CHAPTER XI

MAYA

1 The Importance of the Concept of MAYA

According to Advaita, reality is non-dual. It is Brahman, or Atman. But common experience presents us a world of duality. If non-duality is the reality, duality is only an appearance. How is it that the reality which is non-dual appears as the realm of duality? The answer to this is maya. Theistic Vedanta also uses the term maya. But it uses the term in the sense of a real power belonging to God by which he engages in real cosmic activity like creation. But Advaita takes the word in its literal meaning — 'that' (vā) 'which is not' (mā). Thus maya is that which, while not existing, produces the appearance of experience. While duality is not real, it appears to be real. Such is the work of maya. Hence in Advaita, maya is the principle which explains how the non-dual reality appears as the manifold scheme consisting of Isvara, the individual souls, and the physical world of diverse objects and events. As such, the concept of maya is of vital importance in the philosophy of Advaita. This Chapter will be concerned with the treatment of maya as Advaita understands it in the Bhagavata. Although the theistic conception of maya frequently occurs in the Bhagavata, the reader is often led from it to the Advaita conception of it — the
the indeterminable principle by virtue of which the non-dual reality appears as many.

2 **Māyā as the Cause of Appearance**

It is emphasised in the Bhāgavata that the Lord in reality is without forms and attributes, and it is only through māyā that diversity appears.

In the sixth skandha, king Citraketu expresses the view that everything is Brahman only. Even the gods try to outshine one another on account of māyā, which create the feeling of duality in them. Also the non-reality of the world is emphasised in them. Also the non-duality of the world is emphasised in the same verse on the ground that the creation of the world etc., are only due to māyā.

\[
\text{tava vibhavaḥ khalu bhagavan jagadudayasthitilayādīni visvāsājastāḥ'sāṁsāstatra mṛṣā spardhante pṛthagabhimatyā}
\]

\[(VI. 16. 35)\]

The truth that duality is superimposed on the non-dual reality is again expressed through the teachings of Śiva to Parvati in the same skandha of the Bhāgavata.

\[
\text{avivekakṛtaḥ pumso hyarthabheda ivātmani guṇadoṣavikalpaśca bhideva srajvat kṛtaḥ}
\]

\[(VI. 17. 30)\]
That is, just as a rope appears to be a garland or a snake, just as in the dream state one experiences pleasant or unpleasant objects, in the same way, in the Self there is the superimposition of duality, characterised by happiness, misery, etc.

Hiranyakasipu consoles his relatives who are lamenting over the death of Hiranyaksha thus:

\[ \text{tata\'h socata m\'a yuyam param catmanameva ca} \]
\[ \text{ka atma kah paro vatra svyah parakya eva va} \]
\[ \text{svaparabhinnivesena vinajnanena dehinam} \]

(VII. 2. 60)

Here he expresses the truth that grief comes from attachment, and attachment is rooted in a sense of distinction. In reality there are no two objects. So the truth is that the notion that one is distinct from another and the notion that one's possession is distinct from that of another, etc., are born of ignorance alone. And this avidya is the root-cause of all pain. When the blissful Self is the true nature of all, where is the question of pain, misery etc.? The sruti text \text{svam khalvidam brahma}, which says that everything is Brahman alone is echoed in the above verse.

Only when one mistakes the body to be the Self, there arises the notions such as 'I am this' and 'not that' etc.
Actually such notions do not correspond to reality. This is because the Reality is one only without a second. And that which gives rise to the notion of difference is the work of māyā. This is what Prahlāda taught his agura friends. And he worshipped Viṣṇu, who is the Lord of that māyā too.

The truth that duality is caused falsely by māyā is expressed by Prahlāda in the seventh skandha:

He expounds this truth explicitly in the following verse.

pratyagātmasvarūpeṇa dṛṣṭārūpeṇa ca svayaṁ
vyāpyavyāpakanirdesyo hynirdesyo'vikalpitaḥ
kevalānubhāvanandasvarūpaḥ paramesvāraḥ
māyayāntarhitaisvarya Īyate guṇasargayā.

(VII. 6. 22-23).

The truth is that the ultimate reality is one only. And this Supreme Reality, which is knowledge and bliss, projects the universe consisting of sattva, rajas, and tamas elements through māyā, or avidyā. The distinction of the seer and the seen, the experient and the objects of experience are presented by māyā. The Self which cannot be designated by any term is designated as seer, etc., due to māyā. It is unitary, yet it appears as diverse objects due to māyā.
In the seventh chapter of the same skandha, Prahlāda further teaches his friends the nature of ātmā and anātmā, the truth he learned from the revered Nārada. Therein he establishes that the difference is not at all real. Moreover, he says that even the very transmigratory existence is unreal (apārtha), being based upon ajñāna. This can be equated with svapna or dream. Just as the experiences of dream appear to be real until one wakes up, so also the samsāra seems to be real as long as ajñāna continues.

etaddvāro hi samsāro guṇakarmanibandhanah
ajñanamūlo'pārtho'pi pumāḥ svapna ivesāyate
(VII. 7. 27)

Māyā is responsible for presentation of duality in the place of the non-dual reality. Living beings see things through buddhi. And it is so constituted as to see only difference. It is because it is a product of māyā. So difference is non-real as it is created by the mind, in a dream. Thus samsāra, too, is ultimately shown to be a product of ajñāna.

Only the ignorant ones see multiplicity while the wise ones do not. Non-duality is the truth, and duality is caused by māyā. This fundamental truth of Advaita is again set forth in the tenth skandha of the Bhāgavata. The devas and the other gods pray to the Lord when he had taken the form of the child
of Devaki thus.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tvameka evāsyā sataḥ prasūtīstvam sannidhānam} \\
\text{tvamanugrabhasca} \\
\text{tvanmāyayā samvrতacetasastvām pasyanti nānā} \\
\text{navipāścito ye} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(X. 2. 28)

The meaning is this. The reality associated with māyā is the cause (prasūtī) of this world and it is the Lord who affords protection (anugraha) and it is into Him that the world lapses back at the time of dissolution (sannidhānam). So God in Reality is beyond diversities.

The notion of difference is false, says Lord Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava in the eleventh skandha. It can be compared to dream or fanciful thoughts, says He.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{suptasya viṣayāloko dhṛtyato vā manorathāḥ} \\
\text{nānātmakatvād viphalastathā bhedaṁmadhīrgunāiḥ} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(XI. 10. 3.)

'As the dreams of a sleeping person or the fancies of a man absorbed in reveries are illusory, since they are ever-changing by their very nature, so is the notion of difference produced by the guṇas. Since guṇas are products of māyā, the actions and notions based on them are also unreal like māyā.
Yet both appear to be real for the time being only. There is no difference actually since Brahman alone is real.

The same truth the Lord continues to teach in the thirteenth chapter of the same skandha thus:

```

\[
\text{asatvādātmano'nyeṣāṁ bhāvanāṁ tatkrtaḥbhicā
gatayo hetāvasāsya mṛṣā svapnadrśo yathā.}
\]

(XI. 13. 31)
```

'The objective entities like the body, the difference occasioned by them, the destinies attainable by men as prescribed in the Vedas, why, even its causes, viz., the vāsanās have no ultimate reality, as the experiences of the dream state are "real" only until one wakes up.' So the ignorance about the truth of Self is responsible for all diversities. When the Self is realized, the notion of difference vanishes immediately. So duality is due to māyā, which is illusory in nature. It is due to māyā, that the fruits that are attained vary (sādhyā-bhedā), and that the means thereof are distinct (sādhana-bhedā). This is the answer the Lord gives to sages like Sanatkumāra and others when they have doubts about the true nature of Self and not-Self.

```

\[
\text{manmāyāmohitadhiyaḥ puruṣāḥ puruṣaṛṣabha}
\]

\[
\text{sreyo vadyantarvāntam yathākarma yathāruci}
\]

(XI. 14. 9)
'It is only because their buddhi is clouded by māyā that people speak of different ways to attain blessedness according to their own past karma and taste'. The differences in guṇas lead to differences in the intellect (buddhi-bhedā); and this, to differences of opinion; and this, to karma-bhedā; and, this, to differences in taste. The root-cause of all these differences is māyā, which produces the very notion of the not-self in the Self.

3 Māyā and Avidyā

Earlier we have distinguished the Advaita conception of māyā from, (the conception of māyā) in theistic Vedānta. In theistic Vedānta, the ultimate reality is saguna-Brahman or Isvāra, the world and souls are also real, and māyā is the real power belonging to God by which he engages in cosmic activity. According to Advaita, nirguna-Brahman is the only reality, saguna-Brahman, the souls and the world are appearances of it, and māyā is the principle which explains how the non-dual reality comes to appear as all these. Although the theistic conception of māyā is present in the Bhāgavata, we have contended that it is only a passage to its final conception which is that of Advaita. This contention is further supported by the fact that the Bhāgavata identifies māyā with avidyā, or ignorance, as Advaitins do.
In the sixth skandha sage Angiras explains to King Citraketu how this entire world, which is a product of māyā, is illusory in nature. Using analogies, he explains this phenomena beautifully as follows:

adhūnā putrinām tapo bhavataivānubhūyate
evām dhārā gṛhā rāyo vividhais'varyaśampadaḥ
śabdādayasca viṣayāśicala rājyavibhūtayaḥ
mahārājyaṁ balaṁ kosā bhṛtyāṁtyāḥ suhr̄jjanāḥ
sarve'pi sūraseneme sākamobhābhāyārtidāḥ
gandharvanagaraprabhyāḥ svapnāmāyāmaṇorathāḥ
dṛṣyamānā vīnaṁ thena na dṛṣyante manobhāvāḥ
karmabhīrdhyāyato nānā karmāṇi manaso'bhaṇa

(VI. 15. 21 to 24)

The idea taught in these verses is this: one has to consider the entire world as an accidental event, just as the perception of a city in the ether. It is illusory like a dream or magician's show or a mental fancy. It is māyā. Every object is projected by the mind without any reality whatsoever: arthena vīna dṛṣyamāna. Nothing is noticed to be existing permanently. Therefore like a dream, like magic, everything is illusory. So when the product of māyā is spoken of illusory, their cause, viz., māyā also must be illusory in nature. It has only an appearance of reality so to say.
At III. 20. 18 māyā, the cause of the entire universe is, referred to as avidyā pañcaparvāṇa, i.e., the five-fold modification of avidyā. This also suggests the identity of māyā and avidyā.

Even Dharmarāja speaks of the illusory of sensuous experience and says that it is out of ignorance alone that one speaks of the products of guṇas, viz., māyā to be real. The entire world-presentation is like one's fanciful conceptions or dream.

\[ \text{vitathābhinisō'yaṁ yad guneśvarthādṛṣṭvacāh} \]
\[ \text{yathā manorathāḥ svapnāḥ sarvāmaindriyakām mṛṣā} \]
\[ \text{(VII. 2. 48)} \]

In another context Śrī Nārada says that all objective existence is fancies to be real, just like the reflection is taken to be real.

\[ \text{ābhāhito'pi hyābhāso yathā vastutayā smṛtaḥ} \]
\[ \text{durghaṭatvādaiṃdriyakām tadvarthāvikalpitam} \]
\[ \text{(VII. 15. 58)} \]

The reflected image is denied to be real on the basis of reasoning. Yet it appears as real. In the same way, everything that is presented through sense-organs appears to be real, but is not real in the strict sense of the term. Through this
analogy Nārada tries to teach here that the seeming forms of God are not real. To make the non-real appear as real is the function of moha or avidyā, says he.

It is only the ignorant ones that regard māyā as real says the following verse in the tenth skandha. The kings imprisoned by Jarāsandha, when liberated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, prayed thus:

\[ \text{mrgatrāṇām yathā bālā manyanta udakāsāyam} \]
\[ \text{evam vaikarikīm/mayuktā vastu cakṣate!} \]

(X. 73. 11)

The objective world, which is a product of māyā is non-real though it is perceived. The schools of thought other than Advaita consider the world to be real on the ground that it is perceived. Here the Bhāgavata says that this view is similar to the knowledge of the ignorant that the mirage is real.

In the eleventh skandha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks Uddhava to consider everything as transient in nature, because whatever is apprehended by mind, speech, eyes, etc., are mere creations of mind and hence illusory.

\[ \text{Yadidam manasaśvacā cakṣurbhyām śravaṇādibhibh} \]
\[ \text{nasāram gṛhyamāṇaṁ ca viddhi māyāmanomayam} \]

(XI. 7. 7)
The meaning is this: one would comprehend a particular object through a particular sense-organ only when the mind is active. Thus figuratively it can be said that one comprehends everything through mind. The objects that are so comprehended can be said to be enveloped by the mind. Since the mind is an off-shoot of māyā-avidyā, what is enveloped by the mind is also said to be illusory.

The Lord again stresses the illusory nature of the products of avidyā-māyā thus:

'ikṣeta vibhramamidam manaso vilāsam
dṛṣṭam vinaṣṭamati lolaś malātacakram
vijnānamekam urudheva vibhāti māyā
svapnastridhā guṇavisargakṛto vikalpaḥ

(XI. 13. 34)

He says that one should ascertain this world to be a delusion, on the grounds that it is fancied by the mind, that it is perceived and that it is subject to destruction like the dream-world. The world too is fleeting like a fire-brand. Therefore duality caused by the transformation of the strands of māyā is illusory only.
The Lord again tells Uddhava that the notion of duality in the Absolute is only a delusion of the mind. Yet illusion without a substratum is a contradiction in terms. Excepting one’s own Self there is no substratum for the erroneous objects of the world, which is similar to the illusion of silver on the shell.

\[\text{etāvānātmasam} \text{ḥoḥo ṣadvikalpastu kevāle} \]
\[\text{ātmannṛte svamātmānamavalambo na yasyaḥ} \]

(XI. 28. 36)

In the following passage Śrī Śūka conveys the Advaita view that whatever has a beginning and an end is non-real and that the world, though given in perception, is unreal.

\[\text{buddhīndriyārtharūpeṇa jñānam bhāti tadāsrayam} \]
\[\text{dṛṣṭyāt vāyatiṃ kekhyāmādyanta vadvastu yat} \]

(XII. 4. 23)

This passage explains the non-real nature of the world, which is different from Brahman. It is only knowledge unconditioned by nature that manifests as the instruments of cognition and as objects comprehended. The world characterized by sense-organs and objects is non-real though perceived, because it does not have any independent existence apart from its substratum. Further the world has a beginning and also an end. Thus like
a serpent in the rope, the world is non-real.

It follows from the above that when the intellect is non-real, the different stages of the intellect, viz., waking, dreaming and deep sleep are also non-real. And in the pure inner self, which is with Brahman, manifoldness appears through māyā.

buddherjāgaraṇam svapnaḥ susūaptiriti cocyate
māyā mātraṃ mādām rājan nānātvam pratyagatmanī

(XII. 4. 25)

Śrī Śuka further says,

nāhi satyasya nānātvamavidvānyadī manyate
nānātvam chidrayoryadvajjayotisovatayorīva

(XII. 4. 30)

Out of ignorance alone one will perceive jīva and Paramātman as two. Just as there is difference between the all-pervasive ether and the ether conditioned by pot on account of the limiting adjunct, and just as there is difference between the sun in the sky and the sun reflected in the water, in the same way on account of the limiting adjunct, namely māyā/avidvā there appears to be difference in the Ātman.
Thus the Bhāgavata identifies māyā and avidyā, and it is so emphatic on the illusoriness of whatever there is other than Brahman.

4 Status of Māyā

According to Advaita, māyā is neither real nor unreal (asad-asad-vilakṣana); in other words, it is indeterminable (anirvacanīya). The ignorant take māyā, represented by its product, to be real (vāstavī). To one who has realized Brahman māyā simply does not exist, i.e., it is unreal (tuccha). The problem of the status of māyā occurs only to the metaphysician, one who has mediate knowledge of Brahman, and therefore is different from both the ordinary man who has no knowledge of it and from the one who has direct experience of it. To him māyā is actually presented through its products, but at the same time he is not deceived by it, having intellectually convinced about the non-duality of Brahman. It is the conflict of the presentation with his conviction that makes him think about its status, its origin and end, its locus, and other such problems relating to it. Had māyā been unreal, it would not have made itself felt. Were it real, it would not have been said that it disappears at the dawn of right knowledge. Though itself not real, it renders apparently possible what is impossible, i.e., makes the differentiated world appear in the undifferentiated Self.
Such is the enigma called māyā. ‘Wonder is its garment; inscrutable is its nature. The Bhāgavata echoes this teaching of Advaita regarding the stūpa of māyā.

In the second skandha Śrī Sūka gives to King Parīkṣit the quintessence of the truth which was first taught to Brahmā by Bhagavān Himself. This is the well-known catupūrt-slokī Bhāgavata. In it the concept of māyā is explained thus:

\[ \text{pa'lte'rtham yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta ca ātmānī} \]
\[ \text{tad vidyād ātmanomāyām yathā'bhāso yathātamaḥ} \]

(II. 9. 33)

The idea is as follows. That which is manifested without any real content whatsoever in Ātman and which will not be manifested in Ātman at the dawn of right knowledge, know that to be māyā. In order to explain that there could be manifestation without any real content, the illustrative example of abhāsa is given. Just as there appears two moons when the eye is pressed with the finger-tip, while there are not really two moons corresponding to the appearance, in the same way, there is the appearance of māyā in Ātman without any corresponding real content. To the question as to how Brahma could remain non-manifested in its essential nature, the illustrative example of tāmas is given. Here the word tāmas stands for the planet Rāhu. Just as planet
Rāhu, which exists along with the other planets, is not manifested in its true form, in the same way sat or reality, although existing, is not manifested in its true nature. And the cause of non-manifestation is māyā or avidyā. In other words, māyā is that which manifests the non-real in the place of Brahman. And thus Brahman is obscured in its true nature for the time being. But the obscuration disappears as soon as the knowledge of Brahman arises.

Neither māyā nor its products can in any way affect a realized soul. The falsity of māyā can be known only by those who have realized their identity with the Supreme Self. In the third ākānda this truth is explained by Sage Kapila to his mother. She has the doubt as to how the knowledge of Brahman can remove avidyā. If at all removed, is the removal temporary as in the deep sleep state? The Sage replies that there can be no apprehension of the influence of māyā returning to one who is rooted in reality; for he has already got rid of māyā completely through his knowledge of identity. In deep sleep there is only the provisional merging of avidyā and its products in Brahman; for avidyā reappears as soon as one wakes up. There is no such reappearance of avidyā for one who has already realized the Self. So Kapila says:
bhuktabhoga parityakta drštadoṣā ca nityasah
nesvarasyasubham dhatte sve mahimni sthitasya ca

(III. 27. 24)

So māyā does not influence the realised soul by whom the effects of māyā has already been experienced. This also shows that māyā is subject to sublation and hence has no reality. Yet, since it is experienced as an existent, it is described as anirvācaniva in its nature.

5 The Origin of Māyā

Now a question naturally arises as to how there is this indeterminable māyā? In other words, what is the origin of māyā? How does māyā present itself at all in spite of its being not real? From the standpoint of the individual, māyā is ignorance. The Advaitin's answer to this question is that the question itself arises from the influence of māyā and therefore cannot be answered so long as māyā has not been overcome. And when māyā is removed, such questions will no longer arise. The Bhāgavata reflects this teaching when it says that the indeterminable māyā is the cause of all doubts, even regarding the ways of God. Vidura has the real doubt as to how God can take to avatāras even playfully, seeing that he is above all such possibilities. Here Maitreya answers thus:
How can God who is ever free, feel miserable and bound? The very generator of all such doubts is māyā alone.

6 Relation of Māyā to Brahman

The non-Advaitins consider māyā as the real creative power of the Lord. But according to Advaita, there is no real connection between Brahman and māyā, for māyā itself is not a real entity. So when it is considered as unreal from the ultimate standpoint, it cannot naturally have a real connection with Brahman. The appearance of the non-self in the Self is a case of mutual superimposition (anyonyādhyāsa). The Bhāgavata clearly supports the view that the ultimate reality is supra-relational. But through māyā it appears to be related as it were. Until and unless māyā is overcome, the relationships seem to continue.

In relation to sāguṇa-Brahman or Isvāra, māyā may be regarded as a power of cosmic activity. Advaita has no difficulty in conceding such a relationship. But what is significant is that māyā is entirely at the control of Isvāra. It deludes all others, but Isvāra is never deluded by it. The ultimate import of such a relationship is that, while Brahman is real, māyā is
not real. Such an idea is hinted at by the Bhāgavata.

Though māyā is the cause of all other causes, it is without any cause. It is anādi or nirmūla, though it has an end. This uncaused cause, namely māyā is the root cause for this world. The bondage etc., of individual souls are also due to māyā alone. Yet, since it is not a sentient principle, it cannot function independently. For this reason only, it is stated that it is related to God. In fact it is related to pure consciousness. Pure consciousness taken in relation to māyā is Isvāra. In the words of Vidura this view is expressed as follows:

sādhvetaṁ vyāhr̥tam vidvannātmanāṁ māyāyanam hareḥ
ābhātyapārtham nirmūlam visvamūlam na yadbahiḥ

(III. 7. 16)

'Vidura says to Maitreyi: You have rightly observed, O Sage, that the bondage etc., of the jīva is attributable to Śrī Hari's own māyā. Such bondage is only apparent without any reality, for the universe itself has no foundation except the Lord's māyā.'

Another important idea noted in the Bhāgavata is that the guṇas, viz., sattva, rajas and tamas are considered as the modes of the power of God, viz., māyā. So prakṛti or māyā, is not an independent reality. And things beginning with Hiranyagarbha and ending with the tiniest insect in the world are woven as it
were with the three strands of sattva, raja, and tama, which are the modes of the power of God. And all these seem to derive existence and manifestation only from Isvara. Hence Isvara is also known as sarvadevamaya. That there is no independent existence for the world and ultimately everything is Isvara alone is explained in the prayers of Akrūra thus:

sattvam rajastama iti bhavataḥ prakṛterguṇah
teśu hi prakṛtah prataḥ abrahamasthāvarādayāḥ
(X. 40. 11)

The question of the energy or power of the Lord with avidyā in the Bhāgavata shows its trend towards Advaita, which teaches the illusory nature of māyā. Since knowledge comes to the jīva through God alone and since the obscuration of knowledge too proceeds from His energy or power, it is He alone who is capable of knowing the course of māyā and none else, says Uddhava to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the eleventh skandha:

tvatto jñānam hi jīvanāṁ pramoṣastra'tra śaktitaḥ
tvameva hyātmamāyāyā gatim vettha na cāparaḥ
(XI. 22. 28)

So herein the power of God is equated with avidyā or ignorance, which obscures the true knowledge of the Self. It is the sakti
of the Lord, which is identical with the avidyā of the soul, and which causes diversity of things as well as the notion of differences. Differences are not real, since their cause, viz., māyā, is also not real. While all these differences arise through māyā in the Reality, It is never affected by it. As heat is to fire, māyā is to Brahman, neither different nor different from it. As waves are to the sea, so are the powers of Brahman, which are neither identical with nor different from it.

Such is the nature of the power of the Lord call
It can only be overcome by knowledge, and the Self-knowledge alone would reveal the anirvācānīvatva of the relationship of māyā, and Brahman.

VII Work of Māyā

Concealment of the real and the projection of non-real.

The function of māyā is two-fold. On the one hand it conceals the real. On the other, it projects the non-real. Hence māyā is said to have two powers, one for concealment (āvarana-dakṣa) and the other for projection (vikṣepa-dakṣa). These powers together act as a veil. In the case of Isvāra, though He is in relation with māyā, He is not affected by the āvarana-dakṣa of māyā. As Isvāra has always the knowledge of
identity with the Supreme Self, the sakti of concealment is not operative in respect of God. Though the world of objects is present before God, since māyā is at His control, even the vikṣepa-sakti does not delude Him. It is only the jīva who is utterly helpless before these powers of māyā. This truth as understood by Kunti is expressed thus in the first skandha:-

\[
\text{namasye puruṣam tvā' 'dyamīśvaram prakṛteh param alakṣyam sarvabhūtānāmantarbhāhirvasthitam māyājavanikācchannamajñādhokṣajamavyayam na lakṣyase mūḍhadṛṣā naṭo nāṭyadharo yathā}
\]

(I. 8. 18 and 19)

God is beyond sense perception and He is imperishable. He is immanent in the hearts of all beings, and He exists outside the bodies too. And He transcends māyā (prakṛtehparam). And because of being veiled by māyā, He is not known to ordinary people. Just as the true name and designation of an actor is not known to an ordinary man, so also the true nature of God is unknown to one who is under the influence of māyā. And the ignorant ones here mean those who are attached to body, sense-organs etc. For the word 'mūḍhadṛṣāh' is interpreted to mean 'deśabhimānīnāh' by Śrīdhanaśvamin.

In the eight skandha through the story of 'Gajendra mokṣa' the Bhāgavata reveals the existence of the veiling power of avidyā and its removal by the knowledge of Self thus:-
The word ātmaloka in the text means atmaprakāśa. The concealing factor of it is avidyā. It is removable by knowledge. Then the self would remain in its essential nature which is liberation. It would not be destroyed in course of time as it is eternal.

Just as an ignorant one leaves nut water concealed by grass etc. grown over it and turns to the mirage, in the same way under the influence of avidyā the ignorant people turn to external objects. The true nature of the Self is thus veiled by māyā, and because of its influence the individual soul has conceit over the physical body etc., and is keen on nourishing them. He too had been much an ignorant one, says Akrūra:-

yathābudho jalam hitvā praticchannam taduddhavaiḥ
abhyeti mr̥gatṛṣṇām vai tadvattvāham parāṁmukhaḥ

(X. 40. 26)

The Lord through māyā conceals his own true nature and behaves like an ordinary person. They really wonder at His play, say the sages like Āṅgiras and others about Śrī Kṛṣṇa:
yanmāyayā tat tvāvaduttamā vayam
vimohitā visvāsriyāmadhīsāvarāḥ
yadīsitavyāyati gūḍha Īhāyā
aho vicitram bhagavadviceśṭitam (X. 84. 16)

The sages also admit that even they are deluded by māyā, because māyā in its power of concealment exerts influence upon all souls. It is because of māyā that the ultimate reality becomes endowed with attributes and further incarnates itself and conducts itself in familiar ways.

The other power called vikṣepasākti projects the not-self where there is the Self. It is responsible for the seeming manifestation of plurality in the place of non-duality, which alone is real.

The entire universe is an illusory manifestation of māyā, says Brahmā to Nārada.

sarge tapo'harsayo nava ye prajesāḥ
sthāne ca dharma-makhāmanvamarāvanisāḥ
ante tvadharmaharamanyauvaśāsurādyā
māyāvibhūtaya imāḥ purusāktibhājaḥ

(II. 7. 39)

And Brahmā himself is but an appearance of the Lord through māyā at the time of creation.
When it is said that there is the appearance of the not-self in the Self on account of māyā, it is a case of superimposition (adhyāsa) - the false imposition of qualities of one thing on another. This is only another way of expressing the concept of projection (vikāra).

In the first skandha, the Śūta teaches the assembled munis that the things that are not-Self are superimposed upon Self.

yathā nabhasi meghaugho reṇurvā pārthivo'nile
evām draṣṭāri dṛṣyatvamāropitamabuddhibhiḥ

(I. 3. 31)

Just as cloud which is present in air is illusorily thought to be present in ether and just as dust belonging to earth is falsely viewed to be present in air, in the same way, body, sense-organs, etc., which are manifested by knowledge, are superimposed upon Self, which is of the nature of knowledge.

The forms like sūkṣma and sthūla are superimposed on Self, who is beyond all these, through māyā. But this is not realized by ordinary people. Only by the mind which has become pure, one realizes it. Sage Nārada acknowledges this thus:

tasmimīstadā labdhārucermahāmune
priyāsārvasya skhalithā matirmama
yayāhametatsadasatsvamāyayā
dharmāvā brahmāni kalnitam nara (I. 5. 27)
'By the mind which has become pure he could see that bodies, both subtle and gross, are superimposed upon the Self or Brahman, which is supra-relational, by the *māyā* present in Him.' In this, the word 'sadasat' means 'sthūla-sūksma ca eva tatrārām', and 'svamāvavā' means 'svāvidvavā'.

Ātmānāna is the cause of all miseries, why even of *samsāra*. In other words the ordinary people are unable to understand the fact of superimposition of subtle body, etc. In the Self and thus mistake the body to be the Self and fall a prey to the miseries of the world. In the above verse the effect of *māyā-avidvā*, namely, superimposition, is itself spoken of as *māyā-avidvā*. Here reference can be made to Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-Sūtras*. Therein it is stated that 'wise people consider this superimposition to be *avidvā*.' Here the word 'wise people' may be taken to refer to *Patanjali* who in his *Yoga-sūtra* considers the cognition of Self in not-Self to be *avidvā*.

That superimpositions are not real is further stated by Vasudeva thus:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{tañmāna santyāmi bhāvā yarhi tvayi vikalpitaḥ} \\
tvam cāmiṣu vikāreṣu hyanyadāvāvahārikaḥ \quad (X.85.14) \end{align*} \]

The objects of the world appear in Brahman. And being the subtratum of the world, Brahman pervades each and every object.
In Reality however, the substratum of the superimposed world alone is Real. This is the truth.

This can be realized only when there is the knowledge of identity. Just as the body of a serpent appears in a rope owing to ignorance and disappears due to the correct knowledge of the rope, in the same way, in the inner Self the entire world appears through māyā, and those who know the Inner Self as such, i.e. as identical with the Supreme Self, transcend māyā and to them the world does not appear anymore. Thus the real knowledge of the substratum alone removes the superimposition. This is taught through the prayers of Brahmā in the following verse. Here he adds that if the world appears even after one knows the Self, it would appear to be illusory only.

ātmānamevātmatayāvijñānatām
tenāiva jātām nibhilam prapañcitam
jñānena bhūyo'pi ca tatpralīyate
rajjvāmaherbhogabhavābhavau ythā

(X. 14. 25)

In the eleventh skandha Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches Uddhava that there is no reality other than Him. So all the appearances are only due to superimposition created by māyā in Him. The three-fold appearances of sruti, sthitī and sambhāra
and the four factors of perception, the perceiver, the perceived, and the act of perception, all these are products of māyā alone. So they appear illusorily in the Self.

\[\text{tasmānna hyātmano'nyasmādanyo bhāvo nirūpitaḥ} \]
\[\text{nirūpīteyam trividhā nirmūla bhātirātmani} \]
\[\text{idam guṇamayām vidhi trividham māyāyā kṛtam} \]

(XI. 28. 7)

So whatever that appears as other than Self is not Real. Appearance of not-Self being the result of superimposition, the substratum, viz., Brahman alone is Real.

VIII. **Consequences of the work of māyā, such as samsāra, passion, fear, etc.**

Very often an illusory snake produces fear in an ignorant man. The audience considers the feats of a magician to be real cost of the time. An utterly thirst man fails to recognise the unreality of a mirage. Likewise, the state of being an individual soul is itself a product of ignorance, viz., māyā.

The Bhāgavata supports the Advaita view that, even though māyā and its products are illusory, they do influence those who are under its grip and make them suffer. The consequence of the work of māyā are innumerable. Not only the feelings such as passion, fear, hatred, etc., but the cycle of
births and re-births is itself a consequence of māyā.

In the fourth skandha, Dhruva repents for his deeds thus.

dāvīṁ māyāmupāsritya prasupta iva bhinnadrk
tapye dvitiye'pyasati bhrāṭbhrāṭvyahṛdrujā

(IV. 9. 33)

Here he says that it is due to cognition of difference (bheda-darsana) only he has jealousy towards his brother and hates him. So the pains caused by viewing and believing duality to be real followed. Just as one perceives the dream objects which do not exist really and experiences misery, in the same way, the individual soul under the influence of māyā, present in the Self-luminous Reality, perceives objects of duality, which, however, do not exist really, and experiences misery.

Forgetfulness is also the result of influence of māyā. That is why Śrī Śuka states in the following verse that everyone forgets everything when deluded by māyā.

kim kim na vismarantīha māyāmohitacetasah
yanmohitam jagat sarvamabhūkṣṇam vismṛtātmakam

(X. 14. 44)

Self-deception, passion, feelings of friendship and enemity, etc. are also consequences of māyā. From māyā comes conceit over the physical body, and this is the cause of the
notion of variety, such as is expressed in 'this one is a friend' 'he is an enemy', etc. In this way the work and influence of māyā is explained to Rukmini by Balarama through the following verse:

ātmajāho nṛṣāmeṣa kalpyate devāmayāya
subṛddمهرṛduḍāśāna iti dehātmamānānām

(X. 54. 43)

One will not be able to cross gāmsāra if one is under the influence of māyā says Akrūra, while eulogising Lord Kṛṣṇa.

tubhyam namaste'stvavisaktadrśṭaye
sarvātmane sarvadhiyāṃ ca sāksiṇe
guṇapraṇavāho'yaṃavidyām kṛtaḥ
pravartate devanṛtyagātmasya.

(X. 40. 12)

Besides showing that transmigration is a consequence of māyā, this verse also refers to the truth that God is the witness-self of the minds and their functions. This is indicated by the phrase sarvadhiyāṃ ca sāksiṇe. For God there is no transmigration as He has no sense of agency whatsoever. The individual souls, divine, human or sub-human, having conceit over their bodies, undergo transmigration under the influence of māyā-avidyā.
In verses XI. 22. 5 and 6 the Lord tells Uddhava how the very diversity and differences of opinion found among men is the consequence of māyā alone. There will be solution for all controversies when there is the disappearance of duality, says He.

IX. Caution Against the Formidable Influence of Māyā

Such being the formidable influence of māyā, this Purāṇa reminds the seekers of truth to be very cautious about its deceptive nature. Through stories, even the ordinary men are warned against being caught in the current of ignorance. That is why in one place Maitreya tells Vidura that God Himself does not know the course of māyā.

ato bhagavato māyā māyināmapi mohini
yat svayam cātmavartmtātmā na veda kimutāpare.

(III. 6. 39)

In reality māyā cannot delude the One who controls it. God is omniscient (sarvajña). Therefore the description is figurative and is meant to underline the deceptive capacity of māyā.

One cannot understand the doings of the Lord Himself when under the influence of His māyā. And it is very difficult to conquer it. This is what goddess Earth mentions in her prayers to King Pṛthu, in the fourth skandha.
nūnāṁ batesāsya saṁhitaṁ janais
tanmāyāṁ durjāyāṁ kṛtātmabhīṁ
da laṅkṣaye yastvakaṁdaṁkaṁrayad
yo'neka ekaḥ paratascā isvraḥ

That is, the Reality which is one appears to be manifold only through māyā. Even the appearance of Brahmā and the world of objects are brought about by it only. But this māyā cannot be overcome by those who have not controlled their sense-organs.

Sage Mārkandeya says that it is only by being under the influence of māyā, that everyone including the devas see diversity in Reality.

athāpyambujatāraṇa pūnyaślokāśikhamane
drakṣye māyāṁ yaya lokaḥ sapalo veda saṁhitaṁ

(XII. 9. 6)

Thus we can see that māyā has the capacity even to delude the celestials. So what will be the fate of man who is in its grip? That is why the Bhāgavata now and then warns as about the formidable influence of māyā and asks us to come out of its influence as early as possible.

X Utility of Māyā

Māyā is not unreal like a hare's hown or a sky-flower. Nor is it real, as Brahman is. It is illusory (mithyā). Accord-
ing to Advaita, what is illusory need not be useless. Māyā has its own utility. Though it represents bondage, it is at the same time the avenue to liberation. The case of māyā, an illusory appearance producing useful result, can be compared to the cases of samvādibhrama. The case of one mistaking the light of a gem for the gem itself and obtaining the real gem after approaching it, illustrates the type of samvādibhrama. So what is illusory can yield results. But the unreal can never be useful because it is not known at all. The Bhāgavata testifies to the usefulness of māyā for mokṣa.

In the sixth skandha, Citraketu teaches that whereas the results of māyā lead to bondage of a soul, the effort made by him from within māyā could lead him to liberation. Though bound by māyā, by doing good deeds and following the scriptural path, one can attain mokṣa. So māyā helps one to attain liberation.

tathāpi tācchaktivisarga eṣām
sukhāya duḥkhāya hitāhitāya
bandhāya mokṣāya ca mṛtyujanmanoḥ
sārīrinām samsṛtaye'vakalpate (VI. 17. 23.)

Though the Self is attributless, its power, viz., māyā is responsible for agency on the part of individual soul, bondage, liberation etc.
Sage Antarikṣa remarks that it is for the enjoyment and emancipation of the souls, that the power of the Lord, viz., māyā became the source of all creation.

ebbhirbhūtāni bhūtāmā mahābhūtairmahābhūja
sasarjoccaśacāntyādyaḥ svamātrātma-prasiddhayā
t(XI. 3. 3.)

I XI How to Conquer Māyā

It has been said that we must overcome māyā in order to reach the 'fear-less state'. Māyā is not real. It is superimposed upon Brahman. And superimposition can be removed only by knowing the true nature of the substratum on which it is superimposed. And when that knowledge arises, the superimposed as well as the process of superimposition vanishes completely. So māyā disappears altogether when the knowledge of Brahman arises. In this way māyā can be overcome, says Bhagavān as Adiṣeṣa to Citraketu, in the sixth skandha.

yathā susuptaḥ puruṣo visvāṃ pasyāti catmanī
atmanamekadesaṁstham manyate svapna utthaññatāḥ
evaṁ jāgaraṇādīṇi jīvasthānāni catmanāḥ
māyāmātrāṇi viññāya tad draṣṭāram param smaret

(VI. 16. 53 and 54)
The meaning is this. Just as a person who dreams experiences the entire world in his self and notices himself to be in one and the same place after coming back to the waking state, in the same way the individual soul has the states of waking, dream and deep sleep as its field of experience. But these are illusory. But this can be realized only by knowing the witness of all these states, on which it is superimposed. So what one has to do is to strive to realise the Self, which is pure and the only manifesting Reality.

In the seventh skandha Śrī Nārada clarifies the fact that only immediate knowledge of Brahman would remove the notion of diversity i.e., māyā. So even when one has the mediate knowledge of Self, one has to fulfil his duties, according to the scriptural injunctions, says he.

\[
\text{syāt sādṛṣyābhramastāvad vikalpe sati vastunāḥ}
\]
\[
jāgratadvāpau ythā svapne tathā vidhiniśedhataḥ
\]
(VII. 15. 61)

It is said here that the knowledge of ultimate Reality brings about the removal of avidyā. Till the attainment of that knowledge, the superimposition of the not-Self upon the Self based upon the recollection of previous superimposition continues to exist.
Amśumān says that the direct realization of god purifies one's mind wherein the knowledge of Ultimate Reality arises and thereby the bonds of nescience, etc., are destroyed.

adyah nāḥ sarvabhūtātman kāmakarmendrāiyāsāyah
mohapāsō drḍhaschinno bhagavamstava darsānāt

(Ix. 8. 27)

Sage Kavi teaches King Nimi how to conquer māya:-

avidyamāno'pyavabhāti hi dvayo
dhyāturduhiyā svapnamanorathau yathā
tat karma saṅkalpavikalpakaṁ mano
buddo nirūdhyādabhayaṁ tataḥ syāt (XI. 2. 38)

He says that duality does not exist. Yet it appears like dream, fanciful images, etc. If one controls one's mind, the sense-organs would cease functioning, and in the end one will attain the state of fearlessness (abhaya). So controlling of the mind is the first step to conquer māya.

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava that only knowledge received from a guru dispels māya.

vaisārādi sātisuddha buddhir
dhunoti māyaṁ guṇasamprasūtām
guṇāmsaśca samdahya yaḍātmametat
svayaṁ ca śāmyatyasamid yathāgniḥ (XI. 10. 13)
The perfectly purified wisdom obtained from an efficient preceptor dispels māyā and its products too and ultimately the intellect itself becomes quiescent as fire with its fuel consumed. So self-knowledge is the antidote to māyā.

Thus the role of māyā is the same in the philosophy of the Bhāgavata, as in Advaita.