
UNIT 2 INDIAN METAPHYSICS

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to provide a sketch of Indian Metaphysics. This unit looks into the fundamental questions raised and answered by Indian metaphysics and outlines its conceptual structure. It will provide a comprehensive account of Indian Materialism, Realism, Dualism, Pluralism, Idealism and Absolutism of different schools of Indian tradition.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Metaphysics is the theory of reality. It raises profound questions about the nature of matter, life, mind, God, space, time, numbers, of causation, freedom and fate, and of objects and events. What sets metaphysics apart from other enquiries is the distinctive method of approach where it seeks to answer the questions only through natural faculties of which reason is the chief. It is not possible to speak of Indian Metaphysics in the singular. Each school of Indian Philosophy has developed a distinct metaphysical view that is consistent with its epistemology and ethics. The motive of metaphysical thinking in the Indian tradition has been practical and not merely theoretical. Questions related to the Universe and creation have been subordinated to the concern for the ultimate destiny of man and its fulfillment.

2.2 INDIAN MATERIALISM (CARVAKA)

The school of the Carvaka or Lokayata held a metaphysics of materialism. The Carvakas were materialists and Naturalists because they believed in the reality of physical Nature alone; every object being a form assumed by Natural elements. The process by which the elements assume the forms are also natural, not guided or controlled by any supernatural agency. Since *pratyaksa* is the only *pramana* accepted by Carvaka, the four elements – earth, water, fire and air – are the only categories accepted by it. The fifth element *akasa* is not accepted as it is not an object of perception. All objects in the world including human beings are made up of the four basic elements. The differences among the types of objects in the world are due to differences among the patterns in which the four elements combine with one another. The atman is nothing but the physical body of man. The living man is conscious, but consciousness emerges when the material particles of the body come together in a particular pattern and form a particular structure. When that pattern deteriorates and the body disintegrates and is destroyed, the constituents separate themselves and the emergent quality disappears. The Carvaka brings in the analogue of the instance when yeast is added to grape juice to make wine which acquires the quality of intoxicating power which is possessed neither by yeast nor grape juice. The Carvaka argues that God or an ethical potency need not be posited to create the world and its forms, because it believes that the elements come together naturally and produce the forms without any specific purpose. This mechanistic and naturalistic model of creation of the objects of the world is called *yadarcavada*.

2.3 REALISM OF NYAYA-VAISESIKA

The Nyaya-Vaisesika classifies reality under a few categories (*padarthas*) in order to facilitate a comprehensive treatment of reality. The Vaisesika recognizes seven such categories. One of them is *abhava* or non-being that stands for all kinds of non-existence, which is classified into four: *pragabhava* (prior non-existence), *pradhvamsabhava* (non-existence after destruction), *anyonyabhava* (mutual non-existence) and *athyanthabhava* (absolute non-existence). The remaining six categories represent various kinds of being (*bhava*) and include *dravya*, (substance), *guna* (quality), *karma* (action), *samanya* (universal), *visesa* (particular) and *samavaya* (inherence). Nyaya had admitted sixteen categories which are *pramana* (source of valid knowledge), *prameya* (objects of knowledge), *samsaya* (doubt), *prayojana* (end), *drstanta* (example), *siddhanta* (doctrine), *avayava* (members of syllogism), *tarka* (hypothetical argument), *nirnaya* (ascertainment), *vada* (discussion), *jalpa* (wrangling), *vitanda* (destructive dialectic), *hetvabhava* (fallacies of inference), *chala* (quibbling), *jati* (futile objections), and *nigrahasthanas* (points of defeat in a debate). Except *prameya*, the categories of Nyaya are logical and epistemological while the seven categories of Vaisesika are exclusively metaphysical. The important knowables (*prameyas*) according to Nyaya are twelve in number – the atman, the physical body, senses, objects of the world, cognition or consciousness, mind, activity, imperfection, life after death, result, pain and final liberation.

The Nyaya school regards the atman as essentially unconscious. Consciousness arises in the atman as an adventitious property when perception occurs. Nyaya maintains that the atman constitutes an infinite plurality and each atman is the knower, doer, enjoyer and sufferer. God is one of the atmans but the greatest of them. Unlike other atmans, God is by nature conscious and his consciousness is eternal and infinite. God is only the efficient cause of creation, the eternal atoms being the material cause. The atoms are brought together by God in accordance with the ethical merits and demerits of the atmans.

The Vaisesika school defines substance (*dravya*) as that in which qualities and actions inhere (*samaveta*). Qualities and actions cannot exist except in a substance. The relationship between substance and its qualities and action is the inseparable relation of inherence (*samavaya*). There are nine kinds of substances: earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, space, spirit and mind. Of the nine substances, the first four, that is, earth, water, fire and air are constituted by atoms. Mind is also atomic in size but the other four substances – ether, time, space and spirit – are infinite. Time and space are indivisible and divisions like the past, the present and future of time and directions like north and south of space, are conventional and artificial. Qualitatively, the atman, mind, and atoms of the elements are different from one another. This difference is made possible because each individual has its own particular (*visesa*) that distinguishes it from others.

Of the four kinds of atoms, each group differs from another qualitatively. They are imperceptible to human beings except yogis. For ordinary human beings, the existence of atoms is proved by inference. All perceptible objects are composed of parts and are therefore divisible. But the division into parts cannot be carried on ad infinitum. Therefore we have to stop at some point where further division is not possible. This fundamental unit is the atom (*anu*). The atoms (*anu*) are imperceptible and so are their qualities. Two atoms combine to form a dyad (*dvayanuka*). Three dyads combine together to form a triad (*trayanuka*). The triad is the least visible unit. It is said to possess the size of mote in the sunbeam.

Quality is defined as the being that is different from substance and activity and that is itself without qualities and activities. The list of twenty four qualities listed in the Vaisesika school are: colour, taste, smell, touch, number, magnitude, distinctness (*prthaktva*), conjunction (*samyoga*), disjunction (*vibhaga*), nearness (temporal and spatial), remoteness (temporal and spatial), cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, hate, effort, weight, fluidity, viscosity, tendency (*samskara*), unseen merit, unseen demerit (*adrsta*) and sound.

Action belongs to finite substances and is the cause of conjunction and disjunction. It can only be a formal (*asamavayi*) and an instrumental (*nimitta*) cause but not a material cause, since only a substance can be a material cause. Actions are of five kinds: throwing upward, throwing downward, contraction, expansion and locomotion.

The universal (*samanya, jati*) is defined as that which is eternal (*nitya*) and which inheres in many. It is dependent on our cognition (*buddhyapeksyam*). It exists in substances, qualities and activities. It is of two kinds, the higher and the lower, the highest (*para*) beyond which there is no higher is Being (*satta*).

The particular (*visesa*) is defined as that which is ultimate and exist in eternal substances. It exists only in substances and that too only in ultimate, eternal substances. The particular is the ultimate differentiator. To illustrate, all the earth atoms are alike, yet they are differentiated from one another by each one having a particular.

Inherence (*samavaya*) is defined as the relation of inseparability. Inherence is found between the whole and its parts, between substance and qualities, between substance and activities, and between the universals on the one hand and substances, qualities and activities on the other. The whole inheres in its parts, qualities and activities inhere in substances and universals inhere in substances, qualities and activities. However, no higher universal inheres in the lower universals. Non-being (*abhava*) is defined as what is not, or as different from the six positive categories. Nyaya-Vaisesika holds that reality is both positive and negative. Non-being is real only with reference to our thought and is not related to any form of being. Yet Nyaya-Vaisesika holds that

non-being is perceived, but only when accompanied by the thought, “Had the object been there, it would have been perceived”. Non-being is of two kinds: relational absence (*samsargabhava*) and mutual negation (*anyonyabhava*). Relational absence is the absence of something in something else like the absence of the pen on the table. Relational absence is of three kinds: prior negation (*pragabhava*), posterior negation (*pradhvansabhava*), and absolute or infinite negation (*athyanthabhava*).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. Define metaphysics. What are the unique features of Indian metaphysics?

2. What are the fundamental tenets of Carvaka metaphysics?

3. What are the categories of reality accepted by Nyaya and Vaisheshika?

2.4 REALISM OF THE SAUTRANTIKA AND VAIBHASIKA

The Vaibhasika and Sautrantika schools of Buddhism are affiliated to the Theravada or Hinayana sects of Buddhism. Buddhist realism takes its origin from the Sarvastivadins who are the advocates of the doctrine which says that all things no matter whether they belong to the past, present or future exist (*Sarvastivada*). The Vaibhasikas hold the view that the universe is ultimately constituted by simple, unanalysable elements called *dharmas*. The *dharmas* are regarded as impermanent or momentary (*ksanika*). There is no whole as distinct from the parts; concrete objects are mere aggregates (*skandhas*) of a number of *dharmas*. The aggregation of the elements is effected by the principle of causality conveyed by the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* (theory of dependant origination). Both matter and mind are considered to be real; they are real in virtue of their simplicity, indivisibility and unanalysability, though they are both impermanent. The Universe is ultimately constituted of 75 elements, 72 of which are conditioned (*samskrta*)

and the remaining three are unconditioned (*asamskrta*). This distinction suggests that the universe is the field where human beings are thrown into a state of bondage and which provides them opportunities to win back their freedom or liberation. The elements (*dharmas*) conditioned by *avidya* and passions that accompany it co-operate with one another so as to present themselves as a stream (*sasrava*) of phenomenal life (*samsara*) marked by the presence of pain (*duhkha*) or else the cause of pain (*samudaya*) and are held in a state of bondage. The elements are open to subjection to the counteracting process of their separation from one another and their suppression through the means of spiritual discipline (*marga*), resulting in the emergence of *prajna*. They are reduced to a state of quiescence, free from the pain and cause of pain, which is the state of *Nirvana*.

The Vaibhasika school classifies dharmas into five: (1) *rupa* (matter) (2) *citta* (consciousness) (3) *cetasika* (states and characteristics of the mind) (4) *citta-viprayukta-samskara* (powers that are neither mental nor material but common to both mind and matter) and (5) *asamskrta dharmas* (the unconditioned dharmas). The realism of the Vaibhasikas is subject to the limitations imposed upon it by the core ideas of Buddhism, namely momentariness (*ksanikavada*), theory of no-self (*nairatmyavada*) and the theory of particularity (*sva-laksana*) as opposed to generality or universality (*samanya*).

The Sautrantikas opposed the Vaibhasika contention that the elements exist in the past, the present and the future. The admission of the continuous existence of things through the past, the present and the future amounts to the acceptance of a form of eternalism, which is unacceptable to Buddhist metaphysics as a whole. The Sautrantikas criticize the Vaibhasika contention that whatever is an object of thought, exists. Whatever exists admits of being thought of but the converse is not necessarily true. The Sautrantikas consider some of the elements admitted by Vaibhasika to be fictitious like *akasa* (space), *niravana*, *citta-viprayukta* (non-mental powers) and the past and future aspects of elements. The Sautrantikas list forty three elements classified under five heads: (1) *Rupa* (matter) comprising four primary forms (*upadana*) and four secondary or derivative forms (*upadaya-rupa*) (2) *Vedana* (feelings) including pleasure, pain and the neutral feeling (3) *Samjna* (signs or sense-organs) consisting of five external sense organs and one internal sense organ called *citta* or *manas* (4) *Vijnana* (consciousness) of six kinds corresponding to the six sense organs. (5) *Samskaras* (powers or forces) numbering twenty in all including ten good (*kusala*) and ten bad (*akusala*) ones. Like Vaibhasikas, Sautrantikas also admit the reality of the twofold world of matter and mind. The Vaibhasikas hold that our knowledge of objective reality is direct and immediate and is yielded by perception while the Sautrantikas regard this knowledge as indirect and mediate, i.e, derivable from inference instead of from perception.

2.5 REALISM OF MIMAMSA

The Mimamsa propounds a metaphysics of ethical action. It advocates qualitative and quantitative pluralism. It substitutes ethical action for God himself. The efficacy of ethical action is a force that creates the forms of the world and is the controller of the world and its organizer. The world is meant for action and is created by action. Dharma is the central concern of the Mimamsa and it is that which supports the universe. Ethical action must be what answers to a Vedic injunction (*vedapratipadya*). Dharma brings forth the desired fruits of action; if ethically right, it brings forth enjoyment, if ethically wrong, it results in suffering (*adharmas*). The

Mimamsa does not regard dharma and *adharma* as qualities (*gunas*), but as constituting a potential force which is extraordinary (*apurva*) and the unseen (*adrsta*). This force or *sakti* resides in the atman of the agent and controls and determines the future life of the atman. Action performed at the present produces its fruit often after a lapse of time. But causation is a continuous process without any time intervening between the processes of the cause and the appearance of the effect. The Mimamsa therefore postulates that the action we perform does not end when our activity ends, but assumes the form of a potential force that remains as a potency until the circumstances become ripe for its fruition. This force called the *sakti* is unseen (*adrsta*) and since it is extraordinary it is called *apurva*. The Mimamsa accepts the reality of the atman as distinct from the mind (*manas*), senses and the physical body. It is identified with the I – consciousness (*ahamdhi*); plurality of the *atmans* is accepted, each atman is regarded as infinite. Consciousness is not regarded as the essential nature of the atman, but arises in it as an adventitious quality when *manas* comes into contact with it. The atman itself is the seer, doer and enjoyer. The problem of God is taken up by Mimamsa in the context of the interpretation of the meanings of the words of the Veda. Jaimini regarded the relationship between the word and meaning as innate and therefore did not feel the need to posit God to fix the meaning of words.

2.6 DUALISTIC METAPHYSICS OF SAMKHYA

Samkhya presents a qualitative dualism of spirit and matter, the material principle being Prakrti and the spiritual element, Purusa. The Purusa which is of the nature of pure consciousness, throws the reflection of its consciousness on Prakrti and this initiates a process of evolution. While Prakrti is one, Purusas are infinite in number. Prakrti evolves the universe through its three constituents (*gunas*): the *sattva* (pure), *rajas* (active) and *tamas* (inert). All the objects of the universe are composed of three *gunas*. The original nature of the *sattva* is pleasantness (*priti*), of the *rajas*, drive, and of *tamas*, dullness and inertia. None of the *gunas* are found alone without the other two. In the objects of the world, one or the other of the three *gunas* dominates over the other two. Prior to evolution, the *gunas* remain in equilibrium in *Prakrti*. Due to inexplicable association of the Purusa with Prakrti, the reflection of the Purusa is thrown on Prakrti that destroys the original equilibrium of the *gunas*. Evolution of the world out of *Prakrti* follows. Various theories have been offered in the Samkhya school to explain the nature of the contact between Prakrti and Purusa that vary from each other, but according to all those theories, the contact has no beginning and therefore the universe is beginningless. The Samkhya in its atheistic form gives twenty five categories (Prakrti and its evolutes + Purusa) that evolve from Prakrti during the course of evolution. They are not the meanings of words (*padarthas*) as in Nyaya-Vaisesika but as ontological entities. The theistic Samkhya adds God in addition to the twenty five.

The Purusa is a pure knower (*drasta*) but not a doer (*karta*). Action belongs to *manas*, *ahamkara* and its evolutes, all of which are evolutes of *prakrti*. The purusa exists by himself, separate and unrelated to everything else (*kaivalya*). The Samkhya accepts a plurality of *Purusas* because it maintains that birth, death and all other physical characteristics are separate for each individual. If *Purusas* are not many, when one man is born, all others must be born at the same time; if one man knows an object, all the others must know it; if one man acts all the others must act. Similarly enjoyment, suffering, good and evil, must be the same for all. Since Purusa is a pure

witness and never the doer, the existence of different egos implies that they are the reflections of different Purusas. The essential nature of the Purusa is consciousness (*cit*). In the state of bondage after evolution, the Purusa may think that it is happy or miserable but this is due to the lack of discrimination between itself and the higher evolutes of *prakrti* to which the dualities of happiness and sorrow actually belong. It is like the coloring of a pure, colourless, transparent glass by the reflection of some colour. When the Purusa identifies itself as pure consciousness, distinct from all the evolutes of *prakrti*, then it is said to be liberated (*kaivalya*).

2.7 REALISTIC RELATIVISTIC PLURALISM OF JAINISM

The Jaina metaphysics is a realistic relativistic pluralism; it is realistic as it accepts the existence of an extramental reality; it is relativistic as it denies the validity of any absolute predication of reality; it is pluralistic as it accepts the plurality of substances. Jaina metaphysics is metaphysics of substance. Even motion, rest, space, and action are substances.

Jainism regards every object as multi-modal (*anekanta*) and as possessing many characteristics. Jainism distinguishes between the substances that possess the characteristics (*dharmi*) and the characteristics possessed by the substance (*dharmas*). Characteristics are further divided into essential characteristics (*gunas*) and changing modes (*pariyayas*). Both change and permanence are real. Every object has both positive and negative characteristics, from one point of view, if an object has the characteristic 'P', from another point of view it has the characteristic '~P'. Every object has the characteristics of origin, duration and decay. Jainism does not accept the view that the reality of an object lies in performing the function for which it is meant (*arthakriyakaritva*). Substance is divided into the extended (*astikaya*) and the unextended (*anastikaya*). Extended substance is further divided into the animate and the inanimate. The animate substance called the *Jiva* is one that displays the characteristics of consciousness (*cetana laksano jivah*). The Jivas are of two kinds: the liberated and the bound. The bound is again of two types: the moving and the unmoving. The non-moving are the plants that have only the sense of touch. Moving *jivas* are of four kinds: those with five senses like human beings, those with four senses like bees, those with three senses like ants and those with two senses like worms. The atman is identified with the *Jiva* and the relation between the atman and consciousness is both identity and difference. The atman is endowed with both doership and enjoyership. Atmans are infinite in number, yet they coexist. Jainism rejects the reality of God as the Universal spirit and creator of the world. They reject all the proofs for the existence of God. The atman although not a material substance is regarded as extended; it being coextensive with the body that it inhabits. By nature atman is infinite but it has the capacity to expand or contract depending upon the karma that is present in it.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. Give an account of the classification of substance according to Jainism.

2. What are the constituents of Prakrti? What are their characteristics?

3. Explain the process of evolution of the world according to Samkhya metaphysics.

4. What is the Jaina conception of substance?

2.8 IDEALISM OF VIJNANAVADA SCHOOL OF BUDDHISM

Vijnanavada school of Buddhism maintained that *Vijnana* (idea) alone is real. To the Madhyamika claim that everything is illusory, Vijnanavadins reply that even illusion is a kind of cognition. *Vijnana* cannot be reflected in any kind of dialectical argument. Vijnanavadins argue that since cognition and its object are inseparable, and since we cannot conceive or even speak of an object which is unknown, the external objects which are said to exist independent of cognition, are inadmissible. If the object is external, then there can be no relation of its identity (*sarupya*) with cognition which is demanded by the possibility of its being cognized. The Vijnanavadins argue that the phenomena of illusion, hallucination and dream which involve cognitions without there being any extramental objects corresponding to them, testify to the fact that cognition creates its own object, instead of being determined by objects existing independently of it. Thus the Vijnanavadin concludes that there are no extramental objects

Madhyamika showed that the ultimate reality cannot be described either in the positive or negative terms. Even the phenomenal world cannot be described because none of the categories we use in describing the world has its own nature. Nagarjuna held the theory of naturelessness (*nihsvabhavata*) and attacked the view that everything has its own nature or character (*sarvam svalaksanam*). If everything is devoid of its own characteristics and is void then the Absolute reality itself must be void. Whatever is experienced is only an appearance of the void;

appearance is the empirical truth (*samvrtisatya*) and the void is the Absolute truth (*paramarthikasatya*). Then even the Buddha, his doctrine, the aggregates, the bases and the elements are not ultimately true. If the world is not real, it could not have been born and therefore was never born.

2.9 NON-DUALISTIC ABSOLUTISM (*ADVAITAVADA*)

The metaphysics of Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracarya is centred on the establishment of the reality of only the Brahman, showing that the world cannot have an independent being of its own and demonstrating that the being of the world is rooted in the Brahman. Sankaracarya accepts the reality of Brahman on the basis of the Upanisads. The *svarupalaksana* (defining or constitutive characteristics) of Brahman is *Sat-Cit-Ananda* (infinite being, consciousness and bliss). Advaita introduces the concept of levels of reality which are not levels of truth, but levels of Being (*satta*). Advaita propounds four levels of Being, the lowest of which is the insignificant Being (*tuccha satta*). It includes the merely imaginary, fanciful and self-contradictory like the horns of hare, the lotuses of the heavenly river (sky lotuses), son of a barren woman etc. They belong merely to imagination and are acknowledged as having no place in reality. The next higher level is the illusory Being (*pratibhasika satta*) or apparent Being, the example of which is the perception of an illusory snake. Higher than the illusory Being is the pragmatic Being (*vyavaharika satta*) identified with the empirical reality. It is the product of our past ethical actions (*karmas*) and is meant for future actions. While the illusory being is contradicted by perceptual experience within the world itself and the experience of action, the pragmatic Being is not contradicted either by perception or action, but by dialectical reason and the intuition of Brahman. The innate self-contradictions of the pragmatic world are revealed to the light of reason by its own self reflection. Just as the illusory Being presupposes the pragmatic Being, the pragmatic Being due to its inherent self-contradictions presupposes the ultimate Being (*paramarthika satta*) that is above all contradictions. Uncontradicted and unchanged in the past, present and future, the ultimate Being marks the pinnacle of existence. Each of the lower levels of Being presupposes and is superimposed (*adhyasta*) upon the higher one.

The Advaitins use the word *Maya* to refer to the appearance of the objective world as an existent and its non-existence at a higher level. The world experience is a cosmic illusion whereas the appearance of the snake in the rope-snake illusion, is an individual illusion. The cosmic illusion is identified with *Maya* and the individual illusion is called *avidya*, although most Advaitins use the terms synonymously. *Maya* cannot be accepted as real since the illusion of Brahman sublates it, neither can it be called unreal as it is experienced by one and all until the Brahman is realized. Hence it is ontologically indescribable (*sadasadvilaksana*). *Maya* is treated as a positive entity (*bhavarupa*), its powers being concealment of the true nature of Brahman (*avaranasakti*) and the projection of the world of multiplicity (*viksepasakti*).

Advaita accepts only that cognition which is uncontradictable (*abhadya*) as absolutely true and only the Brahman stands this test of truth and this justifies the nomenclature of Advaita (non-dualism). The Brahman shines through the individual as the witness of Self, actions, cognitions and the states of the mind. This is called the witness consciousness (*saksi caitanya*). This witness consciousness delimited by the psycho-physical adjuncts is the Jiva. The witness consciousness

is continuous with the Brahman and is non-different from it. The Jiva in its identification as a separate entity distinct from the Brahman is a mere appearance. It is essentially identical to the Brahman. Just as the ego (*ahamkara*) is continuous with the Brahman, so is the personal God Isvara. Sankaracarya uses the term Brahman for both, calling them the higher Brahman (*para Brahman*) and the lower Brahman (*apara Brahman*). The lower Brahman is the same as the higher Brahman, but as facing the world of objectivity, that is with reference to Maya. It is never overpowered by Maya like the Jiva. The Isvara is therefore never in bondage.

2.10 NON-DUALISM OF THE QUALIFIED WHOLE (*VISISTADVAITA*)

Visistadvaita holds the view that Brahman is non-dual but qualified or characterized by the world and the individual spirits, both of which form its body (*sarira*). Visistadvaita broadly divides the categories (*padarthas*) into the means of cognition (*pramanas*) and the objects of cognition (*prameyas*). The objects of knowledge are of two kinds, substance (*dravya*) and non-substance (*adravya*). Substances are of two kinds, the conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious are of two kinds, *prakrti* and *kala*. *Prakrti* is divided into twenty four categories as in the Samkhya. The conscious is of two kinds, the inward (*pratyak*) and the outer (*parak*). The inward is of two kinds, the atman and God. The atman is of three kinds – the bound, the liberated and the eternal. The outward consciousness is of two kinds – the eternal force (*nityavibhuti*) and the attribute consciousness (*dharmabhutajnana*).

Ramanujacarya maintains that the three attributes are not the constitutive qualities of Prakrti but merely their qualities. Ramanujacarya regards Prakrti as eternal and calls it by many names like the non-transient (*aksara*), *avidya*, *maya* etc. Ramanujacarya accepts the concept of eternal force or energy (*nityavibhuti*) from the Pancaratra. It is same as the pure transparent (*suddha-sattva*) and is also called the pure essence. It is never found mixed with other attributes of Prakrti. It is by nature unconscious (*acetana*), yet thoroughly self-relieving and blissful (*anandatmika*). It constitutes the bodies, the means of enjoyment, the objects of enjoyment and also the process of enjoyment by God, the eternally liberated souls and the liberated souls. God's body has six attributes – knowledge (*jnana*), power (*sakti*), strength (*bala*), lordship (*aiswarya*), heroic quality (*virya*) and splendor (*tejas*). The Concept of attribute consciousness (*dharmabhuta-jnana*) is an important contribution of Visistadvaita. The 'I' as the knower, reveals itself to itself, but not to the consciousness revealing the object. Thus we have two consciousness, one that reveals itself to another, and the other that reveals itself to itself only. The former belongs to the latter and is called its attribute (dharma). It is called attribute consciousness (*dharmabhutajnana*).

The atman according to Visistadvaita is by nature atomic (*anu*), but its attribute consciousness which is inseparable from it, is infinite. It is dependent on God and is subsidiary to (*sesa*) him, as the body is to the spirit. It is eternal, different for each individual and by nature blissful. It is the knower, doer and enjoyer (*jnata*, *karta* and *bhokta*). The nature of the atman is to be the 'I' consciousness (*ahamdhi*) and not mere consciousness (*jnana*) or mere witness consciousness (*saksi caitanya*). The atman is of three kinds – the bound, the liberated and the eternal. The bound souls are the ones living in the world of *prakrti*; the liberated are those souls that have freed themselves from *prakrti* and the eternal souls are the eternal servants of God, who live with him and have never done anything against his wishes. The liberated and the eternal souls live

with God, enjoy like him and are similar to him. They are not identical to him and do not have the powers of creation and destruction.

2.11 DUALISTIC ABSOLUTISM OF MADHVACARYA

Madhvacharya proclaimed complete difference between the Brahman and the world and maintained that the non-duality referred to by the Upanisads had to be interpreted as that between a king and his subjects or one who is independent (*svatantra*) and one who is dependent on the former (*paratantra*). Since Madhvacharya rejects any relationship of being between God and the world, his philosophy is dualism (*dvaitavada*). It is primarily a dualism of God and the individual spirit and a dualism of God and the world. The world of matter (*prakrti*) is different from God and the individual spirits. Thus the philosophy of Madhvacharya is metaphysically qualitative dualism and quantitative pluralism. As a quantitative pluralist, he makes use of the Vaisesika doctrine of the particular (*visesa*).

Madhvacharya broadly divides the categories into the independent (*svatantra*) and the dependent (*paratantra*). The only independent reality is God. The dependent category falls into two kinds, the conscious and the unconscious. The individual atmans and supernal beings like the consort of Visnu, Lakshmi are conscious. The supernals are eternally liberated and perform certain cosmic and divine functions. Here Madhvacharya follows the line of traditional Vaisnavite mythology and the Pancaratra. He classifies the individual atmans into four kinds: those that are liberated like the *Hiranyagarba* (the Cosmic soul), who is called the highest soul (*jivottama*), those that are capable of obtaining salvation (*muktiyogyas*), those that are always transmigrating (*nityasamsaris*) and those that are eternally damned (*tamoyogya*), those that deserve only darkness). This classification involves the doctrine of predestination which is unacceptable to many Vedantins. The unconscious reality is of three kinds: *prakrti*, space and time. Another classification enlists nine categories: substance (*dravya*), quality (*guna*), action (*karma*), universal (*samanya*), particular (*visesa*), the characterized (*visista*) or the whole (*amsi*), force (*sakti*), similarity (*sadrasya*) and negation (*abhava*). Substances are said to be nineteen in number: God, his consort (SriLakshmi), innate forces (*samskaras*, *vasanas*), the atman, space, prakrti, the three attributes (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), mind (*manas*), the senses (*indriyas*), the elements (*pancabhutas*), the subtle elements (*tanmatras*), ignorance (*avidya*), word sounds (*varnas*), darkness (*andhakara*), time (*kala*), reflection (*pratibimba*), cosmic reason (*Mahat*), ego (*ahamkara*) and individual reason (*buddhi*). Madhvacharya's list of qualities include mental and ethical qualities such as self-control (*sama*), mercy (*krpa*), endurance (*titiksa*), gravity (*gambhira*), beauty (*saundarya*), courage (*saurya*), fear (*bhaya*), liberality (*audarya*), strength (*bala*) and shame (*lajja*). The particular (*visesa*) plays an important role in the philosophy of Madhvacharya. The particulars are found everywhere and exist in all things, eternal and transient, conscious and unconscious, God and the world.

Madhvacharya identifies the atman with the witness consciousness (*saksi caitanya*). It is of the nature of 'I' consciousness (*ahamdhi*) which is different from the ego (*ahamkara*) which is an evolute of *prakrti*. It is the knower (*jnata*), doer (*karta*) and enjoyer (*bharta*) of the fruits of

actions. The atmans are atomic and constitute a plurality, each having a particular (*visesa*). They are absolutely dependent (*paratantra*) on God, who alone is self-dependent (*svatantra*) or independent. By nature, every atman is existent, conscious and blissful (*sat-cit-ananda*). Through ignorance (*avidya*) of its original nature, it becomes entangled in *prakrti*. This entanglement is its bondage. Every atman is entirely different from God, *prakrti* and the other atmans. The Upanisadic statements that speak of the identity of the atman and Brahman, are to be interpreted as meaning that the atman is similar to the Brahman just as the reflection of a face in the mirror is similar to the face. The atman is self-conscious, self-revealing, and self-luminous, yet its consciousness is distinct from itself, just as the specific gravity of a substance is distinct from that substance.

Maya and *avidya* are treated as separate from *prakrti* in the philosophy of Madhavacarya. He regards *Maya* as the mysterious will of God (*Isvareccha*) and *avidya* as the ignorance of the atman. *Avidya* conceals the true nature of the atman and it conceals the Brahman from the atman. The latter results in the atman developing a false notion of independence from God. Like Ramanujacarya, Madhavacarya identifies the personal God with the Brahman. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world and has infinite auspicious qualities. Madhavacarya insists upon five kinds of differences (*pancabheda*): (1) difference between the atman (*jiva*) and the Brahman (God); (2) difference between all that is unconscious (*prakrti*, time and space) and the Brahman; (3) difference of every atman from every other; (4) difference of every atman from all that is unconscious (*prakrti*, time and space); and (5) difference of every unconscious entity from every other unconscious entity. Madhavacarya accepts not only the difference of every member of a class from every other member of the same class (*sajatiyabheda*) but also every member of a class from every member of every other class (*vijayiyabheda*) but also the difference of every element of the content of a whole from every other element in that whole and from that whole also. He says that every element is a particular (*visesa*) and is not merely distinguished but differentiated from the others.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. State the arguments provided by Vijnanavada to conclude that there are no extramental objects.

2. Explain the Visistadvaita conception of *atman*.

3. Explain the Advaita conception of *maya*.

2.12 LET US SUM UP

Every school of Indian philosophy has developed a profound metaphysics of its own which is intertwined with the epistemology and ethics of that school. Indian metaphysics has evolved through a rich tradition of exegesis and dialectics. Ranging from materialism to spiritual absolutism, Indian metaphysics displays a wide range of standpoints.

2.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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