As we have already seen, it is the very nature of human being to take one thing for another which may be called as a misunderstanding, an error or ignorance or avidyā. Error or avidyā comes in the way of real knowledge. It is the erroneous knowledge of silver which obstructs the knowledge of conch shell and so also the erroneous knowledge of snake creates a hurdle in the real knowledge of rope. In the same way, the wrong knowledge about the phenomenal world is that the world is completely real, creates an obstruction in the real knowledge of Brahman. It must be remembered that for the knowledge of rope, the substratum, the knowledge of superimposed snake is necessary. If it is not known that the snake which is superimposed on the rope is unreal then the real rope can never be known. Similarly, this magnificent world, which we experience in life, is unreal, the reality behind the world is Brahman. So long as we are not able to realise the falsity of the world, we can never be able to know Brahman. That is why all the Indian philosophers admit the importance of Avidyā or error for achieving the eternity.

Theories of Error :-

Error is a form of invalid cognition. Because in it one thing is cognised not as it is, but as otherwise. For example, in the case of rope-snake illusion or the perception of nacre as silver, here, the rope or the nacre is not perceived as it is, but in other ways like 'this is a snake', or 'this is silver' etc. Here this stands for nacre lying in front of the knower, and it is first seen not as a rope
but as a 'snake' or the 'nacre' as a silver. The distinctive feature of nacre is missed here either due to some defect in sight or due to some particular situation, arising in that field. The silver is falsely cognised as 'here' and 'now'. This is a case of misapprehension or erroneous cognition called viparyaya. It is thus a form of invalid knowledge.

The prominent system of Indian philosophy have given due importance to the concept of error in the name of khyāti. Keeping in view of their philosophical ideal, they have propounded the concept of khyāti in their own way, and we can find that the erroneous cognition of silver based on nacre, for example, has been treated by them altogether in a different manner.

The significant types of khyāti or error can be grouped under two classes- (1) Asatkhyāti and (2) Satkhyāti. According to the theory of Asatkhyāti, in error, there is cognition of the unreal. The theories that go under the class of Satkhyāti hold that in error there is cognition of the real. They are of three types- ātmakhyāti, akhyāti and anyathākhyāti. Besides these there is the Anirvacaniya khyāti of the Advaita vedānta. There are also some other khyātis, like the Prasiddhārtha khyāti of Cārvāka, Alaukika khyāti of Bhattombeka and the Sadasat-khyāti of Śāṅkhyāvādin. Thus though we find that the number of khyātis becomes nine, yet we will discuss here only the first five khyātis which are relevent to our present study.
I) Asatkhyātivāda :-

The Buddhists belonging to the Mādhyamika school hold the Asatkhyātī theory. For the Mādhyamika error is cognition of the non-existent as existent. It consists in cognising the unreal as real. Not to speak of the snake in the rope, even the rope itself is unreal. There can be no substrate for the erroneous cognition. For the Mādhyamikas, therefore, if illusion is the cognition of the real, then, it can not be sublated whether by a cognition of the real, or by a cognition of the unreal.

Now, the question may arise as to when the substrate itself is non-existent, how can there be superimposition on it? The Mādhyamika replies it that it is possible to have a substrateless illusion as in the case of kesōndraka (appearance of a bright wooly mass when the closed eye is pressed with the finger tip) and the appearance of the 'fata morgana'. But the Sunyavādin is not correct in their explanation. For the rays of light are the substrate of the kesōndraka and ether is the substrate of the 'fata morgana'.

The main principle of the Mādhyamika is based on the fact of sublation. Of the real, there can be no sublation. The Mādhyamikas are right when they say that the content of illusion can not be real. For what ever is real can never be negated. But he fails to see that there can be no bare negation, "All negation is significant negation". It at once points towards a positive content. The cancellation in the form, 'not snake', culminates in the cognition, 'but a rope'. Hence it is a mistake for the Sunyavādins that they take both the terms as unreal. Thus after the cancellation of the superimposed snake, there is of course, the unreal snake, but prior to that stage there must be admitted, even by the Sunyavādin, the presentation of the illusory object on a real substrate.
The crux of Advaitin's argument against Asat khyātivādin's is that "the cognition of non-existence is an impossibility". Any cognition must have a cognitum. In the rope-snake illusion, we have immediate experience of a snake. Now, if snake is absolutely non-existent it can never be an object of perception. The cognition of the non-existent is contradictory, for the so called cognition of the non-existent has no content, like the sky-lotus. Thus, "A sheer naught can never be affirmed nor denied, neither accepted nor rejected."

From this we may come to two main solutions. Firstly, that appearance can not be absolutely naught. The appearance of snake in the rope is not an appearance in the making. It is complete in itself. We can not say that it constitutes a complete content and yet is nothing. Again, from our ordinary experience we can say that false content has causal efficiency. It always produce some effect on the cogniser like frightening, run away, attempt to destroy the snake etc. But an absolute nought can not produce any effect to the cogniser. So there can not be absolute naught even in false appearance.

Secondly, it is logically impossible to negate a non-existent entity; for any negation or sublation or rejection must presuppose anything positive to negate, or reject or sublate. S. K. Maitra has rightly remarked that "to reject a nothing is like striking the empty air with a sword". So, to accept that error is sublated, is to accept that it is not non-existent.
II) Ātmakhyātivāda :

The Yogācara idealist school of Buddhists advocates the theory of Ātmakhyāti. According to this school, there is no extra-mental reality at all and objects are mental. Error consists in projecting a mental idea as an extra-mental object or fact. The cognition of extra-mental silver is mistaken according to the Ātmakhyātivādin. It is called Ātmakhyāti, because the locus of the khyāti or error is Ātman.

The Ātmakhyātivādin argues that it is because of the beginningless (anādi) vāsanā that the internal silver is erroneously known as external. For them, the vāsanā regarding the external object, is also external and mere idea (vijñāna). According to the Yogācara, therefore, each vāsanā is the cause of its later vijñāna and so this process is beginningless (anādi). Here seems to raise one objection that as between the vāsaṅā of silver and the erroneous knowledge of silver, there is the obstacle of the knowledge etc, the vāsanā of silver can not be a competent cause for the knowledge of silver. To this, the Vijnānavādin replies that, “as the seed is able to produce the seed, even being the obstacle of ankura, between the cause and effect, so the sajātiya anādi vijñāna is competent to create the sajātiya vijñāna of silver, etc. even if there is an obstacle between the two”.9

The Yogācara school differ from the Mādhyamika school. According to the former, the subjective idea appear as an objective fact in illusion. According to the latter, the non-existent appears to be existent in illusion. Again according to the former, reality is a mental activity, but according to the Mādhyamika school, there is no reality at all. There is neither the existence of silver nor the
nacre. Both are absolutely non-existent. According to the Yogācāra, at least the idea is existent which is wrongly cognised as an object.

The Advaitin agree with the Viśṇunārādīn in so far as the latter admit the relation as well as one of the two terms to be false. But he does not accept the falsity of 'thisness'. For the Viśṇunārādīn, the 'this' is false and 'silver' in the mind is real; whereas Advaita vedānta holds that 'this' is real and 'silver' is false. Advaita vedānta is realistic in its approach here. The object is given and the knowledge is determined by the object.

Śaṅkara has vehemently criticised the Viśṇunārādīn's denial of the external object. In the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya Śaṅkara refutes the Viśṇunārādīn's idealism according to which only idea exists and nothing else. For Śaṅkara, the external world is an object of experience through the senses and therefore can not be denied as non-existent like the horn of a hare. No one says that, "Devadatta is like the son of a barren woman". The existence of external object is ascertained by all kinds of valid knowledge, so their non-existence can not be admitted.

Again to prove their view that there is no external object and the internal are perceived as if external, the Viśṇunārādīn have placed the dream state and waking state on a par. In a dream there are no external object, yet the ideas appear as if in a two-fold form as subject and object. But the Advaitins refute this view by saying that there is difference between the dream state and the waking state. The dream state is contradicted by waking experience as it is unreal. The dream is a kind of memory, but the waking state is a real perception so it can not be rejected as unreal. Nobody can deny the existence of external
objects like trees, pots, walls, house, mountain etc, seen in the waking state. Again dreams are private. It can never be shared even by one sleeping in the same bed. On the other hand, waking life is public. Thus, Śaṅkara argues that these two states can not be equated or treated on the same level.

Thus, it is clear, that the theory of Ātmakhyāti is untenable from all sides. Unless, we have experience of the external object, how can there occur the illusion of externality? If there are no external object, the ideas can not have the form of objects. Even the impression also require external objects. Thus the Advaitin rejects Ātmakhyātivāda.

III) Satkhyātivāda :-

The Viśiṣṭadvaita theory of error as developed by Rāmānuja is known as Satkhyātivāda. Sometimes Akhyātivāda, Ātmakhyātivāda, Anyathākhyātivāda and Anirvacanīyakhyātivāda are grouped as Satkhyātivāda on the ground that they admit a real substratum of all erroneous cognition. But this view is not correct. It is rather a distinctly original theory developed by Rāmānuja and his followers. “This theory was propounded after Śaṅkara, and its main intention was to criticize the Advaita theory of error”. However, it is evident that, the Satkhyātivādins are dissatisfied with the view of Astkhyātivādins that error is the cognition of the unreal as real. They base their views on the positive import of erroneous cognition that the object of illusion is real and that the content of the illusory experience really exists in the substratum of illusion. The most widely accepted view of error, according to the realist is that, “all our experiences are true”, and that “all that is presented in experience is real”. Thus according to this theory, every illusory perceptions contains some element of reality.
Rāmānuja's theory is based on the principle of quintuplication (pañcikaranā) that all objects of the physical world are of five elements in varying proportions; and it is in this meaning that Rāmānuja says, "everything participates in the nature of everything else". That one 'silver' and another 'shell' has its relation preponderance of one over the other. The implication is that everything contains every other thing. Thus nacre contains the constituent parts of silver; mirage possesses water. The difference among them is that of degree, and not of kind. "When one observe that a shell is similar to silver perception itself informs that some elements of the latter actually exists in the former". Thus the shell-element is in a prominent degree whereas silver-element is in a lesser degree. When conch appears yellow to a jaundiced man, it is because yellowness pertaining to the eyes are transmitted to the conch. Even dream objects are for Rāmānuja a knowledge of the real. "Dream objects are temporarily created by God for the dreamer". So that the experiencer can enjoy the fruit of his past action. Thus for Rāmānuja, knowledge is always the knowledge of realities. The so called illusory knowledge is illusory, not because the object is unreal, but because it fails to catch the real. When the defect of the sense organ go away, the so-called illusion is corrected. This theory states that, "error is neither the apprehension of sheer nothingness, nor of any anirvacaniya object, it is simply the cognition of a partial feature as the only and the exclusive feature of the object". When the rope is perceived as a snake, the perceiver perceives a real snake feature in the rope laying before him, ignoring its other characters. His mistake consists not in perceiving the unreal, but in considering the snake-character to be the only character of the objects laying before him and ignoring its other characters.
The post Śaṅkara Advaita vedāntins have criticised this theory which we can briefly express as follows -

Firstly, Rāmānuja’s theory of Satkhyāti rests on a misunderstanding of Pañcikaraṇa principle. According to this principle, subtle elements are mixed up with one another, but not the gross elements or their evolutes. Hence the statement that everything consists every other thing does not hold good. If it is true, then we should see the particles of gold, carban and other particles mixed up with the particles of shell. If it is urged that since the particles of nacre and silver are extremely similar, then it will be difficult to discriminate between the two. Therefore, Rāmānuja’s claim that everything exists in everything else is untenable.

Secondly, Rāmānuja’s Satkhyātivāda goes against the actual deliverence of experience. If there is really silver in nacre, when put into fire, we should have got it in liquified state and not into ashes. If the conch were really painted yellow by the rays of the eyes, it ought to have been equally seen yellow by others also. But in our actual life it never happen.

Thirdly, dream objects can not be treated on a par with other objects. Elephants, gardens, etc, seen in the dream can not belong to the same spatio-temporal order of waking life. Again dreams are absolutely private and have different kinds of existence which extremely belongs to the experiencer and can not be shared by others.

Fourthly, Rāmānuja says that the so-called illusory knowledge is illusory not because it has an unreal object but because it fails in life. Now since he admits that both the silver elsewhere and nacre-silver are equally real,
so it is necessary for him to explain why one is useful and the other is not which he could not answer satisfactorily.

Rāmānuja holds that there is no difference in degree of reality between illusory and right knowledge of objects. But this view is logically untenable. Hence the Satkhyāti theory can not be accepted.

IV) Akhyātivāda :-

The propounder of the Akhyātivāda (the theory of non-apprehension) are the Prabhākara Mīmāṃsakas. It is the most thorough-going attempt to explain error on realistic line. According to this theory there is no such thing as invalid cognition. Knowledge is always valid, there is no room for error in knowledge. The so called error is due to non-discrimination of two different cognitions - presentative and memory image. In the case of 'This is silver' the 'this' is presented to us and the 'silver' is remembered. Due to its similarity with the nacre, and along with it some psychological factors like greed, etc., the silver is supplied by memory. Thus due to the failure to distinguish between the perceived fact and the memory image, non-distinction between the presentative and representative character of objects, there arises the cognition of silver instead of nacre. This view is known as Asatkhyāti, for according to the propounders of this theory, the cognition of nacre as silver is due to non-apprehension of the difference between the present object and the represented idea.

Thus, in the Akhyātivāda, there involves the following elements—

(a) The presentation of something. (A)
(b) The non-cognition of the real nature of the thing thus presented through the defect of the senses.

(c) The revival of images (B) of other things through superficial resemblance.

(d) The failure of the mind to cognise it as a memory image and this helps to hold it up as something presented, rather than represented.

(e) The confusion of the presentation and the representation, and the fallacy of mistaking one for the other.

The Akhyāti theory is ingenuous in as much as it manages to steer clear of the subjective element. But it rests on certain dangerous propositions which fails to do justice to the fact of experience as- (i) that erroneous knowledge is not a unit but a composite of two jñānas. (ii) that there can be a memory experience with the element of past reference and (iii) that mere absence of knowledge or non-apprehension can act as a motive to action.

According to the Akhyātivādins there is no invalid cognition- cognition may be less than true but can not be untrue. But this view does not stand scrutiny. If a person does not cognize the nacre which is in front of him as silver, he will not proceed towards it and try to pick it up. But as he does so we can not but admit that he has mistaken nacre for silver. Hence it must be admitted that error is wrong cognition in the positive sense, and it can not be said to be just non-apprehension in the negative sense.

While explaining error, the Akhyātivādins do not attach much importance to the presentational character of the illusory object. They contend
that all erroneous cognitions are cases of memory. But memory can not account
for the presentation of the illusory object because, on the one hand, the object
of memory never appears outside, and on the other hand, the spatio-temporal
reference of the original experience is an important factor of all memory. Memory
without past reference, is in fact a contradictory term. In case of illusory
experience, objects are presented to us positively without a past reference. We
can not say that we remember the 'silver' and perceive the 'this' here. Illusory
object is positively presented without a past reference. So erroneous cognition
can not be the case of memory.

Vācaspati Misra states that non-apprehension of difference between
perceptual and memory elements in error can never be the cause of activity of
an intelligent being, such activity being a function of positive knowledge.²⁰ He
has rightly said that there can not be any activity without desire which rests on
positive assurance of the existence of its objects. Unless one knows silver to
be the substrate of 'thisness' one can not be persuaded to desire it.²¹ Man's
activity always results from knowledge. In illusory state we are active, we pick
up the shell-silver or run away from the rope-snake. Over and above the non-
distinction there is identification of two things—positive and negative which the
Akhyātivādins do not observe. Further, if non-apprehension is the cause of
error there should be delusion in sleep where there is non-existence of cognition.

Prabhākara's theory held that there is no misapprehension, but only
non-apprehension of difference between two objects in illusion. But this
explanation of error in terms of non-apprehension is not intelligible. Non-
apprehension being the absence or abhāva of apprehension can not claim
anything for its content and thus, cannot claim to reveal anything. Now, if there is no content apprehended, there cannot be any sublating cognition later on. But our experience says that the cognition of the object in front as silver may be sublated later on due to the effect that it is not silver. Thus the sublating cognition that we experience, cannot be explained by Prabhāśaṅkha's theory of error.

We see, thus that the Akhyātivādins explanation of error is untenable. They are not able to determine and explain the exact nature of error.

V) **Anyathākhātivāda** :-

The Naiyāyikas advocate the Anyathākhāti theory of error. This theory is an advance over the Akhyātivādins in so far as it recognizes the presentative character of the object of illusion. Like Akhyātivādins it holds that both the terms of the illusion are real. But unlike them, it maintains that illusion is a positive affair. Illusion is a wrong identification of two real objects. For the Anyathākhātivādin, an illusion is thus a manifestation of a real object not as it is, but as a different object. It is thus the misapprehension of one thing as another thing. It is presentative or perceptual in character.

Let us take, for example, a mother-of-pearl shell which has been mistaken for a piece of silver, and this knowledge is expressed as, "This is silver". Now the question is, how such an illusion arises? According to the older Naiyāyikas what we first perceive in the shell-silver illusion is "those qualities of nacre which are common to both nacre and silver". We fail to perceive the peculiar qualities of the nacre owing to the perversion of the visual organ; then the perception of these common qualities reminds us of the peculiar qualities of silver by association." The recollection of silver, owing to some perversion,
of the mind, produces the perception of silver, in contact with the visual organ.

The Navya-Naiyāyikas hold that the "visual perception of silver in a nacre depends upon the extraordinary intercourse through the idea of silver revived in memory by association". Through this intercourse, "the idea of silver reproduce in memory by association produce the visual perception of silver". Again, negation of this knowledge as 'This is not silver' (na idaṁ rajatam), while it brings out that silver is not here, also implies that it is present elsewhere. Thus negation performs two acts - first, it negates the silver here, and next, it affirms that silver is present elsewhere. Thus both silver and nacre are real, what is false is the relation between the two.

The main objection against the position of the older Naiyāyikas is the same as that of Prabhākara or the Akhyātivadins. There is a vast difference between recollection and perception which can not be denied. Thus the silver seen at present can not be identified with the silver seen before and elsewhere. The illusory object, so long as it persists, has a character of giveness in the spatio-temporal frame of here and now. Silver of memory can not have this presentational character of giveness. So the perception of silver is quite different from the memory of silver.

The extraordinary contact also can not satisfactorily explain the immediacy of the illusory object. The distant silver is perceived through this contact, in the nacre. But actually silver is presented 'here and now' and not in a distant place. Therefore, the remote silver can not be the content of illusory perception of silver.
Further, the Anyathākhyātivādins should not say that correction cancels only the relation of identity between the 'this' and the 'silver'. For the exact nature of correction (na idarhi rajatarthi) clearly shows that the silver itself is the object of cognition. The sublating cognition does not exhibit silver as present elsewhere. Thus, in illusion, not only the relation between the two terms is false, but one of the term (silver) is also false. So we can not accept the Anyathākhyātivādins contention that both the terms in illusory cognitions are real.

VI) Anirvacanīyakhyātivāda :-

From the above discussion of the various theories of error, we can trace out two main points- one that which maintains the appearance of something non-real in false appearance (Asat khyāti) and the other that which maintain the appearance of something real in false perception (Sat khyāti). And combining these theories we have the Vedāntic doctrine of appearance of something relatively real and relatively non-real in false perception (Anirvacanīyakhyāti).

We have seen that the content of illusory experience can not really exist in the substratum of illusion, it is not a memory-image, neither it is a real existing elsewhere, nor again it is purely internal or mental. Śaṅkara points out that in spite of difference, these theories agree at one point. All of them admit that 'error is the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing in another thing'. And there with agrees also the popular view which is examplified by expressions such as the following "mother-of-pearl, pears like silver, 'the moon although one only appears as if she were double".
When we analyse the illusory experience, we find three stages there. First of all, there is the illusory perception (bhrānti), as the perception of shell as silver. The second stage is that of sublation (bādha). In this stage, there is the assertion that “This is not silver”. In the third stage, we have the knowledge of the falsity (mithyātva), along with the realisation of the fact that “This is shell”. This is the stage of reflection. Now, through out the entire process, we come to the conclusion, that shell-silver can not be real or unreal or both. If it were real, its cognition would not be delusive, nor could there be sublation for it. Nor can it be unreal since it is perceived or experienced. The real is that which can never be negated or sublated. The shell-silver being cancelled later on, can not be regarded as real. Nor can it be unreal, for the unreal is that which can never be an object of immediate experience. The shell-silver being immediately cognised, can not be unreal. Hence, because of cognition the shell-silver illusion is not unreal, because of sublation, it is not real. It can not be both real and unreal at the same time because of contradiction. What then, it is ? It is anirvacanīya.

**Meaning of Anirvacanīya**

The generally accepted meaning of the term anirvacanīya is unutterable, unspeakable, or indescribable.²⁷ But Śaṅkara does not use the term in these senses. When something can not be explained either as real or unreal, he uses the term ‘anirvacanīya’. For Kazi Nurul Islam, “this term is very often translation as indescribable, indeterminable, indefinable etc, without caring either for the exact sense in which it is used by Śaṅkara or for the proper meanings of these terms”.²⁸ For him the term ‘anirvacanīya’ as used by Śaṅkara.
therefore, does not convey the exact meaning of the term as commonly understood. For example, the term indescribable means 'beyond description'. In this sense 'a barren woman's child' or 'a square circle' etc are beyond description, since they are absolute naught. But Śaṅkara does not consider them to be anirvacāṇīya. Again, a term is said to be indefinable when it can not be defined in any language. In this sense, Brahman is anirvacāṇīya, but Śaṅkara never hold Brahman to be anirvacāṇīya. For Śaṅkara "anirvacāṇīya refers to the object belonging to the Pratibhāsika sattā and the vyavahārīka sattā and not to the Pāramārthika sattā or to the absolutely unreal". Therefore "while using terms like indeterminable or indefinable for anirvacāṇīya, one should bear in the mind that it refers to something which can not be determined in terms of Sat ideas, such as real or unreal or both." So we can say that Śaṅkara's anirvacaniya is always related with the term reality or Sat.

Śaṅkara used the term anirvacāṇīya to explain the nature of the phenomenal world. The critics often misunderstood Śaṅkara's explanation of the world as other than Brahman who conceive it as mere illusion or falsity. The attempt to clarify the logical status of the empirical world, made him conceived it as vyavahārīka and to establish this vyavahārīka position of the world led him to refer the concept of Anirvacāṇīya-khyāti as distinct from other views of error. Śaṅkara does not designate the rival khyātis but that does not mean that he was not aware of their precise nature. It is a fact that Śaṅkara does not show his fondness towards this term. "That Śaṅkara does not use the term 'anirvacāṇīya' in this context in the Brahma Sutra Bhāṣya, does not mean that he could not have used the term elsewhere." According to N. K. Devaraja
"It is of rare occurrence in his works and has not been used more than half a dozen times in the Śāriṅaka Bhāṣya." 32 Under sutra 1.1.5.33 we are told that undeveloped names and forms, which are desired to be differentiated by God, which can not be defined as either real or unreal, are the object of knowledge. Again in the Bhāṣya on sutra 11.1.14.34, it is said that names and forms, the products of avidyā, which are the very self of the Omniscient God as it were, which can not be defined as either real or unreal, which are at the root of the universe, are called māyāsakti or prakṛti of Brahman in the Śrūtīs and Śmṛtīs.

In the above and other similar contexts, Śaṅkara speaks of māyā as anirvacanīya in respect of reality and unreality. Thus in the Bhāṣya on 1.4.3. Śaṅkara observes, "Māyā is unmanifest, because it can not be characterized as either real or unreal." 35 He always characterise māyā as Sadsadānirvacanīya. He never countenances the popular interpretation of the term as indefinable or inexplicable. Hence anirvacanīya constitutes the very nature of Maya, which constitutes the Indispensable creative power of God, or more accurately we may say that it is anirvacanīya in respect of reality and unreality.

**Mithyā Stands for Anirvacanīya:**

Generally anirvacanīya and mithyā do not convey the same meaning. But in Advaita vedānta they are used in the same sense. While explaining the nature of the world, the Advaitins consider the world to be mithyā (Jagat mithyā), and by the term 'mithyā' they mean anirvacanīya, and this is the very term, which the critics misunderstood as 'false' or illusion. Kazi Nurul Islam in his book 36 has made a clear explanation of this point. And we may also accept the view that mithyā in Advaita vedānta implies 'sadasadvilaksanānāṁ' or anirvacanīya.
Thus throughout our whole study we find that the Anirvacanīyakhyātivāda is a logical consequence of the refutation of the rival theories of error. For neither the theories which consider the object of erroneous cognition as real, nor the theories which regard it as unreal, can adequately explain the fact of error. Take the example of 'rope-snake' illusion. The snake appearing in the rope, can not be real, as it is sublated when right knowledge arises. Nor can it be unreal, as it is a fact of experience. It can not be both real and unreal for that will violate the law of contradiction. Therefore one must admit that the object of erroneous cognition is anirvacanīya. Infact, the Advaitins never hold that the erroneous object is non existent. What they want to say that it is neither real nor unreal.

Śaṅkara uses the term 'anirvacanīyata' to explain the world appearance. In our next chapter we will find that Śaṅkara recognises three level of reality- prātibhāsika, vyavahārika and pāramārthika. If the subject and the object belong to the same order of reality, there is no possibility of error. But when they belong to different grades of reality, there arises error. In the rope-snake illusion e.g, the snake belongs to the prātibhāsika level as it is perceived by only one individual being and therefore it is strictly 'private'. But the rope belongs to a higher order. It is 'public' as it is perceived by all or by the same individual at different time and even by different individuals at the same time. So it belongs to the vyavahārika level of existence. Thus in the 'rope-snake' illusion, the snake is real from prātibhāsika level, unreal from vyavahārika level, and hence it is neither real nor unreal i.e. it is anirvacanīya. Similar is the case with the world appearance. The world is real in the vyavahārika level as it is...
experienced by all. But it suffers from contradiction only when man attains the knowledge of Brahman. Thus in the vyavahārika level there is no error in world experience, all are real. But from the higher stage i.e. when man attains the pāramārthika level i.e. when Brahman-consciousness arises, man realises the unreality of the world appearance. And in order to explain the state of world appearance as neither real nor unreal, Śaṅkara has used the term 'anirvacāṇīya' in a befitting manner.
References

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3) ibid. P-90.

4) ibid. P-89.

5) 'Nirādhārasya bhramasya asaṁbhabāt'.

6) 'Ākāśa nalinaupallabaderapratibhāsanāt'-Nyāya Manjuri.

7) Quoted from Islum Kazi Nurul. A Critique of Śaṅkara’s Philosophy of Appearance. P-201.


9) Prof. Sharma Ram Murti. Some Aspects of Advaita Philosophy. P-38

10) B. S. S.- 2.11.28.

11) ibid- 2.11.29.

12) Quoted from Islum Kazi Nurul. A Critique of Śaṅkara’s Philosophy of Appearance. P-236.


14) ‘Prakāśamānātmatātram sattvārñ’.-Bhāmati.

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16) ibid. P-80.

17) Ramanuja’s Śrī Bhāṣya. III.2.1-3.


19) Quoted from Circar. M. N. Vedāntic Thought and Culture. P-61

21) ibid. P-206.


23) ibid. P-127.

24) ibid. P-128.

25) B. S. S. Introduction.

26) ibid. 'Tathā ca laukenubhabah-suṣṭikā hi rajatabadababhāsate, svachandraḥ sa dvitiyavad'.


29) ibid. P-215.

30) B. S. S. Introduction.

31) Pande Govinda Chandra. Life and Thought of Śaṅkara. P-117.

32) Devaraja. N. K. An Introduction to Śaṅkara’s Theory of Knowledge P-158.

33) ibid. P-158.

34) ibid. P-158.

35) ‘Avyakta hi sa māya tattvānyatvabhyāṁ nīrupanasyasakyātvāt’ - B. S. S. 1.4.3.


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