

## MĀYĀ: A NOTE

Śaṅkara speaks of Māyā as the power of the Lord, and beginningless. Sadānanda says that Māyā is something positive though intangible which cannot be described as either being or non-being. (It is very doubtful whether it can be described as cosmic illusion). Māyā cannot be described as being or as non-being that is why Māyā is said to be indefinable. If it were being, in the true sense, then its effect, the tangible universe would be perceived at all times. For being can never become unreal. On the other hand, if Māyā were non-being a non-existent unreality, like the son of a barren woman, the manifold universe could not be seen. One could not see the world of names and form as real. Therefore Māyā is said to be 'something positive'. If it is regarded as something positive then Monism cannot be established because then there would be two principles not one, Brahman and Māyā. (Orthodox thinkers would consider this a 'type fallacy' for the two cannot be equated). Yet the word 'positive' suggests that 'Māyā' cannot be explained away as 'airy nothing'.

This dilemma can only be solved by changing the form of the question. Instead of asking the question 'What is Māyā' we should ask the question, 'What are those features of the world that make us regard the world as 'Māyā'? We know that there are certain features of the world which refuse to add up. Then at once the problem becomes verifiable, checkable. 'Māyā' is not a genuine name. It cannot function as name.

I would like other philosophers to comment upon this original suggestion of mine.

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