**Definition of Falsity or Mithyā: An Analysis of Advaitasiddhi**

**Bidyut Mondal**

**Assistant Professor**

**Department of Philosophy**

**Presidency University, Kolkata**

**Abstract:** We see, experience, and live our lives in this empirical world. We, ordinary people, perceive the world as real or sattvāvāna. But, Advaitins say, the world is false, it has no actual existence. So, questions, then, arise, do we live in a falsified universe? Or, do the things which are around us have no essential value? Such questions haunt us to look into the meaning and analysis of the Advaitins, and thus, this paper is nothing but an unraveling interpretation of the meaning of falsity presented by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his auspicious text, *Advaitasiddhi*. Not a single among the five definitions given in the book is his definition of Madhusūdna. He just tried to establish the validity of those definitions. Among the five, Pancapādikākāra wrote the first one. Vivaraṇakāra gave the second and the third. Citsukhācāriya wrote the fourth definition of falsity. And the last, i.e., the fifth definition of falsity, is provided by the author of *Makaranda*, Ᾱnandavodhācāriya.

The first definition of falsity presented in the *Advaitasiddhi* is *sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva*. That is to say; the property falsity is not the substratum of either existence (*sattvā*) or non-existence (*asattvā*). Here, existence (*sattvā)* means free from contradiction for all the times, i.e., *trikālāvādhyatva* and non-existence (*asattvā)* means being the absence or *vyatireka* of *trikālāvādhyatva*. In this sense, Brahman is existent as it has the property *trikālāvādhyatva*. Brahman is never liable to contradiction, while the hare`s horn, sky-lotus, etc. are non-existent because such things cognize nowhere as *trikālāvādhyatva*.

It has been said in the earlier that the first definition of the falsity would be analyzed, which is discussed and explained in Advaitasiddhi. Regarding the interpretations, the opponent leveled many objections which were subdued by Madhusūdana. Hence, I intend to focus only on the validity of the first definition of falsity by rejecting the opponent’s position.

**Keywords: Advaita Vedānta, Advaitasiddhi, Mithyātve(Falsity), Brahman, Trikālāvādhyatva, Sattvā, Asattvā, Anadhikaraṇa, sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva, Pratipannopādhou traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam, Jñānanivartyatva, Svāśrayaniṣṭhātyantabhāvapratiyogitva, Sadviviktatva, arthāntara doṣa, sādhyavaikalya.**

Today, Advaita Vedānta occupied a vast area in Indian Philosophy. The fundamental tenants of Advaita School influence the western thinkers. Even, it has a significant impact on the theory of consciousness and also the method of Philosophical Psychology. However, many works have been done both in against and in favor of it. Nevertheless, it seems the unique characteristic concealed in the following sloka-

“Ślokārdhena pravakṣyāmi yad uktam granthakotibhiḥ

Brahma satyaṁ jaganmithyā jīvo brahmaiva nā paraḥ”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The authorˈs claim is that what the thousands of books said, with half a sloka he is exploring- Brahman is real, the world is false, the occupied soul or *jīva* is nothing but the Brahman.

From the above explanation, it is evident that there is only one real entity, i.e., Brahman. Apart from him, the world is false, where the individual soul is identical to that one real entity. According to the *pariccheda-vāda*, the one and only Brahman appear divided into many embodied *jīvas* because of various *upādhis*, just as the one and eternal sky appear divided by being contained in multiple places. Like the sky of Jadavpur is Jādavpurākāś, the sky of America is Americā Akāś, etc. But this empirical world appears to every individual soul as real. So, how can we claim that the world is nothing but an illusion or false? Isn`t it the refutation of our empirical perception? Even one would ask, what sense the Vedāntins carry the word 'falsity'? Thus, for the establishment of the falsity of the practical world, the meaning and the definition of the word ‘false’ or *‘mithyā,’* should be presented.

Madhusūdan Sarasvatī at the begging of his *Advaitasiddhi* underlines that unavoidable means for the establishment of non-duality, the falsity of the world should prove first-

*“Tatrādvaitasiddheḥ dvaitamithyātvasiddhipūrvakatvāt dvaitamithyātvameva prathamam upapādanīyam.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

In order to establish the falsity of the world, the author of *Nyāyamakaranda*, Ᾱnandavodhācāriya advances an inference which is upheld by the Advaitins that is*—“Vimataṁ mithyā dṛśyatvāt, jaḍatvāt, paricchinnatvāt, śuktirūpyavaditi”[[3]](#footnote-3)* that is to say, the universe under consideration (*vimata*) is false (*mithyā*) because it is the object of cognition (*dṛśyatvāt*) or because it is insensate (*jaḍatvāt*) or because it is limited (*paricchinnatvāt*). This three *hetu* or causes have presented To prove the falsity of the world. Now, one might ask here, what is meant by ‘falsity’?

It is our Indian tradition, according to which for the establishment of an object or entity, definition and instruments of knowledge are to be given. Every philosophical debate always proceeds based on this illustrious hearsay, i.e.—*Lakṣaṇapramāṇabhyaṁ hi vastusiddhiḥ*. It`s mean, through the definition and *pramāṇa* (Instrument of knowledge); indeed, there is the establishment of an object.

Madhusūdana, in this connection, has adduced five definitions of falsity based on four different predecessors (teachers) of Advaita. The following verse bears the names as has mentioned by Madhusūdana—

“Ᾱdyaṁ syāt pancapādyuktaṁ tato vivoraṇodite

Citsukhīyaṁ caturthaṁ syādantyamānandavodhajam”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Let us know those five definitions of falsity which are offered by four teachers of Advaita. The first definition-***Sadasattvānadhikaraṇatvam***, is given by the immediate disciple of Saṁkara, Padmapāda. There it has been said that a false entity is not the substratum of either existence or non-existence. Vivaraṇācāriya gives the second and third definitions of falsity as ***Pratipannopādhou traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam*** and ***Jñānanivartyatvam***. Citsukhācāriya gives the fourth definition i.e., Svāśrayaniṣṭhātyantabhāvapratiyogitvam. *Mithya*, here defined as the positive counterpart of the absolute negation co-existing in the same locus with the object under review. And the last definition is offered by Ᾱnandavodha as ***Sadviviktatva***.

Let us consider the first definition of falsity, which is given by Pancapādikākāra. In his *Pancapādikā*, he defines the word *mithyā* (false) as *anirvacanīya* (indescribable). He said, *“mithyāśavdahanirvacanīyatā vacana.”[[5]](#footnote-5)* That is to say, which is not the locus of *sattva* or being, and *asattva* or non-being (*sadasattvānadhikaraṇa*) is indescribable. Thus, which is false, is not the locus of being (*sattvā*), not even the locus of non-being (*asattvā*).

**-:FIRST SECTION:-**

**The Opponent`s Objections against the Advaitins :**

Now, the opponent, Mādhva Vedāntins, leveled some objections against this definition by putting three alternative meanings. They asked the Advaitins, what does, the character of *sadasattvānadhikaraṇa* mean? Is it intended, the absence of *asattva* as characterized by *sattva* (*sattvaviśiṣṭa asattvābhāva*)? Or is it, both the characters of being the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of *asattva* (*sattvātyantābhāva o asattvātyantābhāva*)? Or is it, the absolute absence of *asattva* as characterized by the absolute absence of *sattva* (*sattvātyantābhāvavattve sati asattvātyantābhāva*)? The author of *Advaitasiddhi*, Madhusūdana, in his text, presented these opponent`s objections beautifully. He said, *“taddhi kiṁ sattvāviśiṣṭāsattvābhāvaḥ, uta sattvātyantābhāvāsattvātyantābhāvarūpaṁ dharmadvayam, āhosvit sattvātyantābhāvavattve satyasattvātyantābhāvarūpaṁ viśiṣṭam.”[[6]](#footnote-6)*

These alternatives offer that none of the three can be accepted as a convincing one. Well, we shall know why they are not consistent. Among the three choices, we cannot take the first; if the first alternative is taken, then that would involve two different fallacies. Firstly, since *asattva*, as characterized by sattva, can nowhere be seen, the counter co-relative or *pratiyogī,* i.e. *sattva viśiṣṭa asttva* (non-being which is characterized by being) of this absence is uncelebrated (*aprasiddha*). Being so, if this point of view is taken as the meaning of the falsity, there it will suffer from *aprasiddha pratiyogika doṣa*. Secondly, it is being presupposed as the opponent`s position that the world is devoid of both being and non-being, again, if the Advaitin tries to establish the non-duality of the reality by giving the meaning of falsity as sattva *viśiṣṭa asattvābhāva*, then it would be vain to establish. Because Mādhva admits that *sattva* *viśiṣṭa asattva* is already there in the world. So, whatever set again has been set by the Advaitins. In this way, the first alternative suffers from *siddha-sādhanatā* fallacy. This position is also upheld by the author of *Advaitasiddhi*— *“nādyaḥ, sattvamātrādhāre jagati sattvaviśiṣṭāsattvānabhyupagamāt, viśiṣṭābhāvasādhane siddhasādhanāt.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

Now, the opponent attacked the second alternative meaning of the first definition of the falsity. The second alternative also cannot be accepted because of its acceptance amounts of violation of the law of contradiction. Where there is being or *sattva*, there is the absence of non-being, and on the other hand, where is non-being or *asattva*, there is the absence of being or *sattva*. To refute this position, the opponent, Mādhva, puts three different fallacies— *vyāghāt, arthāntara, sādhyavaikalya*.

Firstly, here, the opponent intends to show that the relation between being and non-being is mutually contradicted. They say where there is *sattva* or being, *asattva* or non-being cannot be present there at the same locus as there is the absolute absence of *asattva* or non-being, which is already there. In this way, where there is the absolute absence of *sattva*, there is the *asattva,* and again if we try to establish the absolute absence of *asattva* in the same locus, then *vyāghāt* or contradiction will be inevitable. So, if falsity is defined as both the characters of the absolute absence of *sattva* and *asattva* then that would be the violation of the law of contradiction.

Secondly, it argues that if the character of not being the locus of being-non-being (*sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva*) means both the nature of the absolute absence of being and the absolute absence of non-being, then there would be the fallacy of diversified meaning or *arthāntara doṣa*. Because there is a *śruti* like *“kevala nirguṇaśca”[[8]](#footnote-8)* which establishes that being devoid of any quality, Brahman has the absolute absence of being (*sattva*). And as any knowledge can not refute brahman, it has the absolute absence of non-being (*asattva*) too. Thus, in this way, Brahman is seen as having both the characters of the absolute absence of being and non-being. Mostly, devoid of the character of being, Brahman can yet be regarded as being in itself (*sadrūpa*) instead of being considered as false (*mithyā*). Likewise, why would the world or *prapanca* not be regarded as being in itself (*sadrūpa*) even been the substratum of the characters of both *sattva* and *asattva* (being and non-being)? This position is vicious by the fallacy of diversified meaning or *arthāntara doṣa* because to establish the world or *prapanca* as false this inference and even the whole discussion is arranged, but to do so the world or *prapanca* would have been established as having the property being, which is totally the shifting of meaning.

Thirdly, it is also being said that the acceptance of the second alternative as both the characters of the absolute absence of *sattva* and *asattva* also makes the argument to prove the falsity of the world defective in the sense that in shell-silver or *śukti-rajata* which is already taken as an instance or *dṛstānta*. In that inference, the probandum or *sādhya* is *mithyātva,* which is meant as both the character of the absolute absence of *sattva* and *asattva*. It is claimed here that the probandum or *sādhya* is not present in shell-silver because the instance or *dṛsṭānta*, which is cited to prove the inference, can be refuted by the cognition of Brahman (*pāramārthika jñāna*). However, the opponent, Mādhva, claims here that though the absolute absence of *sattva* is present in the instance, yet there is the absence of the absolute absence of *asattva*. Since the probandum is not present in the example of the inference, the probandum of the inference is defective (*sādhyavaikalya*), which is against the rule of inference. That is to say; if this third alternative is taken then the argument will suffer from *sādhyavaikalya*. To mention the objections of the opponent, the author of *Advaitasiddhi*, Madhusūdana, in his *Advaitasiddhi* said,

*“na dvitīyaḥ sattvāsattvayorekābhāvehaparasattvāvaśakyatvena vyāghātāt, nirddharmakabrahmāvat sattvarāhityehapi sadrūpatvenāmithyātvopapttyārthāntarācca, śuktirūpyehavādhyatvarūpasattvavyatirekasya sattvehapi vādhyatvarūpāsattvasya vyatirekāsiddhayā sādhyavaikalyācca.”[[9]](#footnote-9)*

After putting some difficulties, the opponent, now, would show some defects on the third alternative, which defined falsity as the absolute absence of *asattva* as characterized by the absolute absence of *sattva.* To refute this alternative, he says that the same difficulties which have been employed to the second alternative are applied to the third one if this alternative is taken for granted. Firstly, to indicate the contradiction in the third alternative, the opponent says, how the second alternative has defected, the same way, this position which holds that the absolute absence of *asattva* (non-being) as characterized by the absolute absence of *sattva* (being), is defected. Because the property, *sattva* is as such as the absence of *asattva*.

Similarly, the absolute absence of *sattva* is as such as *asattva*. Here, the opponent intends to mean that where the character of the absolute absence of *sattva*, the absolute absence of the *asattva* is impossible to be there because the absolute absence of *sattva* is nothing but the character *asattva*. In this way, even if this third position is accepted as argumentative, then that would be the violation of the law of contradiction or *vyāghāt*. Secondly, if falsity is defined as the absolute absence of *asattva* as characterized by the absolute absence of *sattva* (*sattvātyantābhāvavattve sati asattvātyantābhāva*), then the same objection would be countered where the world should be regarded as being as such if Brahman is considered as having the property being in itself or *sadrūpa* without even having the features like *sattva* and *asattva*, the same way the world or *prapanca* should be regarded as being as such. Thus, this position is also not free from the fallacy of diversified meaning or *arthāntara doṣa*. Thirdly, it is being claimed that if this alternative is taken for granted, then it would also suffer from defective probandum or *sādhyavaikalya* in the same way which has mentioned earlier.

**-: SECOND SECTION :-**

**Refutation of the opponent`s position and Advaitin`s reply against them:**

The Advaitin (*siddhāntī*) nullified the objections of the opponent by rejecting the view that being and non-being is mutually contradicted because of the Advaitin, the absence of sattva, or being doesn`t alike with *asattva* or non-being. They say, *sattva* or being and *asattva* or non-being both can be present in the same locus. Now, the question is, how? The simple answer is, *mithyātva* (falsity) can be the characters of the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of *asattva* both. They also claim that this definition of falsity or *mithyātva* is free from any defects. Even the acceptance of the definition of falsity as both the characters of the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of *asattva* does not lead to any contradiction. To remove the violation of the law of contradiction, now, the Advaitin is asking to the opponent that whether the breach arising is due to *sattva* or being and *asattva* or non-being are of the nature of reciprocal absence— what is *sattva*, is not *asattva*, and what is *asattva*, is not *sattva* (*parasparavirahasvarūpa*)? Or is it due to *sattva* and *asattva* pervade each other absence? Or is it due to *sattva* and *asattva* pervaded by each other`s absence? That is why the author of *Advaitasiddhi* said, “*sā hi sattvāsattvayoḥ parasparaviraharūpatayā vā, parasparavirahavyāpakatayā vā, parasparavirahavyāpyatayā vā.”[[10]](#footnote-10)* [To show violation in the meaning of falsity would have been done in these three ways.]

Advaitins are claiming here that none of these three alternatives is faulty. Even if we accept any one of these three, then that would not be led to any violation of contradictions. Why these three positions are not justified, Madhusūdana is now explaining from the first— “[*tatra*] *na ādyaḥ tadanaṅgīkārāt*.”[[11]](#footnote-11) In this connection, the opponent has given three alternatives of ‘*sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva’*; of which, the first one, to the *Siddhāntī* (Advaitins), is not validly drawn. So, the first of these alternatives is not accepted because Advaitins do not take the view of the opponent, which holds *sattva* as the absence of *asattva* and *asattva* as the absence of *sattva.* Instead of doing so, Advaitins define *sattva* or being as *traikālāvādhyatva,* i.e. non-cancellation for all the times—past, present and future or *traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogītva,* i.e. the property of being the counter co-relative of cancellation for all the times—past, present, and future. That is to say, sattva is *abādhitattva,* but the correct meaning of *asattva* is not *bādhitatva* or the property of being canceled. They mean *asattva* as *sadrūpe pratītinarhatva,* i.e. non-appearance as *sattva* in any locus. Madhusūdana defines *asattva* as non-presentation in any locus, i.e. *kvacidapi upādhau sattven pratīyamānatve sati anadhikaraṇatvam*. If these definitions of *sattva* and *asattva* are accepted, then the meaning of falsity as *‘sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva’* would no longer be charged by contradiction and can very well be defined against the arguments of the opponent.

However, let's look at the second alternative. The second meaning is also rejected based on the same ground. So, *sattva* and *asattva* are not even pervaded by each other`s absence (*parasparavirahavyāpaka*). We cannot say, where is the absence of *sattva*, there is *asattva* or where is the absence of *asattva*, there is *sattva*. It is because, for instance, in the illusory silver, there is the absence of *sattva,* since the pāramārthika sattvā refutes it, but *asattva* is not present there is a sense it becomes the object of our immediate experience. Advaitins have shown that *sattva* is present even in the absence of *asattva*, which proves *sattva* as *vyabhicārī* of *asattva*.

Similarly, Brahman has the property of *sattva*, but there is the absence of *asattva* as *asattva* is not saturated by *sattva*; at the same way, we can say, *sattva* is not pervaded by *asattva*. So, *sattva* is not the *vyāpaka* of *asattva,* and *asattva* is too, not the *vyāpaka* of sattva. Thus, it is also impossible for falsity, as the property pervaded by each other`s absence.

As to the third alternative, Madhusūdana claims that even if we admit sattva to be saturated by the negation of *asattva* and *asattva* to be pervaded by the denial of sattva, the admission does not lead to any self-contradiction because, to the Advaitins, both can be refuted in the same locus. Here presenting a dialect, the Advaitin is arguing that if the opponent says, *sattva* and *asattva* are pervaded by each other`s absence, they would say, where is the absence of *sattva,* there is *asattva* or where is the absence of asattva, there is sattva. Now, if Advaitins can show the absence of both *sattva* and *asattva* in a particular locus, then the position of the opponent would be nullified. For example- *cowness* is pervaded by the absence of *horseness* and *horseness* too pervaded by the absence of *cowness*. In this sense, they are pervaded by each other`s absence (*parasparavirahavyāpya*). But in a camel, there is the absence of both *cowness* and *horseness*. In the same way, *sattva* and *asattva* both can be present in the same locus; there would be no violation of the law of contradiction.

Therefore, we can conclude that the term ‘false’ or *‘mithyā’* can be taken as the locus of the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of *asattva*. So, if falsity is defined in terms of the absolute absence of both *sattva* and *asattva*, then there would be no possibility of any self-contradictions.

The opponent claimed that if falsity is defined as the absolute absence of both *sattva* and *asattva*, then the definition leads to the fallacy of diversified meaning or *arthāntara doṣa* an as well. Advaitins say that the admission of *sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva* does not lead to any mistake. The opponent argued that in spite of being devoid of the property of *sattva*, Brahman is treated as *sadrūpa* or being itself by the Advaitins. If it is so, in the same way, the world should be regarded as *sadrūpa* or being in itself, even being devoid of the property of being in itself. Here, the author of Advaitasiddhi, replies that pot, etc. and even the whole world is appeared as being in itself (*sadrūpa*) due to the reality of Brahman who is one and being in itself (*sadrūpa*). Even, the opponent has no such evidence based on what they can claim the world or *prapanca* as *sadrūpa* or being in itself. The world is reflected as real by the reality of Brahman who is necessarily real. The actual appearance of the world is illusory. Not only that, if the opponent accepts the world as having the property of being in itself, then the identical appearance and equal treatment of the world would be impossible. That is to say that if we accept the thesis of the opponent, then we can no longer use the same word ‘being’ concerning different things in the world.

Hence, even if, falsity is defined as *sadasattvānadhikaraṇatva,* which is the absolute absence of *sattva* and absolute absence of *asattva*, that would free from the fallacy of diversified meaning or *arthāntara doṣa*. So, the world is false in the sense that it is the locus of both the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of asattva as well. Now, you might ask a question here, i.e., isn’t the Brahman locus of both *sattvātyantābhāva* (absolute absence of being) and *asattvātyantābhāva* (absolute absence of non-being)? Brahman, according to the Advaitins, is *nirguna-nirviśeṣa*, as he has neither the property *sattva* nor even *asattva*. Then, why should the opponent not treat Brahman as the locus of both *sattva* and *asattva.* If it is admitted, the definition of falsity as *sattvātyantābhāva* (absolute absence of being) and *asattvātyantābhāva* (absolute absence of non-being), would be vitiated by over-coverage and this would go against the fundamental thesis of Advaitins, and the objection of duality will take place. To remove these possible fallacies, Advaitins said, though Brahman is devoid of the property, *sattva*, he is even *sadrūpa* or being in itself, and also, *śruti* is the evidence of this view. But *sadrūpatva* (the property of being in itself) of the world is not testified in *śruti*. The opponent`s view is objected by Madhusūdana on the ground of the law of parsimony. He maintains parsimony (*lāghava*) where the opponent`s thesis is against the law; therefore, the opponent`s argument must be rejected.

The last possible objection of the opponent was the charge of *sādhyavaikalya*. They have said that the probandum or *sādhya, mithyātva* is not there in the *dṛṣṭānta* or instance (shell-silver or *śukti-rajata*) of the inference which was put to establish the world as false. Advaitins argued, what the opponent objected, is not justified, because the absolute absence of both the property *sattva* and *asattva* can be seen in the *dṛṣṭānta*, *śukti-rajata*. As we know, the instance shell-silver is refuted by the cognition of *“nāyaṁ sarpaḥ kintu rajjuḥ,”* thus, *śukti-rajata* has the absence of sattva in the sense that it has the absence of *traikālāvādhyatva*. On the other hand, being the capacity to be regarded as being in itself or *sadrūpa*, *śukti-rajata*, has the absence of *asattva*. In the way, the instance, *śukti-rajata*, includes the *sādhya* which is characterized as *sattvātyantābhāva o asattvātyantābhāva,* i.e. the characters of being the absolute absence of *sattva* and the absolute absence of *asattva*.

In this way, objections of the opponent, which employed to assert the world as real, have been refuted by the Advaitins logically. To conclude the first definition, Madhusūdana claims there is no error in the definition. Thus, *mithyātva* or falsity can be defined as *sadasattvānadhikaraṇa*. Advaitins proved that the whole universe has the capability not to be the locus of both *sattva* and *asattva*. It might be said on the ground of the probandum or *sādhya,* i.e. falsity or *mithyātva* is consistently presented in the inference (*Vimataṁ mithyā dṛśyatvāt, jaḍatvāt, paricchinnatvāt, śuktirūpyavaditi*) and this sense the inference is to be proven. Though, in this article, all those discussions are merely impossible to explain and expose.

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