratovaḥ pradīpa eva tamaḥ kāryasya" in The Bhadārāṇyaka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Madhavanand, etc., 1.4.10, p.113.
¹²⁷ "Upācāra mātra." Ibid., 4.4.6, p.504.
¹²⁸ "Siddhāṁ jivato'pi vidiṣoṣaśāśarato'pi" in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc, 1.1.4, p.42.
effects is completely destroyed and the world-illusion vanishes for good never to appear again. The Self is an unembodied eternal reality. The Self, due to avidyā, appears to undergo the various state of embodied existence. This happens due to the super-imposition (dehadhyasa) of body, senses, life and mind on the Self. This super-imposition makes the transcendental Self appears as finite ego (pramātā) who is a knower, an agent and an enjoyer of the fruits of action and who undergo transmigration. No real relation between the Self and the body can be established, for the Self is really beyond avidyā and karma. The apparent relation between the Self and the body can be due only to superimposition, and not due to Karma. In this regard, Śaṅkara says, "... the idea of embodiedness is a result of false nescience. Unless it be through the false ignorance of identifying the Self with the body, there can be no embodiedness for the Self...the unembodiedness of the Self is eternal, since it is not a product of action."129 When the attachment to the body due to superimposition is destroyed through the realisation of the Absolute self, Mokṣa is attained even during life. The identification of the Self with the body is false (mithyā) and not secondary or figurative (gauna or upacāra).

As the embodied state of the Self is solely due to false knowledge, it is conclusively proved that the person, who has realised the Self through immediate spiritual experience, is unembodied even though alive. The Śruti declares: "Him, who has lost attachment of his body and has become unembodied, empirical pleasures and pains do not touch."130 "He who has realised the unity of the Self experiences no delusion and no sorrow."131 "When the Supreme is realised, the knot of the heart is loosened, all doubts

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129 "Saśārivatvāya mithyājñānamānimittatvāt." Ibid., 1.1.4, p.40.
Also see, "Śārināṃ sambhāṅsāṃ siddhātvaḥ... kriyāsāmakāyaśhāvācca ātmānāḥ kartātvānupapatteḥ." Ibid., 1.1.4, p.40.
are set at rest, and all karmas are destroyed." The Jivan-mukta's body may continue for sometime due to prārabdha karma, but no new actions are accumulated, just as the wheel of a potter continues to revolve for sometime due to previous force even after the push of potter's hand is withdrawn. "...As the lifeless slough of a snake is cast off and lies in the ant-hill, so does this body lie. Then the self becomes disembodied and immortal, (becomes) the Prāṇa (Supreme Self), Brahman, the Light." After the death of the body, Videha-mukti is achieved.

The realisation of Brahman or Mokṣa is possible when we follow pre-requisites which are known as "Sādhan-catustaya." These are:

(i) eligibility of discrimination between the eternal and non-eternal (Nityānitya vastuviveka)

(ii) dispassion for the enjoyment of the fruits (of work) here and hereafter (Ih mutrātha phala bhoga virga)

(iii) a perfection of such practices as control of the mind, control of the senses and organs etc. (Samadāmi śādhanā sampat) and

(iv) hankering for Mokṣa (Mumuksutvam).

These four Sādhanas are not sufficient for achieving Mokṣa but it is necessary to follow the "triple discipline" through which we realise our final destination of life as Jivan-mukti. These are:


134 Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkaračārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc, 1.1.1, p.9. Please see also, Talks on Śaṅkara's Vivekānanda, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., Stanza 18-30, pp.28-45.

135 "Śrotayaṁ piśumāmācyārtya āgamataśca, paścāntamāntasyastarkataḥ, tato nīdhiyāśītavyo niscayena dhyātavya, evaṁ hiyasaś ca rṣṭo bhavati śravaṇa manana nīdhiyāśāna śādhanai nirvarṣitāḥ" in The Bhādārātyāka Upaniṣad: with the Commentary of Śaṅkaračārya, trans. by Swami Madhavanand, etc., 2.4.5, p.242.
(i) **Sravana** which means a serious and sustained study of *Vedānta* text through hearing or reading.

(ii) **Manana** which means critical exposition what has been heard or read.

(iii) **Nididhyāsana** which means long, constant and continuous meditation.

2.10. REALITY AS PARAMĀRTHA, VYĀVAHĀRA AND PRĀTIBHĀSA:

*Advaita Vedānta* distinguishes three levels of being or reality, namely, Absolute or Ultimate Reality (*Paramārthika sat*), phenomenal or empirical reality (*vyāvahārika sat*) and imaginary reality (*prātibhāsika sat*).

Pure Being or the Ultimate Reality is *Brahman*. “The Absolute truth is only one, which is *Brahman*.”

It is beyond our empirical experience, beyond senses, thought and language, as the foundational reality of all. It is *Paramārtha satya*, the Absolute Real. Śaṅkara says, “The content of knowledge is said to be the most real (*Paramārtha satya*), since it ever remains the same; and in the world, the knowledge of that kind is said to be right knowledge (*Samyak-jñāna*).” *Paramārtha* is “the cessation of all empirical dealing in the state of the Highest Reality.”

Next comes in our empirical world, valid for senses, thought and language, valid for all empirical experiences, but not real in itself. Śaṅkara says, “An object... which exists because of a fancied empirical outlook (i.e. on

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Please see also, *Talks on Śāṅkara’s Vivekāchūdamani*, trans. by Swami Chinmayananda, etc., Stanza 70, p.93.


137 “ekarūpeṣa hyavasthitō yoarthāḥ sa paramārthāḥ. Loke tadeśeṣaṁ jñānaṁ samyagjñānamityucyate” in *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* of Śrī Śaṅkara-cārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 2.1.11, p.322.

the strength of empirical experience)- it being called so because it is an empirical outlook (samvrti) that is imagined (kalpita) as a means for the attainment of the highest object; anything that exists by virtue of this, that has no existence, from the standpoint of the Absolute Reality.”

It is the sphere of becoming of ‘appearance’, of space-time, causation, ruled by thought. This phenomenal world is vyāvahārika satya. It can neither be justified nor questioned by thought. Being appears in it in various degrees and that constitutes its reality. ‘Being’ is not only transcendent to ‘appearance’, but also immanent in it in varying degrees. Brahman is the reality of this world; its phenomenal character is a super-imposition on Brahman and is, therefore, appearance (ābhāsa) and false (mithyā).

The enquirer may further elaborate to say that if Brahman is the only reality then what about the world. Is it completely nothing or something or both? Indeed, it is not nothing because its factual position is clear in our day to day life. But world also cannot be taken as real, because if it is taken so, then the non-dualism cannot be proved. Thus, the crucial problem regarding the status of the phenomenal world was first analysed and solved by Śaṅkara by propounding the doctrine of māyā. The māyic character of the world proves it anirvacaniya and because of anirvacaniyatā, the phenomenal world is neither completely sat like Brahman nor completely asat like hare’s horn or the son of a barren women. Further, neither it is both Sat and asat and nor even different from both. However, it is something and thus anirvacaniya. “They are the unmanifested name and form which cannot be referred to either as different or non-different from Brahman...” The phenomenal reality of the world is never actually rejected by Śaṅkara. His declaring the phenomenal world to be māyā is only significant from the Ultimate (Paramārtha) point of view. But the

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139 “yaḥ padārthah...sa kalpitasaḥnoṣṭyā; kalpitā ca sā pāramārthapratipattiyupāyatoena saḥnoṣṭiṣca sā, taṅga yoasti pāramārthena nāstyasau na vidyate.” in Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Māṇḍūkya Kārikā’s Alātasānti-Prakarāḥ, 4.73 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkara-cārya, Vol.II, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.379.

140 “Tatvāntavābhavinirvacaniye nāmārūpe avyākṛte vyācikśite...” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkara-cārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 1.1.5, p.50.
world is accepted to be as real as possible so long the Ultimate Reality is not realised. The phenomenal reality (vyāvahārika sattā) of the world is never denied. In this regard, Śaṅkara says, “...all common human dealing or Vedic observances are logical (and valid) prior to the realization of the identity of the Self and Brahman.”  

On the third level, stand imaginary illusions, dreams, etc., which are taken as ‘real’ as long as they last and then rejected as ‘unreal’ when their ground-reality is realised. This is the level of the illusory called prātibhāsā. The imaginary object and the knowledge of imaginary object are not the same level. The object of imaginary knowledge is false (mithyā) but its knowledge and ground is not false (mithyā). “Though the snake-bite and bathing in water in the case of a dreamer be false, still the knowledge resulting from those acts is true, since that knowledge is not sublated even when he wakes up. For even when a man knows after waking that the acts of snake-bite and bathing in water etc., experienced by him in dream, were false, he does not surely consider the knowledge of those acts to be false as well.”  

Both the illusory and the empirical are indescribable and, in fact, ‘unreal’ mistaken as ‘real’. The illusory cannot be set aside as a mere ‘nothing’ for it confronts us as an object of knowledge during illusion and is mistaken by us as such. It is taken as real as long as it appears. The illusory and the empirical are different types of objects and belong to different order of being. “The perception of the waking state cannot be classed with those in a dream...because of difference of characteristics; for waking and dream states are really different in nature.” but objectivity is common to both. Both are

143 “Na svapnādīpratyaya vajjogratpratyaya bhūvitumharhanti...vaidhamrya hi bhavati svapnajāgarītyoḥ.” Ibid., 2.2.29, p.423.
indescribable either as real or unreal. They cannot be labelled under any category of thought. They are not real, for they are contradicted latter on when their ground-reality is known. They are not unreal, for they do appear in knowledge as real and are taken as such during illusion. They are not both real and unreal, for this conception is self-contradictory. The indescribability or the character of being neither real nor unreal nor both is common to both the illusory and the empirical and reveals their falsity (mithyātva). Each is taken as real within its sphere and turns out to be unreal from a higher order. The rope-snake is real during illusion and is set aside when the rope is known. The dream-snake is real during dream and is set aside when the dreamer awakes. Similarly, this world is real as long as we perceive it through senses and thought and is realised as unreal when Brahman is known.

The phenomenal world (vyāvahārika sat) is real for all. But in the case of rope-snake illusion, snake is real only for individual. The existence of the world is not dependent on any particular person's perception, and hence it is called 'Īśvara-sṛṣṭa'. On the contrary, the prātibhāsika object is founded on individual nescience; it comes into being with its perception by some one and ceases to exist with the cessation of that perception. It is, therefore, called 'jīva-sṛṣṭa'. The rope, along with all the objects of waking experience, is super-imposition on Brahman. The snake and similar illusory objects are also super-imposition on Brahman but only through the objects of waking experience. The phenomenal world (empirical reality) is taken as real due to māyā and rope-snake (illusory reality) is real due to avidyā. However, māyā and avidyā are synonyms terms in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta because both are used as the cause of appearance or illusion either as universal or individual. But the significant distinction between māyā and avidyā cannot be ignored.

In contrast to these three levels of being, the 'non-being' (asat) stands as the 'utterly unreal', as a pseudo-concept. "For those who think everything to be unreal, there can be no possibility of birth, in any way, of a non-existent
object, either through māyā or in reality, for such is never our experience.” 144
A sky-flower or "a barren woman’s son is born neither through māyā nor in reality" 145 which cannot even appear as an object in knowledge at any time. “It is a matter of common experience in this world that any thing from which something is produced does exist” 146 but “no effect is perceived in this world as having been produced from a non-entity.” 147 And "for nobody perceives anywhere a rope-snake or a mirage if there is no substratum." 148

Even the indescribable (anirvacaniya), i.e., the illusory and the empirical, treated as false (mithyā) has like, the utterly unreal, no being at any time. Yet, the significant distinction between the indescribable and the utterly unreal is that while the former appears in our knowledge as real and is mistaken by us to be real until it is set aside as unreal by the sublating knowledge of its ground, the latter has no power even to appear as real. The indescribable confronts us by appearing in the garb of the real, though its pretension to reality is later on discovered and discarded, the utterly unreal lacks this power of appearance and has no pretension to reality. It is due to this important distinction that the indescribable is accorded a place under ‘degrees of reality’, while the pseudo concept is relegated to the sphere of ‘non-being.’ The illusory is a projection of ignorance. It is taken as ‘real’ as long as it appears; it is rejected as ‘unreal’ when its ground is known and it is realised as indescribable either as real or as unreal or as both when the

145 “Bandhyāputro na tatvena māyayā vāpi jāyate” in Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Māṇḍūkya Kārikā’s Agama-Prakaraṇa, 1.6 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.193.
146 “Yasmiicca jāyate kīrtāttadastītī drstiḥ loke...” in Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., 2.6.1, p.348.
147 “Na cāsato jātāṁ kīrtcidgṛhyate loke kāryam” Ibid.,2.6.1, p.348.
148 “Na hi nirāśpadā rajjuśarpmgamatṛṣṭikādāyataḥ kaścidupalabhyaḥ Kentac.” in Śaṅkara’s Commentary on Māṇḍūkya Kārikā’s Agama-Prakaraṇa, 1.6 in Eight Upaniṣads: with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, Vol.II, trans by Swami Gambhirananda, etc., p.194.
question of determining its metaphysical status is taken up. Similarly, this
empirical world is taken as real for all practical purposes when experienced
through sense organs and thought-forms. When philosophically analysed it
turns out to be indescribable either as real or as unreal or as both
\((anirvacaniya)\) and is, therefore, treated as false; and when \(Brahman\), its ground-
reality, is realised though immediate spiritual experience (generated by the
Mahāvākyya of the Śruti), it is realised as totally unreal. Śaṅkara says’ “for
people, who think of the Supreme Reality, there is no interest in question
regarding creation which is illusory.”149

\(Brahman\) is \(anirvacaniya\) in the sense of being beyond thought and
language, being trans-empirical. The indescribable, the illusory as well as the
empirical, is \(anirvacaniya\) in the sense that it cannot be logically defined by any
category of thought. Even the utterly unreal may be called \(anirvacaniya\) in the
sense that as a pseudo-concept it is below definition and description. The
indescribability of \(Brahman\) proves its reality; the indescribability of the world
proves its falsity; and the indescribability of the pseudo-concept proves its
utter unreality.

Some critics have often failed to understand the significance of \(avidyā\)
or \(māyā\) and have, therefore, charged Śaṅkara with explaining the world away.
Śaṅkara himself has raised such objections as \(pūrva-pakṣa\) and has answered
them. It is surprising that most of the critics have not considered his answers.
They say: “How can the true knowledge of the identity of the Self with
\(Brahman\) arise from the unreal \(Upaniṣadic\) text?”150 If the world is unreal,
unreal means, like \(Vedānta\) texts, cannot lead unreal personalities to attain real
liberation (\(Mokṣa\)); if the world is real, it cannot be \(māyā\). A philosophy which
has nothing better to say than that unreal personalities are unreally striving in
an unreal world through unreal means to attain an unreal end, is itself unreal.

149 “Na tu pāramārthacintakānāṁ srṣṭivāvādara...” Ibid., 1.7, p.195.
150 “Kathaṁ tosatgyeva Vedāntavākyena satyasya brahmātmatoṣyasya pratipatti rūpapadyeta...” in
Verily, “a man does not die when bitten by a snake super-imposed (by him) on a rope, nor are such needs as drinking and bathing fulfilled by the water in a mirage.”  

Śaṅkara replies that such objections are based on a confusion between the empirical (vyāvahāra) and the transcendental (Paramārtha). The opponent is hopelessly confusing the empirical with the transcendental, even as he is confusing the illusory with the empirical. The falsity of the illusory can be realised only when empirical knowledge is attained. The rope-snake generates fear and an attempt to avoid or kill it and is realised as illusory only when the rope is known. The dream water quenches dream-thirst. The roaring of a dream-tiger generates fear. Dream-objects can be discarded as false only when the dreamer gets awake. Similarly, the unreality of this empirical world can be realised only when the Absolute is attained. Śaṅkara says that we have repeatedly asserted that as long as the transcendental unity of the Self with Brahman is not realised, the entire world must be taken to be true. In his words, “for earlier than the realization of the identity of the self with Brahman, all activities can justly be true like the activities in dream before waking up. So long as the oneness of the true Self is not realized, nobody entertains the idea of unreality when dealing with the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge, and the results...”  

Before Brahman realisation, the world cannot be condemned as unreal. It is only when the unity with Brahman is attained, the Vedānta declares the world to be unreal. This transcendental knowledge cannot be dismissed as subjective or imaginary, for it is directly experienced as unity with the real, and it results in the total cancellation of avidyā along with its products, and itself cannot be contradicted by any other knowledge.

From the above description, it is clear that Śaṅkara is emphatic on preserving the empirical validity of the world. Far from taking away the reality of this world, Śaṅkara grants some reality, during appearance, even to

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151 “...nāhi rajusarpeṇa daśto mriyate, nāpi mṛgatṛṣṇaṁkāmbhasā pānāvāgāhanādiprayojanaṁ kriyata...” Ibid., 2.1.14., p.330.

152 “Śarvavyāvahārāḥāmeva prāg Brahmatatāmavitnāna satyatropapattibb svapmanvāvahārasyeva prāk prabodhat. yāvaddhi na satyātmaiktva pratipattisāvat pramāṇopacaryaparyaphalalakṣaṇesu vikāresvapar tīvatvabuddhirna kasyacidutpadyate...” Ibid., 2.1.14, p.330.
the illusory objects which according to his opponents are unreal. The world ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ are used in Vedānta in their Absolute sense. ‘Real’ means real for all time and Brahman alone is real in this sense. Similarly, ‘unreal’ means utterly unreal like a sky-flower, which this world is not. Śaṅkara says, “...a thing is said to be true (Satya), when it does not change the nature that is ascertained to be its own; and a thing is said to be unreal (mithyā) when it changes the nature that is ascertained to be its own. Hence a mutable thing is unreal.” The world is ‘neither real nor unreal’ and this brings out the indescribable and self-contradictory nature of the world. It has empirical validity, but not Ultimate Reality when the reality, which is denied to this world, means ‘non-eternality’. Who can say that the world is not unreal if unreal means temporal? It is true for all practical purpose. It will be sublated only when knowledge dawns and not before. This should make us humbly strive after true knowledge rather than engage ourselves in futile quarrels. Śaṅkara’s intention is perfectly clear- none can condemn this world as unreal; he who does it is not qualified to do so and he who is qualified to do so, will not do so, for he would have risen above language and finite thought. Nobody can make the unreal, real or transform the real into unreal. The world is what it is, neither more nor less. Its reality is Brahman which is its underlying ground; its unreality consists in its ascribed characters which are superimposed on Brahman. When Brahman is realised, super-imposition is rejected and the ground is reinstated. The real is ever what it is. It is only avidyā that appears and avidyā that vanishes.

To sum up, Śaṅkara, in his philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, elaborates the nature and status of appearance and reality in the framework of ontology, metaphysics and epistemology. Ontological status of Reality, as the evolution of consciousness, has been explained in terms of Prāṇa kośas (five sheaths), i.e.,

Annamaya Kośa, Prāṇamaya Kośa, Manomaya Kośa, Vijñānamaya Kośa and Ānandamaya Kośa. Śaṅkara, to establish his metaphysical system, explains Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat, Cit, Ānanda and Satya, Jñāna, Ananta. The three terms, i.e. Satya, Jñāna and Ananta, contain three different meaning of Reality and separate among themselves. But they are related to Reality as Brahman and show his characteristics. The characterization of metaphysical status of Reality as Brahman in terms of Sat, Cit and Ānanda are not synonymous (aparyāya). Although they all denote, not connote, one and the same entity, i.e., Brahman. These are not concepts or predicate, nor qualities, nor essential attributes, nor even aspects or phases of Brahman itself, but the very nature of Brahman or rather Brahman itself. Whenever we refer to Brahman as Sat, Cit and Ānanda, it must be recognized that the other term necessarily included. He distinguishes two aspects or modes of Brahman, i.e., transcendental perspective and empirical viewpoint. He accepts the former as highest Reality which is the stage of Nirguṇa Brahman and latter as lower reality which is the stage of Sagguṇa Brahman. Nirguṇa Brahman cannot be a category of thought. It can be spoken only in negative term as 'Not this, Not this'. Śaṅkara explains the epistemological status of appearance and reality with reference to antahkarana, pramāṇa-vicāra, anirvacaniya khyātivāda and vivartavāda. antahkarana receive and arrange what is conveyed to it through the senses. Through the function of the antahkarana and its modification, i.e. vṛtti-jñāna, we move from the sphere of appearance towards the sphere of reality. It makes possible for a person to come in contact with the world around him, i.e. vyāvahārika jagat. Pramāṇas are required to justify what is in appearance, what is in reality and what is in both. Through the function of pramāṇas, we can transform appearances into reality. Absolute Reality is comprehended by means of pramāṇas and what appearance is, from the Absolute point of view, is also known by means of pramāṇas. In other words, the world of appearance and Absolute Reality are known through the function of pramāṇas. Therefore, pramāṇas are applicable for both appearance and reality. We establish the existence and non-existence of a thing only by
means of pramāṇa. Śaṅkara accepts the pramāṇas through which our all knowledge is possible whether it is empirical or transcendental. Śaṅkara proves the world of appearance by the theory of vivartavāda. According to this theory, the cause is real and the effect is appearance. The cause (kāraṇa) produces the effect (kārya) without undergoing any change in itself. In the context of Advaita Vedānta, the world (jagat) is only appearance of Brahman. The world has no independent existence apart from Brahman. Brahman appears as the world, and being the substratum of the world of appearance, it is a transfigurative material cause. But for describing the rope-snake or shell-silver analogy, which is seen only by the person who is concerned at the time of illusion, he proposes the theory of anirvacaniya khyāti in terms of being neither Sat and asat. Advaita Vedāntins use the phrases ābhāsa, mithyā, bhrama, māyā, avidyā, sadasadanirvacaniya and so on for the term ‘appearance.’ These phrases are applied in the theory of error, i.e. anirvacaniya khyātivāda. According to this theory, illusion consists in the superimposition of one thing or the characteristic of one thing on another. It is known as adhyāsa. Śaṅkara describes the status of consciousness as reality in terms of avasthātraya, i.e., jāgrat, svapna and susupti. This could be considered as psychological framework. Consciousness illuminates all the objects though it may be appearance or it may be reality, whether it is in waking stage or in dreaming stage, even it is present in deep sleep stage in which there is no object. Therefore, it has been interpreted as Reality in term of avasthātraya. Consciousness is the witness of all the three episodes. The witnessing consciousness is designated as Śākṣin in Advaita Vedānta. This self is always existing and unchanging entity. In this sense, it is accepted as Reality. But consciousness as such cannot be known under the knowledge-situation just as tongue cannot taste itself. This is the fourth state, the nameless, i.e., Turiya. It is at this state that Ātman is to be entirely identified with the Brahman. This is Absolute Reality, Absolute Consciousness. Śaṅkara advocates the doctrine of jīvan-mukti which is also known in term of Reality. According to Advaita, when jīva comes to realize his true nature, he is liberated from the worldly
bondage (*bandhana*), pang of all evil and suffering. It is the stage which *Advaita* calls as Reality in term of *Mokṣa* or *jīvan-mukti* (liberation from worldly bondage). When the *māyā, avidyā, adhyāsa*, all the appearances and illusions are resolved, it is called the stage of *jīvan-mukti*. It means that the *Mokṣa* is not reserved after the death, it can be attained in this life. *Advaita Vedānta* distinguishes three levels of being or reality, namely, Absolute or Ultimate Reality (*Paramārthika sat*), phenomenal or empirical reality (*vyāvahārika sat*) and imaginary reality (*pratibhāsika sat*). *Brahman* (*Paramārthika sat*) is the Ultimate Reality. The phenomenal world is empirical reality (*vyāvahārika sat*) and rope-snake is imaginary reality (*pratibhāsika sat*). Pure being or the Ultimate Reality is *Brahman*. It is beyond our empirical experience, beyond senses, thought and language, as the foundational reality of all. It is *Paramārthika*, the Absolute Real. Next comes our empirical world, valid for senses, thought and language, valid for all empirical experiences, but not real in itself. It is the sphere of 'becoming' or 'appearance', of space-time causation, ruled by thought. This phenomenal world is *vyāvahāra*. *Brahman* is the reality of this world; its phenomenal character is a superimposition on *Brahman* and is, therefore, *mithyā*. Is phenomenal world completely nothing? Indeed, it is not nothing because its factual position is clear in our day to day life. Therefore, phenomenal world is empirical reality (*vyāvahārika sat*). But world also cannot be taken as real, because if it is taken so, then the *Advaitism* cannot be proved. Thus, the crucial problem regarding the status of phenomenal world was first analysed and solved by Śaṅkara by propounding the doctrine of *māyā*, according to which the world is *māyā* and, thus it comes before us as *anirvacaniya*. Because of *anirvacaniyatā*, the world is neither completely *Sat* like *Brahman* nor completely *asat* like hare’s horn or the son of a barren women. Further, neither it is both *Sat* and *asat* and nor even different from both. However, it is something and thus *anirvacaniya*. On the third level, stand imaginary illusions, dreams, rope-snake, etc., which are taken as ‘real’ as long as they last and then rejected as ‘unreal’ when their ground-reality is known. This is the level of the illusory called *pratibhāsika*. In contrast to these three
levels of being, the 'non-being' stands as the 'utterly unreal' (asat), as a pseudo-concept like a barren woman's son or a sky-flower, which cannot even appear as an object in knowledge at any time. The significant distinction between the anirvacaniya and the utterly unreal (asat) is that while the former appears in our knowledge as real and is mistaken by us to be real until it is set aside as unreal by the sublating knowledge of its ground, the latter has no power even to appear as real. The imaginary reality, i.e. rope-snake, is real during illusion and set aside when the rope is known and world is real as long as we view it through senses and thought and realized as unreal when Brahman is known. Thus, prātibhāsika is real during illusion and it does not exist when we see empirical thing as its ground. Finally, vyāvahārika is real as long as we perceive it through our senses and mind and it becomes illusion when Paramārtha is realised. Prātibhāsa is real due to avidyā and vyāvahāra is real due to māyā. Basically, Śaṅkara is Brahmavādī. Māyā and avidyā comes only in the course of philosophical investigation that Śaṅkara undertakes.