Nijaguna Shivayogi has, like the traditional Advaitins, discussed the place of maya in the scheme of Reality. Advaita works out its metaphysics, epistemology and ethical discipline only through its basic concept of maya or avidya. As Dr. R. Balasubramanian explains in his learned work on the Advaita, "the distinction between Brahman as nirguna and Brahman as Saguna, the apparent difference between Brahman and the individual soul, which are important issues in the metaphysics of Advaita presuppose the concept of avidya. In the same way, the subject-object epistemology involving the distinctions of the knower, the known, and the resulting knowledge, and the theory of Vivartha in terms of which the problem of error is explained, presupposes the concept of avidya. If Advaita insists that knowledge, and knowledge alone, is the direct means to release, it is because of the fact that avidya, which is the root cause of bondage of the individual soul, can be removed only by knowledge. The ethical discipline which Advaita formulates for attaining release is meaningful only when it is viewed in the context of avidya. It is, therefore, no wonder that avidya has been characterized as the corner-stone of Advaita."¹

¹. Advaita Vedanta - Dr. R. Balasubramanian, (Pub: Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy University of Madras, 1976), P. 194
Nijaguna uses the terms māyā and avidya as synonyms. This māyā, which is responsible for the appearance of the world of multiplicity and of finite individuals, says Nijaguna is having avinābhuta-sambandha with Brahman or Shambhulinga, like the burning power of fire with the fire. The burning power of the fire cannot said to be either swarūpa of that fire, as it (the burning power) can be controlled by the exercise of the Mani-mantra magic etc., (Maṇi-mantrādī Prayōga) or other than fire, as it participates in the exploding process of fire (spōṭakādī kāryagamyamāgiripudu) etcetera. In the same way, says Nijaguna, māyā is neither the swarūpa of Brahman, as maya or avidya can be removed by right knowledge, nor different from Brahman for Brahman is the only Reality. Māyā is not real. For the only reality is Brahman or Shambhulinga and māyā gets sublated by the onset of Brahman-intuition. But neither is maya totally unreal like the son-of-a-barren-women. For it projects the world of appearance. Nor is it a blend of the real and the unreal. For, if it is so, it violates the law of

1. See Anubhava Sāra 1.4.4-5

contradiction. But māyā is 'anirvacaniya' or unspeakable. It is beginningless and is the seed or cause for the appearance of the whole universe.¹ Nijaguna has offered a unique explanation about the 'anirvacaniyatva' (the unspeakability) of māyā. According to him māyā is 'anirvacaniya' because it cannot be described through any of the nine ways,² that is to say, māyā cannot be described, either as 'bhinna' (different) from Brahman, for there is no other reality other than Brahman, or as 'abhinna' (identical) with Brahman, for māyā is jagā and it cannot be identified with the Pure-Cit or Brahman, or even as both 'bhinna-abhinna' (identity-in-difference, or both identical with and different from) in its relation to Brahman, for this conception is self-discrepant. Further, māyā cannot be described either as 'Sat' (real), for Brahman is the only reality, or as 'asat' (unreal) like hare's horn, for it projects the world of appearance, or as 'Sadasat' (real-cum-unreal), for this leads to self-contradiction. Furthermore, māyā cannot be described either as 'Sāvayava' (the one which is having organs or parts), for 'Sāvayavatva' indicates a beginning and māyā is beginningless, or as 'niravayava' (the one which is organless or partless), for that feature indicates

¹ Anubhava Sāra, 1.4.4

causelessness and maya is the germinal cause for the whole universe, or even as both 'Sāvayava and nirayaya, for its being so violates the law of contradiction. Thus māyā is unthinkable (acintya), for all thought is subject to it and it is anirvacanīya or indescribable, for all language and descriptions result from it. This māyā or avidya is called 'mithya' i.e. something other than sat and asat (Sadasatvilakṣana). Mithya does not, however, mean absolute non-existence like that of a sky-flower. Rather it appears like a dream-elephant and disappears or gets sublated through Brahman-knowledge.¹

Brahman is the 'ādhara' (locus or asraya) for māyā and māyā is the 'ādhēya' (that which is seated or located) and this adhēya māyā is neither totally in nor totally out of Brahman as the marking-nut is in relation to its fruit.² Nijagūṇa Shivayogi takes the support of a statement from the Svetaswatara Upanisat to explain the relation of maya to Brahman and says: "Māyā is the indistinguishable power or 'sakti of Brahman".³

2. Anubhava Sāra, 1.4.5, and Paramānubhavabodhe, 1.7.1.
3. Anubhava Sāra, 1.4.6, (Devatma sakti Swagunairnigūdham 1.3)
This māyā, the indistinguishable power or sakti of Brahman or Shambhulinga, persists as creative power until one realizes the truth of the sole reality of Brahman. It is having 'Aghaṭita-ghaṭana-sāmarthya' or the power of creating that which is unreal as real. Ontologically, māyā deludes us into taking the empirical world as reality. Epistemologically, māyā is ignorance or avidya. ¹

**Powers of Māyā**

Māyā has two powers: one is the power of covering or concealing the Reality (āvaraṇa-sakti); and the other is the power of projecting the unreality or appearance (vikṣepa-sakti). That is the reason why we not only fail to perceive the Shambhulinga but we also substitute something else, which is not real, i.e. the world of multiplicity in its place. ²

**Forms of Māyā**

Māyā has three Vrittis (or forms) they are: 'Visuddha sattvarūpamāyā', 'Malinasattva-rupāvidya' and 'Tamapradhāna-rupaprakṛiti'. Shambhulinga or Brahman, who is the ground of the appearance of the

2. Paramartha Geete, 1,3, lines 6-10.
whole universe (like the rope in the rope-snake illusion), is the adhiṣṭana or adhāra of māyā. Brahman reflecting himself in the Vritti of Visuddhasattva-ruṣyamaya, appears as Iswara. Iswara is qualified by all - pervading qualities like 'Sarvajñatva' etcetera. For his basic nature, unlike the basic nature of the Jīva, is not covered by māyā and hence the covering and delimitting power (āvaranasākāti) of māyā is not operative in his case. Next, the same Brahman, reflecting himself in the Vritti of Malināsattvarupavidya, appears as Jīva. Jīva, however, unlike Iswara possesses only delimited qualities like 'Kincchajñatva' (limited knowing power) etcetera. For in the case of Jīva (unlike in the case of Iswara) Māyā covers its basic nature also and delimits its powers. The same Brahman, further reflecting himself in the Vritti of 'Tamarādhāna-rupaprakriti', appears as the whole insentient universe. Thus the Iswara, the Jīva and the Jagat have all appeared through māyā in the one and the same adhistana or ground namely Brahman.

2. Anubhavasāra, 1.4.8.
Māyā is Positive

This māyā or avidya is not merely negative or a mere absence of knowledge but something positive (bhāva-rūpa). It is not only non-apprehension, but also misapprehension, for it makes the infinite appear as finite, and produces the manifold phenomena when in fact there is only the non-dual Shambhulinga. It makes the unlimited Shambhulinga appear as limited Jīvas. It produces the false notions of plurality and difference. Even in our ordinary experience it is known to exist, for, our experience of it is positive and immediate in the forms: 'I did not know rope; but now I know.' 'I was under wrong impression' etcetera. Further it is positive as we do have actual experiences both of ignorance and of its removal by knowledge. Thus Maya or Avidya is positive or 'bhāva-rūpa. “Here the expression "bhāva-rūpa" does not convey the sense that avidya is real (Sat); rather it conveys the sense that avidya is something positive or existent to be distinguished from what is negative or non-existent. Though avidya is not real, it is nevertheless existent accounting for the appearance of the world, until it is sublated by the immediate knowledge of the ultimate reality.”

1. Advaita Vedanta - Dr. R. Balasubramanian, (Pub. Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1976), P. 207.
Locus of Māya

At one place in his works\(^1\) Sri Nījagūna says: "Jīva is the locus of maya" but at another place\(^2\) he says: "Brahman is the locus of māyā". Thus it may at the outset appear that there is a contradiction in the position adopted by Nījagūna on the question of the locus of māyā. But really speaking it is not so. For although maya, to begin with, appear to be located in the Jīva who perceives the objective manifold it must ultimately be said to be located in the Brahman himself as the Jīva is ultimately Brahman himself. Moreover Nījagūna is of the opinion that this maya or avidya is from the stand point of the Brahman or Shambhulinga unreal and as such it cannot and need not have any real locus. He says we discuss the locus of maya only from the ordinary empirical stand point, as in the rope-snake illusion where the rope is the locus of the illusory snake. As regards the visaya or the object of maya Nījagūna says that it cannot be anything else but Brahman himself.\(^3\) For Brahman alone is the sole reality from the ultimate ontological stand point.

1. Paramartha Geete, 1.3, Line 11.
2. Anubhava sara, 1.4.5.
Adhyâsa or Super-imposition

In describing the process of mâyâ or avidya, which leads to Samsâra, Nijagûna introduces adhyâsa or super-imposition. Adhyâsa is the notion of that in something which is not that, like the notion of silver coming in the place of the notion of shell in a shell-silver-illusion. It is due to such adhyâsa or super-imposition (which is also termed 'adhyârâpa') that the whole world with its multiplicity appears. The primary application of adhyâsa is made, by Nijagûna, with respect to the individual self. Nijagûna has discussed four kinds of adhyâsas in this context. They are:

(i) Mithyâdhyâsa, which consists in identifying the Ātman with the body, (ii) Sattâdhyâsa, which consists in identifying the Ātman with âhanikâra, (iii) Itaradhyâsa

1. Adanu tattalladirpudarâllitadbudhiyudoyavendrivudâle Sukti-rajatambudâradristanta- mukhadinda - Anubhavasâra, 6.2.8.
3. Paramanubhava bôdhe, 3.10. 4-6. (See also Paramârtha Geete, 5.5.7; and Anubhavasâra, 6.2).
which consists in identifying Ātman with the indriyas, and (iv) Itartarakādhyāsa, which consists in identifying Ātman with the antahkarana and its dharmas. This is also called by Nījaguṇa 'anyonyādhyāsa', which is mutual superimposition where we find the mixing up of the qualities of Ātman and antahkarana and as a result we take that antahkarana knows, this and that, although it is jāda and Ātman is real kartha and bhokta etc., although He is neither of them.

Different names for Māyā

Māyā has been called, by Nījaguṇa, by six names. They are: (i) Tamas (this has covered the Jīva-chaitanya), (ii) Māyā (this is the cause for the world of appearance), (iii) Mōha (this is the cause for the identification of self with the not-self and consequently the cause for our craving for the things of the world which it identifies with the self), (iv) Avidya — which has become the obstacle for knowing one's own true self and which is destructible by Vidya or Knowledge, and (v) Anṛta — that which does not exist ultimately or that which, although it appears to exist now, ceases to exist after the Brahman-knowledge.¹ This māyā has also

¹. Paramānubhava bōdhe, 1.7.6–11
(See also Vēdānta Granthāvali, Ibid, Ibid, Sect. 93, P. 312)
been called by Nijaguna (vi) 'Prakriti' which has the
three elements of Sattva, rajas and tamas.1 But
this should not be mistaken to be the Prakriti of
Sāmkhya which is an independent reality. This Prakriti
of Nijaguna is indistinguishable power of Brahman and
it is absolutely dependent on Him. Although this
Prakriti or maya is anadi (beginningless), it is sāntha
(i.e. that which is having an end) as it ceases to
exist with the onset of Brahman-intuition.

Laksanas of Māyā

Māyā, according to Nijaguna, is having five
lakṣanas or characteristics.2 It is: (i) Asat
(Unreal-like a hare's horn), (ii) Jāda (Inert-like a
rock), (iii) Duhkha-rūpa (of the Nature of Sorrow –
like the sorrow resulting from the illusory perception
of shell as silver and from the consequent non-
availability of silver therein), (iv) Anithya
(Uneternal – like the body which appears and disappears)
and (v) Khandita (Divisible – like time).

1. Paramanubhava bodhe, 1.8.1
2. Nijaguna Shivayogi: Viveka Chintamani,
(ed. by Prof. G.M. Umapatishastri, 1969), P. 30
Dharmās of Māyā

Māyā is having two dharmās or natures: One is Contraction and the other is Expansion. Māyā is expanding itself and showing the whole universe and through its contraction it hides everything – Like the Citrapata through its expansion shows all pictures and while through its contraction hides all the pictures.

Gunas of Māyā

Māyā according to Nijaguna is having two guṇas or qualities: (i) Maya is Aswatantra or not-independent since māyā, which is mithya, will never appear without Shambhulinga or Pure-Cit on whom it always depends. (ii) Māyā, says Nijaguna, is also Swatantra or independent. This on the face of it will appear as self-contradictory as he has already said that it is not-independent. But Nijaguna says māyā is independent when viewed in its relation to the world though not when viewed in its relation to the Brahman. Māyā projects the whole universe, both sentient and insentient, out

1. Ibid, P. 31
2. Ibid, P. 31
of Brahman. Thus the whole universe is dependent on maya but māyā cannot be said to be dependent on the universe which it projects. It is in this sense and only in this sense that māyā is said to be independent by Nijaguna.

The concept of maya thus described may appear to be riddled with some contradictory features. For example maya, says Nijaguna at some places, is 'Tucchā' or unreal. But at some other places he says māyā is 'Sathya' or real. And at still some other places he says māyā is 'Anirvacaniya' or indescribable. Nijaguna is well aware of this fact and he proceeds to explain these seemingly contradictory features of māyā with the help of three distinct spheres of knowledge as follows: Māyā, says Nijaguna, is Tucchā or unreal like a sky-flower from the point of view of 'Sruti-sambandhijnana' or the sruti-related-knowledge i.e. from the point of view of the sruti-sphere of knowledge. Māyā, he says, can be regarded as Sathya or real from the point of view of 'Lōka-sambandhijnāna' or the world-related-knowledge i.e. from the point of view of the world or phenomenal-sphere of knowledge. Māyā, he further says, is Anirvacaniya or indescribable like the silver in a shell-silver-illusion due to the 'Yukti-sambandhijnāna or the intellect or logic-related knowledge i.e. due to the logic-sphere of knowledge.

1. Ibid, P. 30