CHAPTER V : THE CONCEPT OF THE WORLD
CHAPTER-V

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1. The Cause of the World:

The sole cause of the world, according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, is Viṣṇu. He is the cause of the origination, sustenance and destruction of the world. But the question is: what type of causality is attributed to Viṣṇu? For cause can be of two types- material cause and instrumental cause. The cause that follows into the effect is called the material cause while the cause, which makes the material cause transform into the effect, is called the instrumental cause. For example, earth is the material cause of the pot and the potter is its instrumental cause.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa regards Viṣṇu as both the instrumental and material cause of the world. Parāśāra implies this in the very first chapter of the first part of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa in reply to Maitreya’s questions. Parāśāra said that the world has appeared from Viṣṇu, it exists in Him, and He is the cause of its continuance and cessation. He is the world.¹ The world is produced from Viṣṇu, implies that Viṣṇu is the instrumental cause. He is the world reply to the inquiry as to the material cause.

¹ viṣṇoḥ sakāsāt saṁbhūtaṁ jagat tatraiva saṁsthitaṁ / sthitisaṁyamakartā’sau jagato’sya jagacca saḥ // VP, 1.1.35
commentator clearly states this. Thus, by this explanation of Viṣṇu as the cause of origination etc. of the world it follows that all is produced from Viṣṇu and all reposes in Him.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa repeatedly declares that the world is a creation of Viṣṇu. While glorifying Viṣṇu Dhruva said that this entire world was derived from Viṣṇu. As the widespread Nyagrodha tree exist in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is comprehended in Viṣṇu as its germ. Again as the Nyagrodha germinates from the seed, and spreads gradually into a huge tree, so the creation originating from Viṣṇu expands itself into the universe.  

It is also said here that for the purpose of creation etc. of the world Viṣṇu assumes the form of Brahmā, the creator. Viṣṇu, the preserver and Siva, the destroyer.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also maintains that Viṣṇu in the form of Brahmā is the instrumental (nimitta) cause of creation. Brahmā is invested with the rajas and as such is a dynamic agent. The main cause or the material cause is said here to be the energies of the objects, which are to be created. These

2. Cf. anena yataścaitaccarācarātmakam jagadityasya nimittapraśnasoytaram, jagacca sa ityupādānāprasānāsayottaram / Cf. Śridhara’s Commentary on Ibid.
3. bijādaṁkurasambhūto nyagrodhaṁ susamutthitah//
   vistāraṁca yathā yāti tvataḥ srṣṭau tathā jagat/ Ibid,1.12.67(b)-68(a)
4. srṣṭisthityantakaranad brahmaviṣṇusivātmikāṁ /
   sa samjñāṁ yātibhagavān eka eva janārddanā// Ibid,1.2.64
energies require only an instrumental cause to make them transform in this universe. It is said that there is no need of any other cause except the instrumental cause for imperceptible substances becoming perceptible. The commentator here comments that this agency of God as Brahmā consists merely in his presence.6

2. The Nature of the World:

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa maintains that the world is not something different from Viṣṇu. It is said that Viṣṇu as creator creates Himself, as preserver preserves Himself and as destroyer destroys Himself.7 Viṣṇu is also said to be the cause as well as the effect.8 There is nothing apart from Him. He is that, from which creation follows and also that which is created.9 This and such other sayings clearly show that, according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa the world is actually a manifestation of Viṣṇu. All the world consisting of earth, water, light, air, ether, all the senses and the mind etc.

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5. nimittamātram muktvākaṁ nānyat kiñcidavekṣyate/
   niyate tapatāṁ Śreṣṭha svasāktyā vastuvastutāṁ// Ibid, 1.4.50-52
6. ayamarthāḥ - śṛṣṭānāṁ sarge brahmā nimittamātram - parijñayavat sannidhimātreṇa
   sādhāraṇaṁkāraṇāmeva. Sridhara’s Commentary on Ibid. 1.4.51
7. srāṣṭaḥ sṛjati cātmānam viṣṇuḥ pālyaṁca pāti ca. /
   upasaṁhiyate cānte saṁharte ca svayaṁ prabhuh// Ibid, 1.2.65
8. yah kāraṇaṁca kāryaṁca kāraṇasyāpi kāraṇaṁ /
   kāryasyāpi ca yah kāryaṁ prasidatu sa no hariḥ // Ibid, 1.9.46
9. sa eva sṛjyaṁca svargakārta// Ibid, 1.2.68 (a)
are termed as *Purusa* or Spirit.\(^{10}\) The *Sruti* also says, “*purusa eva dir: sarvam*” (i.e., All this is indeed *Purusa*). This implies that according to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the world is not different from Viṣṇu and has no independent existence apart from Viṣṇu, for the origin and end of all is the Universal Spirit. As Viṣṇu is both *Bhūtesā* (lord of the created things) and *Viśvarūpa* (the universal form), he is therefore, one with all the created things. Creation is only the expansion of his power.\(^{12}\) The whole world is said to be pervaded by Viṣṇu- the planets, the stars, fire, water, air, earth etc. are all Viṣṇu.\(^{13}\)

These and similar other passages of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* undoubtedly prove that the world is not different from Viṣṇu. It is also said categorically that this whole world is but a manifestation of Viṣṇu and therefore, it is to be regarded by the wise as not different from, but as the same with themselves.\(^{14}\) Again it is said by Prahlāda in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* that gods, men, animals, birds, reptiles, all are but forms of one eternal

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10. *prthivyāpastathē tejo vāyurākaśameva ca /
    sarvendriyāntahkaranāṁ puruṣākhyāṁ hi yaj jagat // Ibid, 1.2.66

11. *Rg.V*, 10.90.2

12. *sa eva sarvavbhūtesō viśvarūpo yato’vyayah /
    sargādikāṁ tato’ṣyaiva bhūtasthamupakāraṇāṁ // VP, 1.2.67

13. Ibid, 1.12.64(b)-66

14. *etadvijānatā sarvāṁ jagat sthāvarajaṅgamaṁ/
    draṣṭavyamātmavad viṣṇuryatō’yaṁ viṣvarūpādhṛk// Ibid, 1.19.48
Visnu, though these exist as different from Him. Hence, one who knows this regards this entire existing world consisting of movable and immovable things, as identical with Him.\(^\text{15}\) Prahlāda also invokes Visnu as the beginning of the world from whom this world is not distinct. Everything of this world is woven as the warp and woof in Visnu.\(^\text{17}\)

The *Visnu Purāṇa* declares that there are two states of Brahmā: Mūrta (with form) and Amūrta (without form). Of these one is perishable (kṣara), the other, imperishable (akṣara). The imperishable is the Supreme Being; the perishable is the entire world.\(^\text{18}\) This entire world is nothing but the manifested energy of the Supreme Brahman. Just as the light of a burning in one spot is spread around, similarly the energy of God manifested as this world.\(^\text{19}\) As the light becomes stronger or feeble because of the nearness and remoteness of the objects, similarly the energy of the Supreme God is more or less intense in the beings that are less or more remote from Him. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva - the Trinity are the most

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15. devā manuṣyāḥ paśāvah pakṣivṛksasarīspāh/
   rūpametadanantasya viṣṇorbhinnamiva sthitān// Ibid, 1.19.47
16. namo’stu viṣṇave tasmai yasyābhinnamidaṁ jagat/
   dheyaḥ sa jagatāṁādyah prasidatu maṁāvyayaḥ// Ibid, 1.19.82
17. yatrotametat protaṅca viṣvanakṣaramavayayaṁ// Ibid, 1.19.83
18. dve rūpe brahmaṇastasya mūrttaṅcāmūrttameva ca/
   kṣaraṅkṣaraṇaḥ te sarvabhūteṣvavasthite// Ibid, 1.22.54
19. akṣaram tat paraṁ brahma kṣaraṁ sarvamidam jagat /
   ekadesaṁsthitasyāṅgerjotsnā vistāriṁ yathā // Ibid, 1.22.55
powerful energies of god; next to them are the inferior deities, then the attendant spirits, then men, then animals, birds, insects, vegetables each becoming more and more feeble as they are farther from the primitive source.\textsuperscript{20} In this way, though the world is in essence, imperishable and eternal, yet it appears as subject to birth and death because of \textit{upādhi} (adjunct).\textsuperscript{21}

The universe is again described as constituting the body of Viśṇu. Parāśāra said that all kinds of substances, with or without shape, here or elsewhere are the body of Viśṇu.\textsuperscript{22} In the context of creation also everything of this world is said to be created from the limbs of Brahmā who is only a form of Viśṇu, the Absolute.\textsuperscript{23} Similarly the four Vedas, the Upaveda (Āyurveda etc.), Vedānta, the \textit{Itihāsa} (Mahābhārata etc.), the Vedāṅga, the Dharmaśāstras promulgated by Manu and others, the Purāṇas, the Kalpasūtras etc., the poem and songs are the body of Viśṇu assuming the form of sound (\textit{sābda}).\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 1.22.57-58
\item \textsuperscript{21} tadetadakṣaram nityaṁ jaganmunivarākhilaṁ /
\texttt{āvīrbhāva tirobhāva jannma-nāśavikalpavat} // Ibid, 1.22.59; also Cf. Śrīdhara’s Comm. on it.
\item \textsuperscript{22} yāni mūrttānyamūrtāni yānyatrānyatra vā vacit /
\texttt{sānti vai vastujātāni tāni sarvāni tadvapuḥ} // Ibid, 1.22.85
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 1.22.59-60
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 1.22.82-83
\end{itemize}
3. All Things are Viṣṇu's Ornaments and Weapons:

True to the character of the Purāṇa as Pañcalakṣaṇa, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa speaks elaborately about the creation of the world. Various levels in the evolutionary process are described, viz., the immovable things, animals, gods, men etc. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also identifies the whole world comprising of perishable and imperishable, material and spiritual, with the ornaments and weapons of Viṣṇu.²⁵ Viṣṇu wears the pure and quality-less self as the Kaustubha gem. The Pradhāna resides in Viṣṇu's body as Śrīvatsya mark and Intellect (buddhi) abides in Him in the form of ms mace. Īśvara holds the two types of Ahaṁkāra - Tāmasika and Rājasika as his conch-shell and his bow. The necklace Vaijayantī, composed of five precious gems, is the aggregate of the five Tanmātras. Janāradana bears in his numerous shafts, the faculties both of action and of knowledge. The bright sword of Acyuta is holy wisdom, concealed at some point of time in the scabbard of ignorance. In this way self, Prakṛti, intellect, egotism, the elements, the senses, mind ignorance and wisdom, are all assembled in the person of Viṣṇu.²⁶

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²⁵. kṣarāksaramayo viṣṇurvibharttyakhilamīśvaraḥ /
    purusāvyākṛtamāṁ bhūṣaṇāstrasvarūpavat // Ibid, 1.22.64
²⁶. Ibid, 1.22.67-75
4. Is the World Real?

From our foregoing discussions it is clear that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa regards this world as a manifestation of Viṣṇu. It is also said here that the world is not different from Him. A question naturally arises here as regards the reality of the world. Is the world real? Or is it false?

So far as the question of reality of the world is concerned it appears that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa regards this world as erroneous and not real. It is true that the world is a creation of Viṣṇu or Brahman who is the cause. But that does not mean that the world should be a real creation. In this context we can take note of the view of Saṅkarācārya regarding the causality of Brahman.

In the view of Saṅkarācārya, material cause of a thing can be of two types, viz. pariṇāmi upādāna and the aparīṇāmi or vivarta upādāna. When a cause really transforms into an effect it is called pariṇāmi upādāna. As for example milk is transformed into curd. But in some cases the cause does not really transform into the effect even though it is regarded as a cause. For example, the rope is not transformed into a snake, but simply...
appears as the snake. This rope is regarded as the *vivarta upādāna* of the snake.\(^\text{27}\)

Saṅkarācārya and his followers maintain that *Brahman* becomes the cause of the world not through *pariṇāma* or transformation but through *vivarta* or appearance. *Brahman*, which is impartial and immutable, cannot really transform into the world. *Brahman* becomes the world without abandoning its real nature. That means *Brahman* simply appears as the world.\(^\text{28}\) This also implies that the world cannot be real. The theory of *vivarta* points out that the effect is false and is nothing but a misrepresentation of the cause. The cause and effect are non-different in essence and the effect has no existence without the cause. Hence, the world, which is nothing but an appearance of *Brahman* is not real and has no independent existence apart from *Brahman*. That is why, Saṅkarācārya maintains that the world is *mithyā* or false.

Now, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* the world is regarded as an effect of *Brahman* or Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is regarded as both the material cause as well as efficient cause of the world-process. It is also repeatedly mentioned that Viṣṇu is the only reality; there is nothing whatsoever other than Viṣṇu. So the question automatically arises whether this world is a real production of:

\(^{27}\) Vedāntasāra, P. 162  
\(^{28}\) Cf. Vedānta Paribhāṣā, P.
Viṣṇu. If the world is real, then it must be accepted that there is a real world other than Viṣṇu. This will jeopardize the non-duality of Viṣṇu. Moreover, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa categorically says that the world is of the nature of Viṣṇu; it is not different from Him. Hence, it follows that the world cannot be real. If the world appears, it must be through illusion. Hence, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa says that those who are ignorant perceive the world through delusive knowledge.²⁹ The goddess Earth while eulogizing Viṣṇu in the incarnation of Boar says that God is the only transcendental Reality; there is nothing except Him. God pervades this world by His greatness (mahimā).³⁰ All that is movable and immovable is the form of Viṣṇu who is knowledge in essence. Thus, the world is essentially of the form of knowledge. Those who are ignorant do not perceive this universe as of the nature of knowledge and conceive erroneously it as of the nature of the world.³¹ Hence, the world as we perceive it is, according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, a delusion. The commentator Śrīdhara explains the term ‘mahimā’ here as the influence of māyā.³² Therefore, the world of moving

²⁹. yadetad drṣyate mūrtametajjñānātmanastava /
    bhṛntijñānena pasyanti jagadrūparamayoginaḥ // VP, 1.4.39
³⁰. paramarthastvamevaiko nānyo'sti jagataḥ pateḥ /
    tavaisa mahimā yena vyāptametaccaracaram // Ibid. 1.4.38
³¹. jñānasvarūpamakhilaṁ jagadetadabuddhayaḥ /
    arthasvarūpāṁ pasyanto bhṛmyante mohasamplave // Ibid, 1.4.40
³². tavaisa mahimā māyaprabhāvaḥ. Śrīdhara’s Commentary on Ibid, 1.4.38
beings and non-moving things is but the projection of *māyā*. The host of objects is not real apart from the consciousness or self.\(^{33}\) Again in the part II of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* Parasara says that Viṣṇu is identical with knowledge; the manifold world is not real. Therefore, mountains, oceans and all diversities of earth etc., are the illusions of apprehension.\(^{34}\) Sridhara here comments that all these are the projections of *māyā* (*māyāvilasitāni*).\(^{35}\) That everything is false is clear from the statement that the world constituted of many differences is but the fruits of the tree of imagination (*saṁkalpataroh phalāni*).\(^{36}\) Parāśara also clarifies that the thing, which was not before and will not be afterwards, but remains in the present time, cannot be real. That which is real should have a uniform nature. How can reality be predicted of that which is subject to change and can resume its original character no more? Parāśara exemplifies this idea with the help of an example. Earth is transformed into a jar, the jar is divided into two halves, the halves are broken to pieces, the pieces become dust and the dust becomes atoms. Hence, the question is, which of these

\(^{33}\) akhilam jagat / jnanatmakam prapasyanti // VP, 1.4.41

\(^{34}\) jñānasvarūpo bhagavān yato’sau aśeṣamūttirna ca vastubhūtaḥ /

\quad tato hi ‘śailābdhidhardibhedān jānīhi vijñānavijñānbhitāni // Ibid, 2.12.38

\(^{35}\) Sridhara’s Commentary on Ibid.

\(^{36}\) yada tu śuddham nijārūpi sarvāṁ karmakṣaye jñānamapāstadoṣanā /

\quad tadā hi saṁkalpataroh phalāni bhavanti no vastuṣu vastubhedāḥ // Ibid, 2.12.39
transformations is the reality.\textsuperscript{37} So, it can be concluded that there is nothing real in this world as everything is changing. That the world is not real (\textit{asatyam}) is conveyed by Parāśāra as he says that only knowledge is truth, everything else is false (\textit{jñānāṁ yathā satyamasatyamanyat}).\textsuperscript{38} Parāśāra again says, just like Saṅkarācārya, that all the advices regarding the three worlds imparted in this Purāṇa are nothing but of empirical character (\textit{samvyava- hārabhūtaṁ}), there is no reality in them.\textsuperscript{39}

Creation and dissolution are not real as these are merely the mental projection of Lord.\textsuperscript{40} That the creation is \textit{māyā} is also hinted at the beginning of the Purāṇa. Maitreya questioned how the \textit{nirguṇa} and illimitable \textit{Brahman} could be regarded as the creator of the world. In reply to this query of Maitreya Parāśāra says that creation is due to the power of Viṣṇu, which is inconceivable. As heat is to fire, so is this power or \textit{māyā} to \textit{Brahman}.\textsuperscript{41} This corresponds to the Upaniṣadic saying –

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{mahī ghatatvam ghatataḥ kapālikā kapālikā cūrṇarajastato'nuḥ} / \textit{janaīḥ svakarmastimitātmanis'cayairālākṣyatā brūhi kimatra vastu} // Ibid, 2.12.41
  \item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{sadbhāva eśo bhavato mayokto jānāṁ yathā satyamasatyamanyat} // Ibid, 2.12.44(a)
  \item \textsuperscript{39} \textit{etattu yat saṁvyavahārabhūtaṁ tatrāpi coktaṁ bhuvanāśritaṁ te} // Ibid, 2.12.44(b)
  \item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{manasaiva jagat srsti samharanca karoti yah} // Ibid, 5.22.15
  \item \textsuperscript{41} \textit{nirguṇasyāprameyasya 'uddhasyāpyamālātmanah} / \textit{kathāṁ sargādikartṛtvam brahmaṇo'bhupagamyate} // \textit{sāktayaḥ sarvabhāvānāmācintyajñānaṁgaścarāḥ} / \textit{yato' to brahmānastāstu sargādyā bhāvaśāktayaḥ} // Ibid, 1.3.1-2
\end{itemize}
From our fore-going discussions it can be said that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa supports the view of Saṅkarācārya as regards the nature and status of the world. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa has mentioned in clear terms that the world is an illusory appearance of Viṣṇu. But Rāmānuja, the propounder of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, does not conform to this view. Unlike Saṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja has drawn extensively from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and has explained the verses of the Purāṇa in such a way so as to support his own view.

Rāmānuja has taken much pain to show that in the view of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the world is not false but it constitutes the body of Viṣṇu. Rāmānuja’s view is not without ground, because in our previous discussion we have already shown that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa sometimes maintains that the universe with all its varieties form the body of Viṣṇu. Rāmānuja also admits that the world is regarded as of the nature of knowledge in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. But in his view, this does not mean that...

42. SU, 6.8
43. Supra, P. 137
the world is false. For in this Purāṇa the world is described as the manifestation of the greatness of Viṣṇu who is endowed with all the auspicious qualities. Hence, it cannot be false.  

Rāmacandra also points out that the world is not non-different or identical with the nature of Brahman. It is true that to the query of Maitreya about the substance (yanmaya), of the world Parāśara replies that Viṣṇu is the world. But here also identity is not the intended meaning. Because here in ‘yanmaya’ the suffix ‘mayat’, is not used in the sense of ‘vikāra’ (cause). If by ‘mayat’ the material cause of the world is meant, then the next question of Maitreya, viz., ‘yatascetaccaracaram’ will be redundant. Hence, here ‘mayat’ refers to “prācurya” (abundance: tatprakrtavacane mayat. This entire world being His body has his nature in abundance. Hence, in the sentence ‘jagacca saḥ’, the apposition of the term jagat and saḥ (Brahman) only refers to the fact that the relation between Brahman and the world is that of the self and the body.  

44. asmin śastre parasya brahmano………………. Hrāntidarśanasambhavāt. SB, P. 224  
45. VP, 1.1.9  
46. tasyavikara, Pāṇinisūra, 4.3.134  
47. yanmayamiti mayadatra na vikārārtha; prthak praśnavaiyarthyāt. SB, P. 232.  
48. Pāṇinisūra, 5.4.21  
49. VP, 1.1.35  
50. jagacca sa iti samānādhikaraṇyām jagadbrahmanoḥ sarirātmabhāvanibandhanānīti niściiyate. SB, P. 233
Brahman and the world are identical then the contention that Brahman is the repository of all auspicious qualities will be contradicted. Brahman will then become the substratum of all inauspicious qualities. Hence, the samānādhyakaranya here means primarily the relation of the body and soul and not identity.

But what will be the meaning of the sentence ‘bhrāntyō-nāne paśyanty jagadrupam ayoym ah’? In this sentence it is clearly said that the world is nothing but the illusory perception of the ignorant. Rāmānuja explains this sentence in somewhat different sense. He says that it is the greatness (mahimā) of Viṣṇu that pervades everything. Hence, Viṣṇu who is of the nature of consciousness is the soul of this world. Illusion consists in the perception of the world as not the God.

In this way in Rāmānuja’s view the world constitutes the body of Viṣṇu, which is supported by the Viṣṇu Purāṇa also.

6. The Concept of Māyā and Avidyā:

The doctrine of māyā is very old. In the Rgveda and in the Upaniṣads the word māyā is very often used. Even the Mahāyāna Buddhists also advocate the doctrine of māyā. Though the doctrine of māyā is very

51. Ibid, 234

52. ata idamucyate - tavaisa mahimā ya sarvavyāptirīti. anyathā tavaisa bhrāntirīti vaktavyam. Ibid, 239

146
old yet it is mainly associated with the name of Saṅkara. In the Purāṇas, especially in the Vaiṣṇavite Purāṇas māya is described as a power of Viṣṇu and is treated elaborately in these Purāṇas. Māya, as a power of God, has been accepted in the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta schools of Rāmānuja etc. But it is Saṅkarācārya who has given a pivotal position to māya in his scheme of thought. The concept of māya occupies such an important position in this philosophy that the Advaita Vedānta system has come to be denoted as Māyāvāda in latter times. Let us now discuss the concept of māya as advocated by Saṅkarācārya.

Saṅkara used the terms māya and avidyā more or less synonymously. It is on the basis of this theory that Saṅkara and his followers establish the difference-less and quality-less Brahman as the only ultimate reality. Saṅkara regards māya as a power of Īśvara.53 Māya signifies a material causal potency, which accounts for the material world. Saṅkara describes māya as beginning-less and as consisting of three guṇas, viz., sattva, rajas and tamas. Its existence is inferred from its effects, i.e., the world appearance. It is said in the Vivekacudāmani,

\[
\textit{anādyavidyayā triguṇātmikā parāl}
\]
\[
\textit{kāryānumeyā śudhiyaiva māyā yayā jagadidam prasūyateli}
\]

53. BSS, 1.3.19
54. Vivekacudāmani, 110
Sankara further says that māyā is avyakta or indeterminable, as it is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both.\textsuperscript{55} Māyā cannot be described as distinct or as non-distinct from Brahman. Māyā cannot be different from Brahman, for if it were so dualism will be the result. Māyā is not non-different from Brahman, since identity is not possible between the conscious and inert. Māyā cannot be regarded as existent or real like Brahman, since it is contradicted later by right knowledge. Māyā is not absolutely non-existent or unreal like a sky flower since it is the cause of the world. It cannot be both existent and non-existent, since existence and non-existence are contradictory and as such cannot be the nature of the same thing. Hence, it is not possible to determine the nature of māyā in anyway. Accordingly, it is called anirvacaniya or indeterminable.\textsuperscript{56}

It has already been mentioned that Sankara uses the terms māyā and avidyā in almost identical sense. But some of his followers have distinguished between māyā and avidyā. Radhakrisnan points out that “when we look at the problem from objective side, we speak of māyā and when from the subjective side, we speak of Avidyā. Even as Brahman and Ātmā are one, so are māyā and avidyā one.”\textsuperscript{57} According to Vidyārṇya

\textsuperscript{55} Brahmasūtra, 3.2.3

\textsuperscript{56} Cf. Ibid

\textsuperscript{57} Indian Philosophy, S. Radhakrishnan, Vol. II, P. 587
Muni, *māyā* is the *upādhi* (adjunct) of *Īśvara* where pure *sātva* predominates; while *avidyā* is the *upādhi* of the *jīva* and in it impure *sātva* predominates.\(^{58}\)

*Māyā* has two functions or powers, viz., *āvaranaśakti* (power of concealment) and *vikṣepaśakti* (power of projection). By its power of concealment *māyā* or *avidyā* conceals the real nature of the self and by the power of projection it projects the manifold world in place of *Brahman*, who is one without a second.\(^{59}\)

In this way, in Saṅkarācārya's view, *māyā* is a causal power, which explains the world appearance. "*Māyā* is the energy of *Īśvara*, his inherent force, by which he transforms the potential into the actual world. His *Māyā*, which is unthinkable, transforms itself into the two modes of desire (*kāma*) and determination (*saṅkalpa*). It is the creative power of the eternal God, and is therefore eternal; and by means of it the Supreme Lord creates the world,"\(^{60}\) However, it must be remembered that in Saṅkara's view *māyā* is not a real power, it is *anirvacaniya*. It does not possess any well-defined character.

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58. *Sarvajñātma Muni's Contribution to Advaita Vedānta*, S. P. Bhattacharyya, P. 66
59. Ibid, P. 57
The Purāṇas speak of māyā as a real power of God. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa identifies māyā with avidyā. In the part V of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa while describing the birth of Śrī Krṣṇa Parāśara alludes to this māyā as Mahāmāyā and Yoganirdrā. Mahāmāyā is also termed as avidyā or ignorance as she causes delusion to the whole world. Explaining these terms Wilson says, "Yoganirdrā is the sleep of devotion or abstraction, the active principle of illusion, personified, and also termed Māyā and Mahāmāyā, also Avidyā or ignorance. In the Durgā Māhātmya of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa she appears as Devī or Durgā, the Sakti or bride of Śiva; but in our text as Vaiṣṇavī or the Sakti of Viṣṇu." Hence, Mahāmāyā or Yoganirdrā is the great energy of Viṣṇu, which causes illusion to this world. This Vaiṣṇavīmāyā or Mahāmāyā is also described as Durgā, Ambikā, Vedagarbhā etc., and is identified with Goddess Sakti.

This māyā is the cause of transmigration. Self, which is eternal becomes entangled in the worldly process of birth, death, old-age etc.

61. H.H. Wilson, The Vishnu Purāṇa, P. 400, 24n
62. yoganidrā mahāmāyā vaiṣṇavī mohitaṁ ṣayāḥ/ avidyāyā jagat sarvaṁ tāmāha bhagavān hariḥ// ye tvāṁ āryeti durgeti vedagarbheṁ biketi ca/ bhadreti bhadrakālīti kṣemyā ksemāṅkarīti ca// VP, 5.1.70,83
because of this māya. It is because of māya that the sense of 'I' (ahānā and mine (mama) is produced in the jīva and the jīva revolves in the whirlpool of selfishness and pride. Māya produces the notion of self which is actually the not self and causes bondage to the ignorant jīva.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa mentions avidyā as a power of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu has three powers viz. Parāsakti or the cit-śakti, Kṣetrajñāsakti and avidyāsakti. Parāsakti is the highest power of consciousness. Kṣetrajñāsakti sustains the selves and avidyāsakti creates this world. Avidyā conceals the self-pervasive Kṣetrajñāsakti and because of this avidyā the individual self becomes subject to the sorrows and sufferings of the world. This avidyā is actually the inability to understand the nature of the self.

Avidyā is also described in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa as consisting of five-fold nature, viz., tamas, moha, mahāmoha, tāmisra and anātāmisra. Tamas is the perception of the not-self such as the body, sense-organs etc as the self. Moha consists in the notion of property or possession and

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63. tvaṃmāyāṃmuḍhamanaso janma-mṛtyu jarādikān/ Ibid. 5.23.42 (a)
64. aham mameti bhāvo'atra yat prāyeṇābhijāyate/
   saṃsāramāturmāyāyāstavaitannītha ceṣṭitam// Ibid, 5.30.15
65. anātmaneyātmaviṣṭanaṁ yayā muḍho niruddhyate/
   asve svamiti bhāvo'atra yat puṃsāmupājāyate // Ibid, 5.30.14-15
66. visnusāktih para proktā kṣetrajñākhyā tathāparaḥ/
   avidyā karmasamājānāī trīyā śaktīrīṣyate// Ibid, 6.7.61
67. yayā kṣetrajñāsaktih sa veṣṭītā nṛpa sarvagā/
   saṃsāratāḥpānakhilānavāpnotyusantāṁ// Ibid, 6.7.62
consequent attachment to children etc. Addiction to the enjoyments of senses is called *Mahāmoha*. *Tāmisra* is impatience or anger. The fifth kind of *avidyā*, i.e., *andhatāmisra* consists in the fear of privation or death.\(^{68}\)

In this way the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes *māyā* as identical with *avidyā* and as the cause of all sorrows and sufferings of the *jīva*. In this sense *māyā* or *avidyā* is similar to Saṅkara's concept of *māyā* or *avidyā*. But there is a great difference also. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *māyā* is never described as unreal or *anirvacaniya*. It is a real power of Viṣṇu. As has been mentioned earlier *māyā* is identified with the Goddess *Sakti* or Durgā. Viṣṇu creates this world with the help of *māyā*, which is His own *Sakti*.\(^{70}\)

**7. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa on Māyā:**

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* *māyā* is described as *anirvacaniya* and is identified with *Prakṛti*.\(^{70}\) *Māyā* is here described as a power of God. Speaking about the creation of the world the *Bhāgavata* says that the creation is the result of *māyā*. Before creation only God existed. He desired

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68. tamo moho mahāmohastāmisro hyandhasānjñitah/

avidyā pañcāparvaiṣa prādurbhūtā mahātmahah// Ibid, 1.5.5;

*The Vishnu Purāṇa*, H.H. Wilson, n2, P. 30

69. Ibid, 5.1.70

70. sa vā etasya samāraṣṭuḥ saktih sadasātmikā/

māyā nāma mahābhāga yayedāṁ nirmame vibhuḥ// BP, 3.5.25; 7.9.21
to be many and accepted the three guṇas viz., sattva, rajas and tama: by his māyā.71 The Lord of māyā influenced Kāla (time), karman (action) and svabhāva (nature) by his māyā.72 Hence, māyā makes the One appear as many, the non-dual as dual.

In another place the Bhāgavata says that Brahman or God, who was alone before creation, became bifurcated in the forms of māyā and the jīva reflected in māyā. The former is known as Prakṛti and the latter is called Puruṣa.73 Māyā is also described as the power that creates, sustains and destroys the universe.74 Māyā is the cause of both vidyā (knowledge) and avidyā (ignorance).75

The nature of māyā, according to the Bhāgavata, is like the appearance of something even when there is no object. This universe of diversity is totally false but appears due to māyā.76 The word ‘māyā’ is derived from the root mā, which means to form or to build and means the

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71. sattvaṁ rajastama iti nirguṇasya guṇāstrayaḥ/
   sthitisarganirodheṣu grhitā māyayā vibhoḥ// Ibid, 2.5.18
72. kālāṁ karma svabhāvaṁca māyeso māyayā svayā/
   ātman yadṛchayā prāptum bibubhūṣurūpādade// Ibid, 2.5.21
73. Ibid, 11.24.3-4
74. Ibid, 11.3.16
75. Ibid, 11.11.3
76. Ibid, 10.70.3.8
capacity to produce forms.\(^{77}\) The \textit{Bhāgavata} also posits \textit{māyā} in the same sense. It is that power of God which manifests non-existent objects but is not manifested itself.\(^{78}\)

Just like Saṅkarācārya the \textit{Bhāgavata} also maintains that the one Reality appears as many due to \textit{māyā}. Just as the single moon appears manifold when reflected in the ripples of water, similarly one Supreme Being appears as many when reflected in \textit{māyā}.\(^{79}\) In some place the \textit{Bhāgavata} also says that the \textit{jīva} is non-different from God, but yet it thinks itself different due to \textit{māyā} and suffers all sorrows and pains.\(^{80}\)

Thus, though the \textit{Bhāgavata Purāṇa} conforms to the \textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa} in some points regarding the nature of \textit{māyā}, there are also a few differences as is clear from our foregoing discussions.

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\(^{77}\) S. Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Bhagavadgītā}, P. 41

\(^{78}\) \textit{rte'ṛthaṁ yat pratiyeta cātmanī/tadvidyādātmano māyāṁ yathābhaśo yathā tamah// BP. 2.9.34}

\(^{79}\) Ibid, 3.7.9-11

\(^{80}\) Cf. 4.29

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