CHAPTER - IV

HAYA
We have seen in the previous chapter that illusory knowledge has been a very knotty problem in Indian Philosophy and every school has discussed it from its own peculiar point of view in order to justify his conclusions in the field of epistemology. Hence there have grown up subtle dialectical controversies with regard to this problem. However, all the propounders of the different systems of Indian Philosophy unanimously accept the fact of illusion - they agree that often the conch-shell appears as silver or a rope appears as a snake. But they differ as regards the nature and cause of illusion. Vidyāranya has brought out these opposite viewpoints and has step by step eliminated them as inadequate for the explanation of illusory knowledge in a bid to establish the inexplicability (anirvacanīyatā) of the illusory silver.

The most ordinary instance of illusion is the appearance of a piece of shell as a piece of silver which is later on sublated by the knowledge that it is conch-shell and not silver. Now we face a very relevant and an important question i.e. what is the nature of the silver, which appears in the conch-shell? Is it real or unreal? If it is real, how can it be sublated in future? In case

---

1. 'No one can deny the fact that there are erroneous cognitions. Differences arise only in defining such cognitions.'

it is unreal, how can we explain the immediate certainty with which it is taken as silver during the whole spell of deception. The Advaitin's answer to this problem is that silver is inexplicable. According to him, the conch-shell appears as silver, because our perception is erroneous - we are under the spell of cosmic illusion (Māyā). In other words, the silver is a product of Māyā and it bears a unique relation to the shell. This relation is technically known as adhyāśa or superimposition.

Vidyārānya has introduced an interesting discussion on the nature of Māyā (which he has equated with Avidyā) when he says that illusory silver is the creation of Māyā, for the opponent says that it cannot be said to be a creation of Māyā, as it being removable by right knowledge (tattva-jñāna) is held to be the creation of Avidyā. The opponent urges that Maya is that which does not delude its abode and confirms to the desire of the agent, while Avidyā has quite the opposite characteristics. Now, in the case of nacre-silver, illusion does not depend upon the creator and being sublated by the knowledge of the nacre, also deludes its own abode and as such illusory silver is held to be the creation of Avidyā and not of Māyā. Nor can it be said that

1. वैक्रम च जयमायः।
2. नन्दा तवश्रादशत्वसाश्रयत्तमायः।
3. नन्दामण्यम्।

ibid.

VPS, p.133.

ibid, p.133.
because of the non-difference between Maya and Avidya, the illusory silver has been said to be a product of Maya, because of the difference seen between the two. In this connection, one point must be noticed that there are two schools among later Advaitins divided on the question whether Maya or Avidya are identical or different. The general trend of the Advaitins, including Shankara himself, has been to treat these two terms as synonymous and to distinguish between the two aspects of Maya or Avidya, which are called avaraṇa and vikṣepa, the former being the negative aspect of concealment and the latter, the positive aspect of projection.

The above-mentioned view regarding the nature of illusory silver is the representative of the other school, who draws a distinction between these two terms. Vidyāraṇya, however following the Vivaraṇa tradition of not making any difference between Maya and Avidya, criticizes the opponents' view. He says that the silver of illusory perception has been rightly said to be a creation of Maya, for it cannot be conclusively proved that in the case of Maya, there is non-delusion of the abode, Viṣṇu, in his incarnation as Rāma was deluded by his own Maya. Nor is it an invariable

1. B.S.S.B, I.iii.19.
2. VC, 113-115.
rule that nescience deludes its own abode for he, who sees
the reflection of a tree in water is not deluded and does
not doubt the uprightness of the tree. It may be said that,
because the tree on the bank is seen, there is no delusion.
But in that case, even for him, who performs a magical feat,
there is non-delusion, only because of his knowledge how to
get out of the effects of his magic. The nature of Māya
however, is to delude.¹ The spectators are deluded by the
feat. If indeed, they had the knowledge of the remedy, they
too would certainly not be deluded. It was said that Māya
does, while Avidyā does not confirm to the desire of the
Agent. But even this mode of distinction is not valid. In
the case of Māya, the agent is independent only in respect
of efficient causes such as spells and drugs. And that kind
of confirmity to desire is observed even in nescience. When
the eye is pressed with the finger tip, there is the
delusive perception of two moons. He who sees two moons has
perfect control over the efficient cause which originates
the delusion. Hence to distinguish between Māya and Avidyā
on the ground that they are to be defined differently is not
rational. A common definition can be stated and it is thus:
¹while being indeterminable, Māya or Avidyā is the cause of
obstruction to the presentation of the true and of the

¹. VPS, p. 135.
presentation of the erroneous.¹

Nor may it be said that the word 'Māyā' is applied only to real things like spells, drugs etc. since spells etc. are not called Māyā. It is only the seen magical feat that is termed Māyā, not the unseen spells etc., which are the efficient cause. The spell etc. which are real cannot be the material cause of the indeterminable magical feat. There must be assumed some beginningless, indeterminable material cause which is denoted by the word 'Māyā' and the application of the same word to the effect, the magical feat is intelligible because of the non-difference between the material cause and its effect.² Hence there is no point in distinguishing Māyā from nescience on the ground that the former relates only to real things.

Scripture in the text, 'Know Māyā to be the primal cause,'³ declares that Māyā is the material cause of all. In 'Again, at the end there is the removal of all Māyā,'⁴ nescience, which is removable by right knowledge is denoted by the word 'Māyā'. And there is the express mention of the oneness of Māyā and nescience in the traditional code, 'That, on whose entry into the heart, the yogin crosses over the extensive nescience, Māyā, obeisance to that immeasurable one, who is of the nature of knowledge.'⁵

¹. निष्कर्षवनीपते सति तत्त्वावधायः सतिर्विनिदेशते तवेन्तुत्तथा तव्यायस विषेयसघम
². ibid, p.134.
⁴. ibid, I.10.
⁵. तत्समवेदिति वितती हृदि यों मनोनिविषिते ।
   येण्या मायामायाय तस्म विद्यतने नमः ॥
   VPS, p.136.
In empirical usage, however, there is a distinction made between Māyā and Avidyā, but that is intelligible even in respect of one and the same thing as conditioned by different adjuncts. When prakṛti generates projection or when it confirms to the desire of the agent it is called 'Māyā' in empirical usage. When it obscures or when it is independent of the agent's will, it is known as nescience. Apart from this adjunct-conditioned distinction, there is no difference between Māyā and Avidyā.1

It comes to this then that Vidyārānya, following the Vivaraṇa tradition, does not admit any logical distinction between Māyā and Avidyā and as such he draws a conclusion that the silver (of illusory perception) is created by Māyā.2

---

1. ibid. p. 136.
2. तृप्ति दर्जति शास्त्रयमयं यद्यम-त्वमुपपन्नं। ibid.
We have seen that Vedântism wants to trace the entire world-process out of Nescience. Figuratively, it is described as the power of Brahman to manifest itself, it is the Śakti of Brahman. Indeed, in the immanent sense, we cannot think of Brahman and Māyā as separate principles of existence, because empirically Vedântism insists upon thinking the entire process as originating out of Brahman. In the second aphorism of the Vedânta philosophy, we have the conception of Brahman as the cause and substratum of the world-process. Nowhere in Vedântism have we any picture of the cosmos as different from Brahman. Empirically we cannot speak of Brahman and Māyā as separate existences. They are indissolubly related as the Reality and its power of manifestation. But the more we look deeply, the more we realise that this relation of Brahman with Māyā is rather imposed than inherent, for Being-in-itself does not admit of any possibility of being related to others. So this relation of Brahman and Māyā is not real, for in the Vedanta philosophy, nothing is Real, besides the identity of substance. Still so long as the empirical show of existence obtains, we must speak of some form of relation between Brahman and Māyā. Hence some ( Vâcaspati and his school ) assert that Avidyā

1. B.S.S.B, II.1.18.
rests in infinite conscious units. Jīva is its locus, Brahman its object. Avidyā is indefinable and does not abide in Brahman. That is eternal and Pure. A Jīva is Brahman limited by beginningless and indefinable Avidyā. Nescience cannot be thought of as existing in itself for all existence is ultimately an appearance to some percipient subject. And Vedāntism is very eloquent and definite in its refusal to grant an independently objective existence to Nescience, for that would establish the duality of substances—a position studiously avoided by Vedāntism. Avidyā must be thought of as existing somewhere and Vacaspati holds that it must be conceived as existing in Jīva. But it may be asked, what constitutes the being of a finite conscious existence? Surely, this finitude of conscious existence is due to the limitation of Avidyā, for consciousness has no inherent limitation of itself. But this explanation of Avidyā as resting in finite selves and finite conscious existences as due to the limitation of Avidyā may be said to involve a fallacy as both of them are interdependent. If Jīva and Avidyā are said to be beginningless like Brahman, on the analogy of the seed and sprout (bijāṅkuradrśṭānta), then Jīva can not be a reflection of

1. जीवार्थाचाप्याविद्या विचित्रतास्तव वर्णनीति
2. नैवेद्य द्वारात्माः सत्याः
3. ibid, I.1,4; p.126.
5. तथा — न जीवार्थाचाप्याविद्याः जीवार्थाचाप्याविद्याः जीवार्थाचाप्याविद्याः जीवार्थाचाप्याविद्याः

Bhāmatī, I.1,4, p.126.


Bhāmatī, I.4,22, p.421.
Brahman in Avidyā, because a reflection comes into existence after its original (bimba). If the Jīva is without an origin, the distinction between it and Brahman cannot be said to be due to Avidyā. Hence Brahman, devoid of origin and end, itself is the abode and object of Avidyā. To make the omniscient Loīd or Ātman experience, nescience is, to say the least, paradoxical. Sureśvarācārya's answer is that, since Avidyā is not metaphysically real, its location in and objectification of God involve no genuine difficulty. He argues that when Avidyā is treated as an entity (of course, empirically) there is none but God to whom it may be regarded as belonging—tadanyasambhayadiha! Indeed all actions and their accessories, real and unreal, have to be credited to Brahman so long as Brahman has not been fully realised. This view of Sureśvara found expression later in his disciple Sarvajñātman's work, the Samkṣepaśūrīrakam and attained celebrity in Advaita as the doctrine of the Vivaraṇa School. More exactly, this position may be formulated, by Vidyāranya in his Vivaraṇa-prameya-sāṃgraha, as follows: Avidyā is located in pure consciousness and at the same time, it has an inclination towards the Jīva, thus accounting for the popular view

1. NM, p.313.
2. BV, II.xii.20.
3. SS, I.iii.19.
that it is the Jīva and not God, who is ignorant!

Prakāśātmayati, a great exponent of the Vivaraṇa School, says that the above mentioned view of Vācaspāti is wrong, for there is no proof for it. The opponent argues that the experience "I am ignorant" proves that the nescience abides in a Jīva. This argument is false because if it were true, the experience 'I do not apprehend', would prove that a Jīva is the abode of manifestation of consciousness. The opponent argues that the internal organ appears to be conscious because of the relation of the internal organ and consciousness to the self even as iron appears to burn because of the relation of iron and burning to a fire. Prakāśātman argues that, similarly, it may be said that a Jīva has the experience "I am ignorant", because of the relation of internal organ and the nescience to the Self and not because of the relation of the internal organ to the nescience. The experience 'I am ignorant', can be explained without assumption of the relation of the internal organ and the nescience to the Self. Further the relation of the nescience to the Self in deep sleep is admitted, because the internal organ is merged in the causal nescience in this state. The opponent

1. तत्परं क्षणाभिषेकमार्गार्थं जीवं व्यापत्तियांज्ञापितनामस्यपि ।

VPS, p.171.

2. PPV, p.45.
objects that the nescience is assumed to abide in a Jīva or Self qualified by an internal organ, because its abiding in the nature of the Self is inexplicable. The objection is groundless, because relation to the nature of the Self is present in a Jīva or Self qualified by an internal organ also. If an internal organ, an insentient entity, were the abode of the nescience, it would be the abode of false knowledge and valid knowledge also. But it cannot be their abode. So it cannot be the abode of the nescience.

The opponent objects that the abiding of the nescience in the nature of Brahman is inconclusive Prakāśātman urges that the opponent’s view assumes two inconclusive elements viz. the abiding of the nescience in the nature of Brahman and its abiding in Brahman qualified by an internal organ. Prakāśātman’s view assumes one inconclusive element viz. the abiding of the nescience in Brahman or Ātman. So his view is better than Vācaspati’s view. In deep sleep Ātman has relation to the nescience. Bondage is the relation of Ātman to the nescience. Liberation is destruction of the relation of Ātman to the nescience. Avidyā abides in the self in bondage. It ceases to abide in it in release. So Ātman is the abode of Avidyā.

1. ibid.
2. न दश गणानाथ वै भ्रान्तिसम्युक्ता गैरिष्ट तत्सःक्षयूपस्वतानू। ibid.
3. अघुपापन्नुद्र गणानाथानानादनां संशोधनन्तःवस्त्र्वसायस्यायतानम् गैरिष्टः तात्मयत्वं रघु स्वम्मक्ष्यत्वम्। \ गैरिष्टः तात्मयत्वं रघु स्वम्मक्ष्यत्वम्। ibid.

Iṣṭa-siddhi, p.211.
Vidyūrṇya elaborates on Prokhātman's arguments and is of the view that the Self is the locus and content of ignorance. Ignorance does not require the difference of locus from content since it is not of the nature of an act. Its residence in and obscuration of one and the same self is intelligible, since it is an obscuring agent, like the darkness present in a room. It is objected that in the experience 'I am ignorant', avidyā abiding in ātman qualified by egoism is manifested and that Āvidyā abiding in ātman is not manifested. The objection is unsound, because Āvidyā and the internal organ (egoism) related to ātman are manifested in the experience, as iron appears to burn, because iron and burning are related to a fire, and not because the internal organ is the abode of Āvidyā. Otherwise there would be interdependence: the internal organ would be inferred from its relation to Āvidyā; the relation of Āvidyā to the internal organ would be inferred from Āvidyā abiding in ātman qualified by the internal organ. The relation of Āvidyā to ātman unqualified by the internal organ in deep sleep is admitted. Āvādya does not abide in ātman qualified by Āvidyā. It is objected that detached pure consciousness (caitanya) can not be the abode of Āvidyā and

1. नवन न्योसनानुजस साधने रूप, नंमात्रहरस्वालम्बयादानि।
   VPs, p. 164.

2. न तथा: कामात्मके जन्मित्व न रुपर पुलक्षं दृश्त: कर्मशमनमं।
can not be related to it and that consequently Ātman qualified by the internal organ is assumed to be the abode of Avidyā. The objection is groundless, since when Ātman qualified by the internal organ is the abode of Avidyā, Ātman also is the abode of Avidyā in that Ātman is included in qualified Ātman. Ātman is qualified by the internal organ and its relation to Avidyā. If another entity be said to be qualified by them it can not be the abode of Avidyā for it is insentient. Otherwise, false knowledge, true knowledge and liberation would abide in an insentient entity, because it is the abode of Avidyā. Hence Avidyā abiding in Ātman or pure consciousness being partial to a Jīva is said to abide in a Jīva. Avidyā abiding in Ātman does not compromise its detachedness. The difficulty in Avidyā abiding in Ātman arises from the fact that the opponent thinks of it as something real. It is indefinable. Its relation to Ātman also is indefinable. So there is no difficulty in Advaitavādin's view.

Bhāskara holds that the internal organ alone is the locus of ignorance. But if the internal organ be the locus, then there would be constant omniscience for the Self. This, indeed is not in the scope of what is experienced. And if the Self is non-omniscient, then since at some time it does not
know something, ignorance is certainly admitted therein. Bhāskara may think that though non-apprehension and illusory cognition be located in the Self, ignorance which of the nature of an existent is located in the internal organ. Even then, what is meant by ignorance? Is it merely what is other than knowledge? Or is it what is opposed to knowledge? On the first, it would be a defect like the film in the eye, jaundice etc. On the second, it would be removable by knowledge. But how is the removal of ignorance located in the internal organ by the knowledge located in the Self possible? Verily, Yajñadatta's ignorance of a certain thing is not removed by the knowledge thereof present in Devadatta. Therefore, the Self and not the internal organ is the locus of ignorance.

It may be urged that the location of nescience in the Self which is of the nature of luminosity is self-contradictory. But is the conflict in what is of the nature of luminosity being the locus of ignorance experienced or inferred? Experience presents no conflict. Ignorance is established by the witness-intelligence. And in the form "I am ignorant," the Self being the locus is experienced. Nor is the conflict inferred. The Self's manifestation is not the ground of its not being the locus of ignorance. The opponents of Advaita, who maintain that the Self

1. तत्सत्यनागदेशकारः ममात्मा तत्सत्यनागदेशकारः. ibid, p.172.
is manifested by originated cognition, have to admit that it is the locus of ignorance. Otherwise there is the contingency of omniscience at the instant the Self is manifested. The Self, it may be said is of a nature opposed to ignorance, because of luminosity, like a psychosis of the internal organ. But this inference is not valid, since there is inconstancy in respect of the manifestation that manifests ignorance. Nor may it be argued that the Self is opposed to conjunction with ignorance, since it is self-luminous, like the consciousness acceptable to the Prābhākāras; for, there is no example the consciousness being itself the Self.

If Brahman be the locus of nescience, how can there be for it omniscience, etc.? We have already said that the property of being the locus is only assumptive. There is oneness between the prototype and the reflection (according to the Vivaraṇa view); but though the darkness etc., present in an impure mirror be superimposed on the reflection, they do not destroy the fairness of the prototype. Similarly, though the Jīva be the locus of nescience, Brahman's omniscience would remain unhindered. Reason, we said, cannot account for the presence of Māyā in the Self. But still, as Viśvarūpācārya says, since nescience is well established, it cannot be denied.

1. ibid, p. 172.
2. प्रतिप्रतियोगीवर्णम् साधिं इत्यादि न तथे। ibid, p. 172.
Is Māyā located in the whole of Brahman? Or only in a part? It cannot cover the whole of Brahman, since the jñānīn's realization is of the Māyā-less Brahman. If it be held that Māyā occupies a part of Brahman, then does the space occupied by nescience belong to Brahman as its part? Is that spatial attribute real? Or is it an unreal superimposition? If it be real, Scripture which declares that Brahman is partless would be invalidated and Brahman itself would be finitized. If it be a superimposition, is it of the nature of the gross and subtle universe or of the nature of the Jīva and Īśvara? Is it to be characterized as time, as void or as Māyā? Or is it something other than these six categories? The spatial attribute of Māyā cannot be identified with the universe which is but a product of nescience. Nor can it be of the nature of the Jīva and the Lord who are conditioned by Māyā. Nor is it time which is a manifestation of nescience, nor śūnya which is mere void. It is not of the nature of Māyā, since, then there would result logical fallacies culminating in infinite regress. And as there is no other alternative, with nothing else can the spatial attribute be identified. Hence space cannot even be superimposed on the space-less Brahman. But from the point of view of empirical existence, Māyā must be regarded as residing only in a part of Brahman. The Veda declares that all beings, sentient
and non-sentient, constitute but a quarter of Brahman, three quarters remaining unobscured and self-effulgent. In the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa observes that he supports the entire universe by a portion of himself: "Pervading the whole world, He is ten inches in excess." And the Vedānta-sūtra tells us, "Brahman transcends the cosmos which is but a product, a modification." Though Brahman is partless and indivisible, it seems as if divided and possessed of parts. This is due to the superimposition effected by Māyā. Scripture answers him, who asks whether Māyā is located in the whole or a part of Brahman, in his own language, imposing particularities on the impartite Reality:

Vidyāranya refutes the view that Brahman cannot be the object of Avidyā. The opponent contends that Brahman is self-luminous and that therefore It cannot be the object of the nescience. He further contends that a jar is not said to be unknown, when it is cognized. Vidyāranya urges that the contention is false, because an object cognized through a means of valid knowledge is not an object of the nescience in that a pramāṇa terminates the nescience of the object. A jar perceptible, the witness-consciousness is nothing but consciousness. It is object-consciousness. It may be the object of nescience.

2. Śvet. Up., III. 14
3. B. S. IV. iv. 19.
The witness consciousness does not terminate the nescience, rather it cognizes the nescience and proves it. Otherwise, it cannot be proved to be opposed to all means of valid knowledge and reasonings. So it is said, "This nescience is opposed to all reasonings, without an object, incomprehensible by reason and veils self-luminous Brahman, as darkness veils the sun. The nescience is of the nature of ignorance. It is not comprehensible by reason. If it were so, it would be a real entity." That this incomprehensible nescience can veil the Self-luminous Atman is not questionable. No empirical self or object can transcend it. It is a false appearance due to Avidyā. It exists, as if it were the Supreme Self, disregarding a pramāṇa and reality. Yet it is not real. Experience cannot be denied. All reasoning is based on apprehension. If it were not based on apprehension, it would be baseless. Even Self-luminous Ātman is experienced as distinguished from the mind-body-complex or veiled by the nescience. So Brahman is the object of nescience or it veils Self-luminous Ātman. It does not veil an empirical Self, which is an unreal entity. In spite of opposition to all evidences and reasonings, we accept the existence of ignorance, because it is revealed by the Sāksīn. Māyā does not brook inquiry, as darkness the Sun. And not brooking inquiry is an

1. VPS, p.175.
2. ibid, p.176.
3. ibid.
ornament to and not a defect in nescience. Thus, it is settled that Māyā, while residing in the Self, obscures it also.

(c) 'Is Ajñāna a Positive Entity?'

Now, comes up the very vital problem of Advaita Vedānta for which its masters have produced volumes of arguments for its valid establishment. Padmapāda, Prakāśātmayati and more so Vidyāranya, have taken up their pens for the same purpose and handed down a rich legacy of their discursive analysis to later writers of Advaita dialectics. The problem concerns itself with the nature of ajñāna, the material cause of adhyāsa. The theory of the presence of ajñāna as the material cause of all false knowledge of multiplicity has been supported with the help of valid proofs by them. But the more vital issue raised and solved by them is about the nature of ajñāna, which they postulate. The issue becomes a perplexing one when one goes on to analyse the grammatical meaning of the word, which makes it a negative entity (jñānābhavarūpam). In Advaita Vedānta, it is not such an entity but a positive one (bhāvarūpam). The implication of it is that ajñāna is not

1. ibid, p.175.
2. VPS, p. 176.

Also see, "या ग के यह दुविशिष्टता संबंधित निर्देशनी का माया अ भूषण हो के, भूषण न हो।"

Bhāmatī Prasthāna Tathā Vivaraṇa
Prasthāna Kā Tulnātmaka Adhyayanā p. 211.
a mere absence of knowledge, a negative concept, as the Viṣistādvaitins hold, but it is a state preceding, but terminated by right knowledge.¹

Prakāśātmayati is of the view that all objects whether known or unknown are revealed by the Śākṣin.² This cue has been the main thesis of all the later developments as in Vidyāraṇya’s writings. The nature of ajñāna, too, is such a development. Vidyāraṇya has shown that the object, the substratum and ajñāna are all revealed by the same sākṣicaitanya in experience like ‘I am ignorant’.³ The sākṣicaitanya reveals ‘I’ as the substratum and the whole range of objects (sarvaviṣaya) as the object of such ignorance. Hence in such places ajñāna as a positive category is revealed as existing in a substratum regarding an object. But all these revelations are the work of the sākṣin. This sākṣicaitanya however, is not the remover of ajñāna for which the vṛttijñāna of the antahkaraṇa is required. In ajñāna there is no such vṛttijñāna but the only vṛtti of the antahkaraṇa or mind is with regard to Avidyā itself. Thus all objects, whether known by the vṛttijñāna or unknown as such, are revealed by the sākṣicaitanya whence it follows that ajñāna like the vṛttijñāna is a positive

2. तद्व वस्तु भावतया अभावतया वा ताक्षिकताय विभ्यं र्य। PPV, p. 84
3. VPS, p. 55.
entity but unlike it, an indeterminate one revealed by and only by the Sākṣīcaitanya. The Avidyānivṛtti is not antagonistic to Avidyā.

Thus, Vidyāranyā has tried to establish the view of Advaita Vedānta that ajñāna as a positive entity is not the object of any or other of the pramāṇas but should be taken as the principia eterna of all our false knowledge and as revealed only by the witness - consciousness (sākṣī-caitanya) hence it is said by the Advaitins that ajñāna is only Sākṣī-vedya.1 This is the pedestal of attack of advaitins and Vidyāranyā has elaborately shown the points of attack from this pedestal.

Now one may doubt that as all objects, whether known or unknown, are revealed by the Sākṣīn, there remains no utility of any pramāṇa as sources of knowledge.2 But this is going too far. To deny the validity of the sources of knowledge is almost to court scepticism, which but for the ever-accomplished positive fact of consciousness, would have been the consistent goal of those that pursue the course. Of course, we cannot make any transcendent use of them. But this does not necessarily indicate that they are quite useless. In fact, they are useful so long as

1. जसमन्नेते नु साक्षीवेद्ये ज्ञानमत्रांवः ।
2. ibid, p.57.

VPS, p.54.
empirical consciousness has a hold upon us. The protest introduced by the above opponents has a meaning in that way. It removes the false notion that the absolute truth is open to the ordinary sources of knowledge. Vidyāranya further says that there is no doubt that no proof can be forwarded to determine the existence of Avidyā as the scope of all proofs is limited to cognitive knowledge only. Avidyā is on the other hand not cognisable. Doubt regarding the existence of Avidyā is also impossible for the similar reason. But doubt may arise regarding the nature of Avidyā such as its being positive, endless etc. and proofs of perception, inference etc. are forwarded to determine its above mentioned nature.

Arguing like this, Vidyāranya by taking the help of perception, establishes the positive nature of ajñāna. He says that it is impossible to have perceptual knowledge of the mere absence of knowledge as the Naiyāyikas hold, for the two are contradictory. We have perceptual experience in the form, 'I do not know', 'I do not know either myself or others'. Apparently this is an experience of ajñāna.¹ Now the question is whether the ajñāna referred to here is of a positive nature or of a negative character. The

---

1. ibid, p.53.
Advaitin's contention is that the perceptual cognition in question does not refer to a negative concept or mere absence of knowledge but indicates a positive character. The argument adduced in support of this contention is that knowledge itself cannot know its absence in so far as the two are incompatible. That is to know its absence the knowledge itself will have to be known first. If the knowledge of the object whose absence is to be perceived is brought within consciousness, how can at the same time its absence too, be asserted.

It cannot be said that the cognition of the non-existence of knowledge is known through a pramāṇa other than perception. For in the judgement 'I do not know myself as well as others', ajñāna is known to be present at the time of cognition. If the individual is questioned whether he knows, he would reply, 'I do not know'. Hence the knowledge generated by other pramāṇas is opposed to the non-existence of knowledge.

This difficulty does not arise if ajñāna is considered as a positive entity. What is positive in character can be known by its own nature, that is without the knowledge of the counter-correlate. It is only a negative entity that presupposes the knowledge of the
counter-correlate but not that which is positive as it could be described by its very nature (svarūpān). In fact there is the cognition of ajñāna in its positive form in such judgements as, 'I am ignorant'. 'I am foolish'. Hence even in the judgement 'I do not know anything', what is referred to is ajñāna which is positive in character and not the mere absence of knowledge whose cognition is impossible.¹

In this way, Vidyāraṇya has repudiated the view of the Nyāya - Vaiśeṣikas² by showing that in experiences like, 'I am ignorant', there cannot be any absence of knowledge for the simple fact that the knowledge of 'I' (dharmān) at least, is present there. Even such knowledge is not an inferential one as some hold by the admission of the absence of any pragmatic action in deep slumber, for the fact that in such a state the self as possessing any function is unrevealed and hence no inferential knowledge of such state is possible.

Vidyāraṇya has also admirably established ajñāna by an inferential proof which makes it a positive entity existing in the same locus as jñāna. His syllogism tries to prove that all means of valid knowledge being the

¹. S.D. Vāda 39. See also Śrī-bhāṣya, p.76.
². VPS, p. 53-54.
means of knowledge of a previously unknown object
must needs presuppose a positive entity existing before
them as the cause of such previous ignorance such a
positive entity which is ājñāna, is a necessary pre-
condition of valid knowledge of an object - the object
being veiled by this previous entity which is dispelled
at the first touch of jñāna being founded in the same
locus viz. the Self. It is never a negative entity as
the previous non-existence (prāgabhāva) of knowledge
but a positive one having a separate existence in the
same locus viz. the Self. The middle term (hetu) which
is postulated here as 'being the means of knowing a
previously unknown object' is supposed to make the
inference valid by the known example of a flicker of
lamp first seen in darkness.¹

This inference of Vidyārāṇya which takes light
and darkness as two positive entities, each existing
separately and not due to negation of the other
establishes on solid foundations the positive and
separate character of ājñāna. This is a principle
always in conflict with jñāna but is nevertheless the
principle of all false knowledge of multiplicity in the

¹. VPS, p.58.
empirical world. Hence, Vidyāraṇya establishes on valid inferential grounds the existence of such a positive principle, having for its locus the same self which is the locus of knowledge, but acting as the veil of the object of valid knowledge to be dispelled by the latter. Here one aspect of ajñāna viz. āvaranajākti has been shown. But the other aspect viz. vikṣepaḥākti by which a false projection is created for illusory knowledge of the Real has not been hinted at in the inference. We can, however, take it to refer to this aspect of ajñāna as well for the fact that valid knowledge of an object, like the first flicker of a lamp not only dispels the unknowability of the object but also the false projections upon it due to ignorance as due to darkness. This inferential proof, however, hinges upon the positive character of darkness which is disputed by some schools of Indian philosophy. But Advaita Vedānta does not dispute that; on the contrary, it establishes with great labour this view. The metaphysical necessity of the positive character of darkness and ignorance is a mere deep-rooted problem in Advaita Vedānta. The whole ontology of the Māyā doctrine revolves round this central point.

1. VPS, p.68.
Vidyāranya has rightly pointed out that although the inference regarding the positive existence of ājñāna appears on the face of it untenable because of its use of the expression - Svaviṣayāvaraṇa, meaning that ājñāna is the veil of the object of knowledge which is not so for ājñāna is the veil of consciousness revealing such object. The false projections (vikṣapa) created by ājñāna have their locus in consciousness which is thus veiled and made to appear as the viṣayā. The external object, being the creation of ājñāna out of the false projection by which only the consciousness delimited by it is veiled, therefore appears as being the object of the veil of ignorance which in fact, it is not.

The inference is intended to prove that all knowledge is preceded by a positive state of ignorance, which is removed as soon as knowledge arises. This state of ignorance is not the same as that of prior non-existence of knowledge. The analogy of the light of a lamp lit in the dark place explains the point clearly. The objects are hidden by darkness and the light of a lamp only, makes them manifest by removing the āvaraṇa viz. the darkness. Similarly ignorance, like darkness

1. VPS, p.69.
is a positive entity in the sense that it hides the true nature of things. With the onset of valid knowledge, the ignorance is removed when the true nature of the things becomes revealed.

Vidyārāṇya has exposed the opponents’ charges that even if ajñāna be recognized as being responsible for the false projection of external objects though it really acts as a veil upon consciousness, the further complications of the non-cessation of the material cause (viz. Ajñāna) in spite of the cessation of the knowledge of false projection and consequential corollary of its not being a material cause of adhyāsa force themselves upon us. Vidyārāṇya has therefore analysed the problem of ajñāna as the material cause of adhyāsa and has shown that true knowledge puts a stop to the vikṣepa as well as the material cause itself. He is very analytical in considering the problem for he shows that there come about the horns of a dilemma to an Advaitin who recognizes ajñāna as the material cause of adhyāsa. If he does not recognize the cessation of the material cause itself along with its false projections by true knowledge, then the question of salvation which is the complete cessation of ajñāna becomes a meaningless hypothesis; on the other hand, even if he recognizes its cessation, he has to postulate

1. विष्णुपादपादानिनिवर्तमणि ।

WFS, p. 68.
infinite pieces of ajñāna to explain fresh false cognitions even after the cessation of one for the fact that the cessation of one piece of ajñāna cannot account for the ultimate salvation. Thus by postulating an endless series of ajñāna or by postulating that ajñāna is not the material cause of adhyāsa, the Advaitin becomes a topsy-turvy dogmatist. Prakāśātmayati has met such arguments by saying that even if the vikṣepas are said to be exterminated due to true knowledge and lose themselves into their cause (ajñāna), there is no legitimate ground for thinking that the cause remains even after the true knowledge has appeared. This argument has been elaborated by Vidyāranya by an inference in which he has shown that the true knowledge, when appears as a posterior category exterminates all previous false categories. Secondly, he has tried to show that to explain the reappearance of ajñāna after the destruction of one manifestation of it, it does not do any harm to the advaitist position if we recognise different empirical manifestations of ajñāna for different pieces of false cognition which we have as springing from one fundamental ajñāna (mulājñāna)!

Vidyāraṇya has again brought in charges against

1. VPS, pp. 68-69.
the Vedāntic theory of the positive nature of ajñāna. These charges have been raised by opponents who have tried to justify that the derivative meanings of the negative particle (nāma) can make ajñāna something other than what the Vedāntin has established. Ajñāna has been described by the opponents as the absence of knowledge (jñānabhāva), antagonism to knowledge (jñānavirodha) or something other than knowledge such as the impressions of false knowledge. Vidyārānya has replied that none of these alternatives is included in the concept of ajñāna in as much as the instances of such alternatives cannot explain satisfactorily the non-revelation of Brahma-svarūpa, which is the effect of ajñāna. In deep slumber (susupti) for example, the non-revelation of Brahma-svarūpa cannot postulate that it is due to any of these alternatives, for such non-revelation is neither due to the intrinsic nature of Brahman which is self-luminous nor due to its distinction from Jīva which is contrary to the Upanisadic teaching of unity. Again it cannot be due to any pratibandha or hindrance of false knowledge which is absent in susupti or of its impressions which are incapable of being hindrances or of absent of knowledge that is accidental in ever present revelation.

---

1. ibid, p.71.
2. नाद्यः, प्रेतमात्रः स्वप्नोष्कस्तत्वात्। न दिवसीयः, तत्वसमीयः रक्षते। VPS, p.72.
of Brahman or any action or its impressions. The last point of the hindrance of action is developed by Vidyāraṇya who shows that the karmic hindrance will either make the Brahman always non-revealed as a result whereof karmas themselves will not be revealed or will make that part of the self revealed by which they themselves are illumined and the other part unrevealed as a result whereof a mermaid like hypothesis will have to be accepted. Hence Vidyāraṇya has repudiated ably all other alternatives to positive ājñāna as being possible ones to explain the non-revelation of Brahmasvārūpa.¹ He has further shown that this positive ājñāna is free from all such charges for the fact that it is of immediate experience as being revealed by the witness-consciousness, but acting as a veil upon the revelation of the other aspects of consciousness viz. delimitation by the object etc. This positive ājñāna as being revealed by Sākṣin is a fact of individual experience whereas the karmic hindrance is either indirectly experienced if it is at all a hindrance which it is not, because of the nature of the karmas which are all impressions in the last analysis.

Vidyāraṇya has still further weighed the charges

¹ Ibid, pp. 72-73.
of some opponents who postulate both difference and non-difference (bhedābhedavādins) in all kinds of existents and who, therefore do not recognize such a positive ajñāna as the creator of all empirical life and not negated till such life exists. On the other hand, they hold that false knowledge or absence of knowledge or their impressions are sufficient reason for the false cognitions of our empirical life and do not make it unreal for the fact that there is not only non-distinction from Brahman but also distinction from It which is also true. Vidyārāṇya has ably refuted these charges and has shown that the dualistic realism negating ajñāna and admitting a kind of mithyājñāna fails to establish its own issue for the fact that such mithyājñāna between the anātman and Ātman turns out to be a true knowledge due to the metaphysical position of dualistic realism. This kind of mithyājñāna is not false for making the distinct as non-distinct because of the fact that distinction and non-distinction are both true. He has refuted such mithyājñāna of the Bhedābhedavādins by taking a familiar example of two species of cow viz. Khaṇḍa and Munḍa. He has shown that even in the negating

1. VPS, p.75.
judgements like 'this is not a khaṇḍa-cow', but a 'munda-cow', there is invariably mutual reality of both distinction and non-distinction of the genus 'cow' from both these species. Even the negation of one (khaṇḍa) in the genus (cow) by another species (munda) cannot account for falsity in as much as the character of the genus (gotva) as modified by one species is not the ground of such negation but such character as modified by the other species. This argument of dualistic realist applies equally to the other side, that is, the absence of falsity in the Jīva which is the ground of both kinds of revelation - as the not-self as well as the self. Thus the ground of negation of one, say the not-self, is not Jīva appearing as such but as the other. But such negation is impossible here, for Jīva is the ground of both the revelations of the not-self and the self. Thus false knowledge of the Self and the not-self becomes unjustifiable in the tenets of the Bhedābhedāvādin.

In this way, Vidyāranya has taken great pains to elaborate this theory by showing that ajñāna is a positive entity responsible for all false, superimposed knowledge of our empirical life.

1. VPS, pp. 76-80.
2. ibid, p. 53.
Sankara describes ignorance as having two powers: the power of concealment (āvaranaśakti) and the power of projection (vikṣepaśakti). It appears that these two powers are the other names given to the subjectivity and objectivity of ignorance. From the statement, "what is Māyā from the objective side, is Avidyā from the subjective side," again it seems that keeping in mind the objectivity and subjectivity of ignorance the Post-Sankara Advaitins give them the names Māyā and Avidyā. Avidyā and Māyā represent the subjective and the objective side of one fundamental fact of experience. It is called Avidyā since it is dissoluable by knowledge but the subjective series is called Māyā since it is co-eternal with the supreme personality.

Though Śaṅkara treats Māyā and Avidyā as synonyms, yet in the beginning of his adhyāsabhāṣya he clearly indicates the objectivity and subjectivity of ignorance, which the Post-Śaṅkara Advaitins call Māyā and Avidyā. Hence the two schools are not opposed. Whether Māyā is called the cosmic and positive power of projection and Avidyā - the individual and negative ignorance or Māyā and Avidyā are treated as synonyms and as having two aspects of projection and concealment, the fundamental position remains the same. Further, both the

1. R.M.Sharma : Vedāntaśāra, p. XXXI.
3. See B.S.S.B. I.iv.3.
4. V.C.145.
schools agree that Ṛṣṭvara is ever free from the negative aspect of ignorance and that in Him, Sattva preponderates. Hence whether concealment is called Avidyā or Tūlā-vidyā or projection Māyā or Mūlā-vidyā, the difference is only in words.

The empirical order so long as it holds and it obtains from eternity - is an order of existence on the background of Brahman. The possibility of Brahman appearing as Jīva, the existence of Māyā or Avidyā and Brahman as covered up by Māyā (in the sense of Ṛṣṭvara), these three elements are mutually dependent upon one-another. Hence to the Vedāntins - the saṃsāra - the process of becoming (the manifold existence) exists in reflection. Brahman-in-itself exists transcendentally and through Avidyā, It is reflected as Jīva, Itself being the primary Jīva when It is regarded as the support of Nescience. The possibility of such a reflection lies in the prior existence of Avidyā which can fitly be called the principle through which Brahman appears. It must be marked that the existence of Māyā does not affect the nature of Brahman and strictly speaking, it is one that does not appear before it - its appearance and reality are true to the Jīva which can perceive it as a principle, but not to Brahman, though it seems to have its support therein.
The main difference of the two lines of thought indicated earlier lies in the conception of Jīva. Vācaspati has characterized Avidyā as centred in Jīva making Brahman its object and Jīva co-exists with Avidyā. The adherents to the Vivarana school, including Vidyārānyya, regard Avidyā to be resting in Brahman, keeping away from view its transcendent nature. Vācaspati insists upon the co-existence of Avidyā and Jīva from eternity. Hence the charge of begging the question has been hurled at his door. The other school is free from this charge in as much as it makes consciousness the resting ground of Nescience and defines Jīva as the reflection of consciousness through Avidyā. Moreover, the distinction between the schools is necessarily involved in their conception of Māyā as many or one; Vācaspati accepts the former alternative and so he must conceive it to be based in Jīva rather than in Brahman. The other school regards it as one and so it is conceived as based in Brahman. It must be noted that Vedāntism fills up the gap between transcendental and empirical existences by Avidyā.

One may, however observe that the question of Avidyā's locus need not be unduly pressed. Being non-metaphysical or unreal, it cannot and need not have a real residence. Of course, it appears to be located in the Jīva who perceives the objective manifold. But then Jīva is essentially one with the pure Spirit
and, so it is equally true to maintain that Jīva or Brahman is the locus of Avidyā.

A doubt may be raised as to how we can even empirically conceive pure conscious existence co-existing with Nescience, for they seem to be quite contrary in nature.

We should note here that Vedāntins do not make this affirmation in the objective sense. Transcendently there is nothing else in the integrity of Being and so long as we do not perceive this integrity of existence, we may conceive the co-existence of consciousness and Nescience just as we can quite conceive the existence of light side by side with darkness. The charge that self-luminous substance is quite contrary to Avidyā in nature and as such cannot simultaneously exist with it, is not to the point, for that which destroys Nescience can be regarded as quite opposite to it in nature, but not that which reveals it. When ignorance is removed by the modification of mental consciousness in the way expressive of the subject we have a subsequent state introduced in us viz. the removal of ignorance by the particular modification. The state of our being as consciousness is no longer expressive of ignorance but of the destruction of it. The nature of consciousness is to express or illuminate. It matters not whether it expresses the existence of Nescience or the
destruction of it. Empirically speaking, consciousness cannot be said to be contradictory to and thus destructive of Avidyā. Really the contradictory opposite of Nescience is not consciousness in integrity but consciousness as modified by the reflection of identity. From the standpoint of Vedāntic absolutism the affirmation or denial of Nescience has only an empirical significance. It does not affect the transcendent nature of existence in the least.