CHAPTER IV

MAHĀMĀYĀ IN ŚRĪ NĀRĀYĀṆA GURU’S PHILOSOPHY

The term Māyā occurs in the Upaniṣads themselves. However, as a concept, it became popular through the commentaries of Śankarācārya and his followers. Later the term was appropriated by philosophical schools like Tantra, Kāśmir Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta with different meanings. The Guru was writing in 19th and 20th centuries. He has followed this tradition in explaining the term Māyā in his writings. He is not solely dependent on Śankarācārya but has taken into account the different connotations of the term in Tantra and Kāśmir Śaivism.

4.1. Mahāmāyā as the Immanent Absolute

In the Tantric tradition, there is repeated emphasis on the immanence of Śiva who is said to be manifest in the form of the universe (viśvamaya). In the Upaniṣads, both the aspects of
Reality-transcendent and immanent are explicitly mentioned. Brahman is said to be immanent as well as transcendent; but the emphasis is tilted on the side of transcendence, and the Advaitins have developed the logic of transcendence to its fullness. In the Āgamas too, both the aspects are explicit; Śiva is said to be Viśvamaya as well as Viśvottirna (transcendent to world). However, they seem to be especially fond of glorifying the immanent aspect, just as the Upanisadic seer is carefully eager to point out the transcendence. The Tantric emphasis on immanence is significant in this context. The Guru accepts the innumerable powers of the Absolute. This power is nothing other than the Supreme Will-Force by which the Absolute Paramēśvara creates this world.

4.2 Vimaṛśa or Mahāmāyā as Svātantryaśakti

A major work of the Guru is called ‘Darśanamālā’ written in Sanskrit. This work consists of ten visions of the Absolute. The Guru has devoted ten stanzas to each darśana. Thus, Darśanamālā consists of One hundred stanzas.

1 AS., 36. arivinu šaktianantamundu.
2 DM., 1.1. sasajja sarvam samkalpātreṇa Paramēśvarah.
The first *darśana* is called *Adhyāropadarśana*. The first stanza of this *darśana* reads as follows:-

Āśīdagre asadevedam bhuvanam svapnavat punah
Sasarja Sarvam samkalpamātrena Parameśvarah.

In the beginning, there was

Non-existence indeed!

Dream wise then again by mere willing

Everything existent created He, the Lord supreme.

Here the word *asat* need not be translated as non-being. It can be treated as equivalent to *Māyā*, the Mother Principle of the world. In this stanza, the Guru equates *asat* (*mahāmāyā*) as the immanent aspect of Absolute. The Guru says, “By mere will of *Parameśvara*, dream wise the world is manifested”. Here the Guru treats *Mahāmāyā* or *Vimāra* as *svātantrya Śakti* of *Parameśvara*. “The great Lord, Highest Śiva alone has that absolute freedom. In the manifested form the ‘I’ represents ‘Śiva’ and the ‘This’ represents ‘Śakti’.

3 Ibid.
4 AAPN., P.47
But the manifestation, whether it is sentient or insentient takes its form out of Power (Śakti). The Guru terms this ‘Śakti’ principle in various ways. In his ‘Kālināṭakam’, this Śakti principle is described as Kālī the immanent aspect of Siva. The very same Śakti principle is described as Bhadrakāli, the bestower of boons to the devotees. In his Jananī Navaratnamāṇijari, this Śakti principle of Śiva is described as the Mother of the universe (Jananī). Just as the Śakta- Tantra does, he also describes this Jananī as the Absolute itself, i.e., as the composition of Prakāśa and Vimarṣa. This Śakti principle has been worshipped by the Guru as the Goddess of learning called Śarada⁵. All these aspects of Śakti are explained in the appropriate chapters of this thesis.

4.3 Māyā daṛśanam of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru in Daṛśanamālā

In his Daṛśanamālā, the Guru has devoted one full daṛśanam to explain the term Māyā. He calls this daṛśanam ‘Māyā daṛśanam’. This work has been translated into English with the commentary by the foremost direct disciple of the Guru

⁵ TPSS., P. 113.
namely Dr. Nataraja Guru. The following is an English translation of *Māyā Darśānam*, which Nataraja Guru calls 'Vision of Negation'.

1. What is not real, that is Negation;

   Which by itself, as by science-nesceince,

   Transcendence- immanence, darkness, and prime potency

   Of nature, in many forms looms.

2. Just as before the origin of the pot the clay itself is

   In its non-being (so too before the origin of

   the world), as other than the world,

   What had no being as the Absolute itself,

   Such is *Māyā* (the negative principal) of

   Indeterminate possibility.

3. "The non – self is unreal, the self is real",

   Thus what looms is *vidyā* (knowledge),

   As the reality of the snake (appearance)

   (Superimposed) on the rope- reality is understood.
4. "The self is unreal, the non-self is real",

Thus what looms is avidyā (nescience) indeed,

As the erroneous cognition

As between rope and snake.

5. The senses, the mind, intelligence and the five Vital tendencies, what creates –

That is the transcendent (parā) indeed, even (they being)

The subtle limbs of the reasoning Self.

6. Adopting as its own these limbs, the reasoning Self;

By its own negative base of error, imagines

(itself) as it happy or suffering;

In truth there is nothing at all.

7. The objective data of the senses which is the world,

What emanates forth- that indeed,

In the context of the self, is the immanent (aparā),

The basis of all gross presentiments of the will.
8. As the ignorance about the mother-of-pearl
Is the basis of the silver-presentiment,
So too what in the Self is basis (of the world)
That is known as darkness (tamas)

9. Because of being that aspect (of Māyā) which is a marvel,
By containing all this (universe) like a tree in a seed,
Or by virtue of its importance (above others),
This here is known as the prime potent power (pradhāna)

10. By its very nature because in a marvellous way
It diversifies the three nature modalities,
This aspect (of Māyā) consisting of the three
Modalities is well known as Nature (Prakṛti)

4.4 Māyā or Ignorance in Śankarācārya.

In post- Śankara Vedānta, Śankarācārya’s doctrine of Māyā has been criticized. Śankarācārya brings out the following characteristic of Māyā.
1. Like the Prakṛti of Sāmkhya, it is something material and unconscious (jada) as opposed to Brahman – (puruṣa in the case of sāmkhya) which is pure consciousness, though unlike Prakṛti it is neither real nor independent.

2. It is the inherent power or potency (Śakti) of Brahman. It is coeval with Him. It is absolutely dependent on and inseparable from Brahman. It is non-different (ananyā) from Him. The relation of Māyā and Brahman is unique and is called tādātmya; it is neither identity nor difference nor both. Māyā is energised and acts as a medium for the projection of this world of plurality on the non-dual ground of Brahman.

3. It is beginning less (anādi)

4. It is something positive (bhāvarūpa), though not real. It is called positive in order to emphasise the fact that it is not merely negative. It has two aspects. In its negative aspect, it conceals (āvarana). Reality acts as a screen to hide it. In its positive aspect, it projects (vikṣepa) the world of plurality on the Brahman-Ground. It is non-apprehension as well as misapprehension.
5. It is indescribable and indefinable for it is neither real nor unreal nor both (sadasadanirvacanīya). It is not real, for it has no existence apart from Brahman; it is not unreal, for it projects the world of appearance. It is not real, for it vanishes at the dawn of knowledge; it is not unreal for it is true as long as it lasts. It is not real to constitute a limit to Brahman and yet it is real enough to give rise to the world appearance. In addition, it is not both real and unreal, for this conception is self-contradictory.

6. It has a phenomenal and relative character (vyāvahārikasatta).

It is an appearance only (vivarta)

7. It is of the nature of super-imposition (adhyāsa). It is an error (bhṛānti) like that of a ‘rope-snake’ or a ‘shell-silver’. It is the super-imposition upon one thing of the character of another thing. It is wrong cognition or misapprehension.

8. It is removable by right knowledge (vijñāna nirasya).

When Vidyā dawns Avidyā vanishes. When the rope is known, the ‘rope-snake’ vanishes.
9. Its locus (āśraya) as well as objects (viṣaya) is Brahman and yet Brahman is really untouched by it, even as a magician is unaffected by his magic or the colourless ākāśa is untouched by the blue colour attributed to it.\textsuperscript{7}

Rāmānuja of visiṣṭādvaita school levels seven important charges against Māyā.

1. Āśrayānapapatti: What is the locus or support of Māyā? Where does Avidyā reside? If there are any such things as Māyā or Avidyā, we are justified in asking for its seat or abode. Verily, it cannot exist in Brahman for then the unqualified monism of Brahman would breakdown. Moreover, Brahman is said to be pure self-luminous consciousness or knowledge and Avidyā means ignorance. Then how can ignorance exist in knowledge? Again, Avidyā cannot reside in the individual self, for the individuality of the self is said to be the creation of Avidyā. How can the cause depend on its effect? Hence, Avidyā cannot exist either in Brahman or in Jīva. It is an illusory concept, a figment of

\textsuperscript{7} CSIP., Pp. 274 - 275
the Advaitin’s imagination. If it resides anywhere, it resides only in the mind of the Advaitin who has imagined this wonderful pseudo-concept, this logical myth.

2. Tirodhānānupapatti: How can Avidyā conceal Brahman? If it does, then Brahman is not a self-conscious and self-luminous subject. If Brahman is of the nature of self-luminosity and self-proved pure knowledge, ignorance cannot cover or veil its essence. It is as absurd as to say that darkness can hide light or that night can act as a veil on day.

3. Svarūpānupapatti: What is the nature of Avidyā? Is it positive or negative or both or neither? If it is positive then how can it be Avidyā? Avidyā means ignorance and ignorance means absence of knowledge. To regard ignorance as positive is to accept a self-contradiction. Moreover, if ignorance is positive how can it be ever destroyed? No positive entity can be destroyed. As the Advaitin admits that ignorance is removed by knowledge, ignorance can be never be positive. In addition, if Avidyā is negative, then how can it project this world-illusion on
**Brahman?** To say that *Avidyā* is both positive and negative is to embrace self-contradiction. Moreover, to say that it is neither positive nor negative is to give up all logic.

4. *Anirvacanīyatvānupapatti*: *Avidyā* is defined by the *Advaitin* as indefinable; it is described as indescribable. This is a clear self-contradiction. To avoid this, *Advaitin* says that *Avidyā* is not indescribable; that to call it “indescribable” means that it cannot be ‘described either as real or as unreal’. Indescribability is equated with being neither real nor unreal. But this is absurd. This shows that the *Advaitin* is giving up all logic. How can a thing be neither real nor unreal? This is merely verbal jugglery. Reality and unreality are both exhaustive and exclusive. They are contradictories not contraries. Between themselves, they exhaust all possibilities of predication. A thing must be either real or unreal. There is no third alternative. All over, cognitions relate to either entities or non-entities. To refute this is to refuse to think. To maintain a third alternative is to reject the well-established canons of logic- the Law of contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle.
5. **Pramāṇāṇupapatti:** By what pramāṇa or means of valid cognition is *Avidyā* cognised? *Avidyā* cannot be perceived, for perception can give us either an entity or a non-entity. It cannot be inferred, for inference proceeds through a valid mark or middle term, which *Avidyā* lacks. Nor can it be maintained as the authority of the scriptures for they declare *Māyā* to be a real wonderful power of creating this wonderful world, which really belongs to God.

6. **Nivartakāṇupapatti:** There is no remover of *Avidyā*. The *Advaitins* believe that knowledge of the unqualified attributeless *Brahman* removes *Avidyā*. Nevertheless, such knowledge is impossible. Discrimination and determination are essential to knowledge. Pure identity is a mere abstraction. Identity is always qualified by difference and distinction. Hence, there can be no knowledge of an undifferentiated attribute less thing. In addition, in the absence of such knowledge nothing can remove *Avidyā*. 
7. *Nivṛtyanupapatti*: In the last point, we were told that there is no remover of *Avidyā*. This point tells us that there is no removal of *Avidyā*, *Avidyā* is said to be positive (*bhāvarūpa*) by the Advaitin. How, then, can a positive thing be removed? A thing, which positively exists, cannot be removed from existence by knowledge. The bondage of the soul is due to *karma*, which is a concrete reality and cannot be removed by abstract knowledge. It can be removed by *karma*, *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and *Prasāda*. The ignorance of the soul is destroyed when the *karmas* are destroyed and when the soul flings itself on the absolute mercy of the Lord who, pleased by the soul’s constant devotion, extends his grace to it.\(^8\)

Dr. Sharma replies to these objections from the point of view of *Advaita Vedānta*. “All these charges of Ramanuja against *Māyā* are based on the misunderstanding of the meaning of this term. It is called indescribable, either as real or as unreal due to the genuine difficulty of our finite intellect to reach Reality. It is a self-contradictory notion.

\(^8\) Ibid., Pp. 358 - 360
Ramanuja takes it in the sense of something 'real' and demands a seat and a pramāṇa for it. However, we may say that Brahman is the seat of Avidyā. Avidyā being not real, the monism of Brahman is not destroyed. Brahman is not really affected by it. The rope is not really affected if it is mistaken as a snake. The shell does not become silver if it is mistaken for that. A mirage cannot make the sandy desert muddy. The power of the magician does not affect his knowledge. In addition, we may say with Vachaspati Mishra that the individual Self and Avidyā go on determining each other in a beginning-less cycle.

Ramajuja himself, when he fails to explain the cause of bondage of the pure soul, falls back upon the notion that the relation of Karma and ignorance with the soul is beginning-less. Again, Avidyā does not really conceal Brahman even as a cloud does not really conceal the sun. Again, Avidyā is called positive only to emphasise the fact that it is not merely negative. In fact, it is neither positive nor negative. There is no point in saying that indescribability of Avidyā is a self-contradictory notion when Advaitin himself admits it. However, its self-contradictory nature is realised only when one rises above it and not before.
As long as error, dream, or illusion lasts, it is quite real. Real means ‘absolutely real’ and unreal means ‘absolutely unreal’ and Avidyā is neither of these. These two terms are not contradictory and hence the Laws of Contradiction and Excluded Middle are not overthrown. The Law of Contradiction is fully maintained, since all that which can be contradicted is said to be false. The Law of Excluded Middle is not overthrown since ‘absolutely real’ and ‘absolutely unreal’ are not exhaustive. Again, since Avidyā is not ‘real’, but only a superimposition, it vanishes when the ground-reality is known”⁹.

In post-Śankara Vedānta, Citsukha has defined ajñāna:

"Anādi bhāvarūpam yad vijnānena viliyate
tad ajñānamiti prajña lakṣanam sampracakṣate"¹⁰

"The rope-snake vanishes when the rope is known. It is only the direct and intuitive knowledge of Reality, which is the cause of liberation. Even Ramanuja admits this though he calls it the highest Bhakti which dawns by the grace of God"¹¹.

⁹ Ibid., Pp. 360-361
¹⁰ Citsukhi., P. 57 (quoted by T.V.R. Murti in Ajnana., P.123.
¹¹ CSIP., P.361
It is seen that Ramanuja takes Māyā in the sense of something real and demands a seat and pramāṇa for it. It must be noted here that in Śankara Vedānta, the word sat means real. This is only Brahman. The word Asat according to Śankarācārya means non-existence, like the hare’s horn or a square circle. But Māyā is neither sat nor asat in this sense. Therefore, in Advaita Vedānta Māyā is characterised as sat-asat-vilakṣana or something indefinable (anirvacanīya) alternatively termed as ‘mithya’. It can be seen that Śankarācārya’s logic is three-valued in this concept. However, unfortunately even today, Māyā is translated primarily as illusion.

L. Thomas O’ Neil says, “This factor has led critics to describe classical Indian thinking as world-negating, pessimistic, and unproductive”\(^{12}\). As a revaluation of Advaita Vedānta, the Guru had to make amends for this.

\(^{12}\) MIS., P. 1
4.5. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru’s concept of Māyā

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru must have been aware of such a controversy. That is why in the opening stanza itself of Māyā Darśanam [Darśanamālā], the Guru characterizes Māyā as something unreal.

\[
\text{na vidyate ya sā māyā} \\
\text{vidyā avidyā parāparā} \\
\text{tamah pradhānam prakṛtir} \\
\text{bahudha saiva bhāsate.}^{13}
\]

The Guru depends therefore not only Advaita Vedānta but also Tantra and Kāśmir Śaivism to bring a positive approach to this subject. In Māyā Darśanam we can see that he has included so many entities under this umbrella term:- viḍyā, avidyā, parā, aparā, tamah, pradhānam, prakṛti.

4.5.1 Mahāmāyā, the culmination of innumerable powers.

To begin with, there is no Māyā at the transcendental level. This is explained by the Guru in the second stanza of Māyā Darśanam as follows:-

\[13 \text{ DM., IV. 1}\]
prāgutpater yatha abhāvo
mrdeva brahmanah prthak
na vidyate brahma hi yā
sā māyā ameya vaibhavā

"Before the production of the pot there is no pot, there is only clay. Similarly, before the emergence of the World, there is only Brahma and there is no Maya apart from Brahma. This is something that cannot be measured. Maya is not different from Brahma in the beginning. So in one sense, Brahma and Maya are not different.

In the third stanza of Maya Darśanam, the Guru gives the definition of Vidyā, which he has included under the term Maya.

anātmā na sadātma sadatā di vidyotate yāyā
sā vidyeyam yadhā rajju-sarpattvāvadhāraṇam

14 Ibid., IV. 2
Here, the Guru uses the analogy of rope and snake made popular by Śankarācārya also. World of phenomena and Brahman are related. The world is a superimposition on Brahman.

Avidyā is defined in the forth stanza as follows.

ātmā na sadanātma sadānī vidyotate yayā
saivāvidyā yadāh rajju –
sarpayorayadhārdhadṛk

In stanza five, the limbs of Jīva are explained due to Māyā and this Māyā is called as Parā by the Guru:

Indriyāni manobhudhi
Pañca prāṇādayo yayā
Visṛjyante saiva parā
Sūṣmāṅgāni cidātmanah

When the limbless Absolute comes to have these subtle limbs, it is called Jīva or vital principle. So, in this manner, the Absolute without limbs is that factor which created limbs, causing the erroneous consciousness of living being; that limbless aspect of Māyā is called Parā or transcendent.
The external world and the immanent level is also traced to Māyā in the seventh stanza.

\[
\text{indriyāṇāṁ hi viṣayāḥ}
\]

\[
prapañco 'yam visṛjyate
\]

\[
yayā saiva aparā adhyātma –
\]

\[
sthūlaśaṅgalpanāmayi}^{15}
\]

The Guru explains the above concept using the well-known analogy of silver and the mother-of-pearl.

As the ignorance about the mother-of-pearl is the basis of the silver presentiment becomes; so too is the self-basis (of the world). That is known as darkness (Tamas)

\[
\text{“śuktikāyāṁ yatha ajñānam}
\]

\[
rajatasya yadātmani
\]

\[
kalpitasya nidanam tat
\]

\[
tamaḥ ityavagamyate}^{16}
\]

---

15 DM., IV. 7
16 Ibid., IV. 8
Just as darkness is the cause of error in perceiving silver in the mother- or- pearl, so the cause of the supposition of the world in the self is that aspect of Māyā called darkness.

In ninth stanza, the Guru explains the term pradhāna

dhīyate asmin prakarṣeṇa
bijē vṛkṣa ivākhilam
ataḥ prādhānyato vā asya
pradhanamiti kadyate

In the same way as a large baniyan tree is contained in a small seed, the whole of the universe is contained within Māyā. This is something marvellous or a mystery and is called pradhāna or prime potent power.

In the tenth stanza, Māyā is shown to be trigunātmika, namely satva, rajas and tamas. Consisting of these three modalities Māyā is called prakṛti.

karotīti prakarṣeṇa
prakṛtyaiva guṇān prthak
nigadyate asau prakṛti-
ritiha trigunātmikā
The Guru has used many of the above terms as equivalent to Māyā in his writings.

It is obvious that the problem that we are trying to solve is the relation between the empirical world of phenomena (jagat or prapañca) and Nirguṇa Brahman or Para Brahman. In this context, the Advaidin invokes the principles of Māyā and calls it anirvacanīya or indefinable.

The Guru has again invoked the principle of Māyā in his Malayalam work “Ātmopadeśa śatakam” or ‘One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction’. Even though the theme of the poem is Ātman, which is Pure Consciousness, the Guru makes use of the term Māyā to explain the phenomenal world. In stanza 35 of this poem, the Guru makes a very important statement.

oru patināyiramāditeyar onnāy
varuvatu pole varum vivekavr̥tti
vrvine mūtūmanitya māyāyāmī
yirulineyīṁneṣumādi sūryanatre\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} AS., 35
“Like the dawn, all together, of ten thousand solar orbs

Wisdom’s function comes: such, verily is that which

Tears asunder this wisdom-hiding

Transient Māyā - darkness here,

And as the primal sun prevails!¹⁸

In his commentary on this stanza, Dr. Nataraja Guru remarks: "Māyā is the negative or static basis of all possible philosophical errors, whether physical or metaphysical. When the full dynamism of absolutist wisdom prevails the brilliance of the illumination suffices to efface all the relativistic vestiges in consciousness, leaving the pure consciousness to prevail over all appearances which are false. The vision of the Absolute is here compared to the primal sun which for ever reigns dispelling the relativistic darkness."¹⁹

In stanza Fifty-one, the Guru hints at the origin of Māyā at the epistemic level.

¹⁸ OHSI., P.135
¹⁹ Ibid., P.137
From awareness the "I" sense first emerged;
Comes then with it "This"-ness, as counterpart beside;
These like creepers twain do cover entirely,
The whole of Māyā tree to hide.²⁰

The Guru here selects two important aspects, which are the origin of Pure Consciousness (arivu). These are the sense of "I" ness or egoism (ahanta) and "This" ness (Idanta). "I" ness and "This" ness may be said to constitute between them the twin creepers of all possible subtle error which has in turn for its basis the tree of Māyā.

A similar process is envisaged in Kāśmir Śaivism. "In the state of bhānavrītti, the power of consciousness (cit-śakti) emerges from cit the supreme self. The first emergence of Śakti into manifestation is in the form of subjectivity i.e., as the

²⁰Ibid., P.171
creation of the sense of “I” (*ahanta*). Subsequently there emerges the sense of “This” (*idanta*) as opposed to the *ahanta* first formed. The Guru says that from awareness the “I” sense first emerged; comes then with it “This-ness”, as counterpart beside. These like creepers twain to cover entirely, the whole of the *Māyā* tree to hide.

The emergent *Śakti* though of the nature of reflection, is the *vimarśa* of the Absolute, and the *vimarśa* is nothing other than the spontaneous “I” consciousness in power- *akṛtrimāhamitī visphuraṇam*. The process of emergence of the subjective *ahanta* and the objective *idanta* from the Supreme Consciousness is *spanda*, and the two aspects of *ahanta* and *idanta* are called *grahaṇa* and *grāhya* respectively in *Kāśmir Śaivism*. All that “I” as subject is aware of is only a reflection of the source of all awareness, *Śiva* ……. I, the apprehender, can apprehend, only when something apprehensible exists. This distinctive ‘throb’ of apprehension, the actual, coming into shape of an individual object from out of an ocean of awareness is known as *spanda*, the vibrating thrill of *vimarśa*, or the Realisation that ‘I’ am, because I find that I am facing the many, all of which are enlightened by
the same apprehension. The apprehender ‘I’ (ahanta), according to the Guru, is of two types- the higher and the lower. The higher, is spiritual and the lower, material or physical. The higher, since it is purely spiritual, cannot actually be conditioned, but only the universal experience. It indicates only an order of all comprehending unlimited subject-object. The Guru calls these two types of ahanta viz. the higher spiritual ahanta and the lower individual ahanta as ‘Ārya’ (sacred) and ‘Anārya’ (profane) respectively. If the former enters directly into Supreme Consciousness, the later enters as limited bodily agents.”

In stanza 54 of Ātmopadesa satakam the Guru again refers to Māyā:

\[\text{uṇarumavasthayurakkil illuṭakkam}\\\text{punaruṇarum pozutum sphurikkuvilā;}\\\text{anudinamiṅṅane raṇṭumādi māyā –}\\\text{vanitayil ninnu puṇṇu māṇḍunnu –}\]

The waking state, it obtains not in sleep
And sleep again does not attain consciousness
When awake: day by day these twain are born
Of maya’s womb and keep alternating on

Here the Guru describes Māyā as Jananī i.e., Mother. Dr. Nataraja Guru has given a rather modern interpretation in explaining Māyā in the above stanza.

"Māyā is the principle of nescience or ignorance which is not an entity but a convenient term or mathematical factor or element with which to relate the two aspects of the Absolute which always co-exist." Nataraja Guru sees a similarity between the square root of minus one used in modern mathematics and Māyā.

In stanza 72, again there is a reference to Māyā

kriyayorukūritavidya: kevalam cin-
mayi marukūritu vidya; Māyā yāle
niyataminiñānane nilkkilum piriṇa-
dvaya parabhāvana turyamēkiṭunnu.

22 OHSI., P. 179
23 Ibid., P. 180
Now there is action which is nescience and again

There is the pure mental which is knowledge;

Ordered by Māyā though this stays on divided thus

The meta-dual attitude the unitive turiya yields.²⁴

In his commentary on this stanza Nataraja Guru says:-

"Consciousness is subject to two main and alternating phases or pulsations; one which is fraught with elements that are overt and refer to the world of actualities in which there is action and reaction in the mechanistic sense. Darkness, nescience, ignorance, necessity are the distinguishing features of this phase. The other ambivalent counterpart of this dark side is that zone of pure thought which is removed from all practical considerations. Māyā is a notion that comprises both phases of this subtle alternating process on final analysis and not merely to the negative aspect of darkness or nescience. It is supposed to have vikṣepa (projecting) and āvarāṇa (veiling) function. One is positive and the other is negative in its content and effect. Although the term ordinarily connotes more the

²⁴ OHSL., P. 220.
negative rather than the positive aspect of this double process, here the Guru merely correctly ascribes the double function as ordered by the principle of Māyā which must refer to the last vestige of asymmetry or error in consciousness, beyond which and neutrally the full notion of the Absolute lies. *Vedānta* knows of no other factor intervening between the Self and the Absolute wisdom and it is permitted even to say that Māyā is the same as the Absolute because of the possibility of Māyā being reabsorbed into the full transparency of the Absolute when its dual or negative implications are realised and effaced by the subject in all completeness of Self-absorption into the Absolute.²⁵

In stanza 87, the Guru shows how Māyā is indescribable.

\[
\begin{align*}
taniyeyitokkeyumunțu & \text{ tammil oro} \\
rinamitaraṇālilillayiprakāram & \\
tanu & \text{ mutalāyatu sattumallayorttā} \\
lanrtavumallatavācyamāyițunnu & .
\end{align*}
\]

Each taken by itself all things here do exist; treated mutually

---

²⁵ Ibid., Pp. 220-221.
Each class excludes the other; considered in this way
The body and other things are neither real
Nor lacking in verity; they become unpredictable.\textsuperscript{26}

Here, the Guru has specifically pointed (to) that gross body and other associated elements as being neither \textit{sat} nor \textit{asat}. He says it cannot be described. In the next stanza itself, the Guru makes his position clear.

\textit{skalavumullatu tanne tattvacintā –}
\textit{grahan itu sarvavumekamāy grahikkum}
\textit{akamukhamāy ariyāykił Māyayām van –}
\textit{paka palatum bhramamekiṭunnu pāram}\textsuperscript{27}.

All things are real enough; the philosopher, however Grasps all things here as one; when not viewed Through the inward eye, that great tribulation Which is \textit{Māyā}, yields much puzzlement, indeed!\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., P. 253  \\
\textsuperscript{27} AS., 88  \\
\textsuperscript{28} OHSI, P. 255
\end{flushright}
He points out the unitive Absolute reached by the philosopher and contrasts it with empirical multiplicity at the phenomenal level. He ascribes this distortion to the working of Māyā.

The Guru continues his arguments as follows:

arivil irunnasadastiyennasāṅkhyam
poriyilaki bhuvanam sphurikkayāle
arivine vittoru vastuvanyamille-
nnariyanamīyarivaika rūpyamekum\(^{29}\)

As out of knowledge, sparks innumerable arise
Asserting the being of non-being to make the world appear.
Know, that outside of knowledge not a thing exists;
Such knowledge global awareness shall yield.\(^{30}\)

Nataraja Guru states in his commentary: “We know that Māyā, as the overall category of error or illusion, which has been examined in the previous verse, is an elusive entity with a double

\(^{29}\) AS., 89
\(^{30}\) OHSI, P. 257
epistemological reference. It is described as both sat (existent) and asat (not real). Further, we have seen that there is a negative principle of indeterminism, which characterises the concept of Māyā. How could there be a relation between such a double-sided concept of Māyā and the unitive and globally understood Absolute? The relation between the two is perhaps the most subtle and has been the cause of differences between Vedantists.\textsuperscript{31}

In Darśanamālā itself, the Guru introduces the term Māyā in other darśanās also. For example, in the opening darśana on Cosmology, which is called Adhyāropadarśana (Vision of Superimposition), the Guru uses the term Māyā in the second stanza.

\textit{vāsanāmāya mēvādā –}

\textit{vāsīdidamatha prabhuḥ}

\textit{asrjan māyayā svasya}

\textit{māyāvīvakhilam jagat}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., Pp. 257 - 258}
In the beginning, in the form of incipient memory factors. (All) this remained. Then the Lord, By His own power of false presentiment, like a magician, Created all this world (of change)\textsuperscript{32}

In the first stanza the Guru says that the world is derived from the will of the Lord\textsuperscript{33}. Therefore, \textit{Māyā} can be taken to be the will of the Lord.

In the third stanza, the Guru says:

\begin{align*}
\text{prāgutpperidam svasmin} \\
\text{vilīnamatha vai svatāḥ} \\
\text{bījādanākuravat svasya} \\
\text{śaktirevaśṛjat svayam}\textsuperscript{34}
\end{align*}

This (world) before creation was Latent within Himself. Thereafter, like sprout from seed, From Himself, by His power, by itself it was created.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32} AAPN., P. 47
\textsuperscript{33} OM., 1.1. \textit{Sasāraja sarvam samkalpa mātreṇa Paramēśvarah}
\textsuperscript{34} DM. 1. 3.
\textsuperscript{35} AAPN., P. 47
\end{flushright}
The second *darśana* deals with De-Superimposition (*Apavāda Darśana*), where *caitanya* or *cit* is shown to be the cause of the phenomenal world. In this *darśana*, the Guru uses the term *Māyā* to explain this superimposition:

\[\text{yasyotpattir layo nāsti}\]
\[\text{tat param brahma nētarat}\]
\[\text{utpattiśca layo astīti}\]
\[\text{brahmyātmani māyā yā}\]

To that which origin and dissolution is not,  
That is none other than the Ultimate Absolute,  
(That there) is origin and re – absorption,  
By *Māyā* ’s confusion in the Self (is supposed)\(^{37}\)

There is no effect independent of the cause. That is, when we examine it more closely, all effects are unreal. Their causes alone are real. Therefore, the visible and invisible universe is unreal because of being an effect. That, which is existent, is what is real. It is what constitutes the one cause for everything, which is the Lord, or in other wards, the Absolute (*Brahman*). The idea is continued:-

---

\(^{36}\) DM, 2, 3  
\(^{37}\) AAPN., P.50
vibhajyāvayavam sarva
mekai̊kam tatra drṣyate
cinmātramakhilam nānya –
diti māyā vidūragam

Dividing all parts one by one,
Everything then is seen there
As mind – stuff alone, and as no other
As thus banishing māyā (relativity) far away.

This is further examined by Vidyanada using the analogy of a piece of cloth: - "To understand this, let us examine the reality of a cloth. In the first place, we can divide the cloth into its threads. When the threads have been taken out, there is no cloth to be seen. Thus, we know that it is the thread, that takes the form of cloth, and the cloth (itself) has no reality. The reality of the cloth merely resides in the thread. If we proceed once again in the same manner to examine the thread, we see that it gives place to cotton. Now we understand that it is cotton that appears like thread, and the reality of the thread is not in the

38 DM 2.7
39 AAPN., P. 51
40 DMD., Pp. 27-29
thread but in the cotton. If we further examine this cotton we find, it consists of fine elements composed of atoms. Now the reality is not even in the cotton, instead it is in the atoms where reality resides. If we further examine these atoms by means of instruments, or even by the instrumentality of the mind, we find these atoms without a being, given as objects for the instruments or even the mind, which is subtler than the subtlest instrument, all perception hiding in a sort of darkness or ignorance, which is nescience. That is to say, nobody is able to know how all this originated. Now by this kind of enquiry about the cloth, thread, cotton, elemental atom and ignorance, we know that for all these, there is only one reality and from cloth to atom, everything is the effect of nescience. But this is capable of being abolished by knowledge or science. It is this aspect of knowledge that is attributed to the Lord. The absence of the knowledge is what constitutes the stuff of ignorance. When knowledge operates, nescience is abolished and with the help of such knowledge, one is able to see the causal status in reality of each one of the items ranging from cloth to atoms. Such awareness is a kind of present and lasting witness, having an ultimate status of its own. Awareness itself is without further cause and is self-evident". 
There is also a reference to Māyā in the *Karma Darśanam* (Vision of Action)

ātmāiva māyayā karma

karoti bahurūpadhrk

asanīgaḥ svaprakāśo api

nidrāyāmiva taijasaḥ⁴¹

It is indeed the Self, though self-luminous
And detached, that through negativity
Does action bearing many forms,
Like the dream-agent in sleep⁴².

4.6 *Māyā* as the Absolute Itself in Dynamism

It can be seen that the dynamism found in the phenomenal world is due to the power of Māyā emphasised by the Ātman or the Absolute, which remains changeless and emits all changes. The Guru here accepts the *Upaniṣadic mantra-*

'asaṅgo hi ayam puruṣah'- Unattached indeed is this Puruṣah.

---

⁴¹ DM., VI.1
⁴² AAPN., P.62
The other factor to be noted here is that all activities like thinking, speaking, breathing, the flowing of rivers, the burning of fire, the blowing of wind are all brought under the word 'karma'. The mental, the biological and the natural phenomena are all traced to Māyā.

Śankarācārya as an exegesis of the Vedas uses the word *karma* for the ritualistic *yajña* or sacrifice of the early Vedas. His aim was to prove the superiority of *jñānā* (knowledge of the Absolute) spoken of in the last portion of the Vedas i.e., the Upaniṣads. Therefore Śankarācārya bases his discussion of *karma* with reference to the Vedic context. According to Śankarācārya also, the Ātman is changeless or *kūṭastanita*. Therefore, there is no need for any *karma* for the realization of Ātman. Veda deals with both *jñāna* and *karma*. *Karma* in this context means Vedic ritual. In the Vedic period, the original aim was to reach the hypothetical heaven or *svarga* through *yajña*. During *yajña* several devarāś were invoked by specific *mantrās* and oblations were poured into the sacrificial fire. The sacrifice was supposed to produce a fruit that was unseen (*adrśta*), and
novel (apūrva). This fruit was to be enjoyed by the individual Self in svarga. The dictum here was ‘svargakāmo yajēta’ i.e., ‘he who is desirous of heaven shall perform sacrifice’. But when we come to the Upaniṣads the concept of svarga yielded place to the concept of mokṣa to be enjoyed here and now (ihaiva). The dictum here became jñānādeva tu kaivalyam- only through jñāna is mokṣa attained. Hence, in Śankara Vedānta, karma has only a secondary place (at best) for the purification of the mind (citta śudhi)43. Śankarācārya maintains that jñāna and karma are diametrically opposed to each other like light and darkness. Karma leads forward, or it takes one away from the Self; the Self is already there in the ground, which can be reached only by retiring or receding and not by moving forward. In other words, the Self can be attained only by jñāna and not by karma. Śankarācārya therefore, not only rejects karma, but he rejects even the combination of jñāna and karma (jñāna–karma–samuccaya).

43 Īśvarāpánahudhyā amuṣṭyamānam karma cittaśudhayē bhavati cittasudhidvāra jñānaprāptih jñānaprāptyā mokṣaprāptih.
The Guru has followed *Tantra* and his definition of action is akin to *Tantrik kriya*. In his *Darśanamālā*, he has devoted one full chapter to *karma*. A careful, reading of the Guru’s *Karma Darśanam* will reveal that it deals with *kriya* as spontaneous activity. The Guru here looks upon natural phenomena like the flowing of water etc. with the involuntary activities taking place within the human body. Thus, this scope of action is widened unlike Śankarācārya who confines the word *karma* to *Vedic* rituals.

The Guru states.

\[
\text{astijanmaddhiparina-}
\text{tyapakṣayavināśanam}
\text{ṣadbhāvamiha yō yāti}
\text{sa nānyō avikriyātmanaḥ}^44
\]

Here (in this visible world), as what exists, is born, Grows, transforms, decreases and attains its end- As subject to six forms of becoming (That) is no other than the actionless Self\(^45\).

\[\text{44 DM., VI.8}
\text{45 AAPN., P. 63}\]
The Guru concludes this *darśanam* as follows:

*dṛṣṭyatvāt bhāsyamahama* –  
*pyato aham śuktirāṅgavat*  
*adhyastameka evādyā*  
*śvo api sarvopari sthitah*\(^{46}\)

Because of being an object of experience,
Even the ‘I’ is a conditioning factor
Superimposed like the mother – of- pearl gleam.
Above everything else, today and tomorrow, one alone is\(^{47}\).

### 4.7 Māyā in *Daivadaśakam*

In his popular Malayalam poem *Daivadaśakam* the Guru speaks of Māyā. In this poem, Guru addresses god (*Daivam*) as follows.

*nīyallo Māyāyum māyā-*  
*viyum māyāvinodanum*  
*nīyallo Māyaye nīkki-*  
*sāyūjyam nalkumāryanum*\(^{48}\).

---

\(^{46}\) DM., VI. 10  
\(^{47}\) AAPN., P.64  
\(^{48}\) DD., 6
Are you not māyā, the author of it.

As also the enjoying agent thereof?

Are you not even One who can cancel Māyā.

To grant us that state of Union Supreme⁴⁹.

In this stanza, the Guru equates Daivam with Māyā and the wielder of Māyā. Jīva is the individual Self caught in Māyā. God removes this Māyā and frees the individual self from bondage. Herein lies the grace of God and hence He is called the Noble One (Āryan)

From the above discussions, it can be seen that any discussion of Māyā will be incomplete without explaining the concept of the Absolute.

Another technical term from the Tāntric tradition, which the Guru gives to Māyā, is Kundalini. This term is fully explained in chapter five.

In this chapter, we have quoted the Guru in extenso to bring out the different aspects of Māyā as conceived by him. The next chapter of this thesis is an attempt to present Māyā as the Power of the Absolute.

⁴⁹ AAPN., P. 38