
UNIT 21 VEDĀNTA: ŚAMKARA, MADHVA, RĀMĀNUJA*

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21.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit—is

- to elucidate the epistemology, metaphysics and axiology of Advaita, and Dvaita schools of Vedanta Traditions.
- discuss the idea of liberation, means to liberation.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Upaniṣads are called Vedānta. Because they are last portion of *Veda* or some say that they are the essence of the *Veda*. They are philosophical in nature. *Upaniṣads* are one of the prasthantrayi (*Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavadgita* and *Vedāntasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa are called departing or beginning point or base of vedantic schools). Various schools based their philosophy on these three. Various attempts have been made by different philosophers to interpret upanisads to justify or establish

their own thesis. These schools are called Vedānta schools. Vedānta philosophy is based upon revelation or *Śruti*, argument or *Yukti* and experience or *Anubhava*. In this unit we will discuss three themes of Śaṅkara, Madhva and Rāmānuja. Śaṅkara propounded Non-dualism (Advaita), Madhva presented dualism and Ramanuja established Qualified non-dualism (Viśiṣṭādvaita).

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Śaṅkara, Madhva,
Rāmānuja**

21.2 ŚAṅKARA

Śaṅkara was born in 788 A.D. in Kalady, Kerala to the couple Shivaguru and Aryamba, who were great devotees of Lord Śiva. He commented on the *Prasthāna Traya* (the three basic tenets of Vedānta, viz, *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Brahma Sūtra*). Some of his disciples were Padmapāda, Sureśvara, Toṭaka and Hastāmāla. His famous philosophical compositions are *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi*, *Upadeśa Sāhasri*, *Vākyavrtti*, *Mohamudgara (Bhaja Govindam)* etc. Some of his devotional hymns are *Ganeshā pancharatnam*, *Saundaryalahari*, *Śivānandalahari*, *Narmadāṣṭakam*, etc. It is said that Śaṅkara composed more than hundred works in his short life span. At the end of his mission in 820 A.D, he directed his disciples to carry out his vision for the welfare of humanity. He then, it is said, walked towards the Himalayas.

21.3 EPISTEMOLOGY

The quintessence of Advaita philosophy is given out by Śaṅkara in his famous line: *Brahma satyam jaganmithyā jivobrahmaiva napaṛaḥ – Brahman is real, the world is unreal and the individual self is non-different from Brahman*. This teaching is based on the Upaniṣadic statements and the whole exercise of culling out the Advaitic essence lies in the interpretation

The knowledge of self or *Brahman* cannot be gained by perceptual cognition since *Brahman* can never be objectified. *Brahman* is self-evident luminous being, hence the knowledge of *Brahman* is known as *svarūpa-jñāna* or knowledge of nature of self as opposed to *vrtti-jñāna* or empirical knowledge.

According to Śaṅkara, Brahman cannot be known through any means of knowledge. Because every means of knowledge presupposes duality; the duality between knower and the object of knowledge. Brahman is non dual. There is no duality between knower and the object of knowledge. Even Scripture is in avidya (duality). But they have statements related to Brahman, hence they can be used as an indicator towards Brahman. One who knows Brahman becomes Brahman shows that there is no time-difference between knower and known. As, the space in pot (ghātakāś) and space (mahākāś) are the same and one, but due to the wall of the pot, we think that they are different, but when the pot destroys, you cannot perceive ghatakāś. Brahman is omnipresent as the mud is present in all mud-pots/vessels. The name and form that that is pot, that is bottle, these are only modification of mud, the truth or real is mud alone. Similarly Brahman alone is real, the world is modification and has no independent and different existence from Brahman.

Avidyā is natural, it is without beginning. It is seeing something as different or other thing. It is *sadasadvilakṣaṇ*, because it is neither real/existent (Brahman is alone real) nor unreal/non-existent (like, flower in the sky). That is why we cannot interpret Avidyā (For interpretation, something should be in the category

21.4 METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES

In this section we shall deal with the metaphysical categories of Advaita.

Brahman

Reality is non-sublated in three states (Waking, Dreaming and Deep Sleep; Jagrat, Swapna, Suṣupti). I or self cannot be sublated, because its denial presupposes its existence. This I or self without any boundry is Brahman. *Upaniṣads* define *Brahman* in two ways, one is revelation of its essential nature (*svarūpa lakṣaṇa*) and the second is revealing Brahman through secondary attributes (*taṭastha lakṣaṇa*). The Upaniṣadic statements like 'Existence Consciousness Limitless Brahma' is known as essential or direct definition of *Brahman* and statements that describe *Brahman* as the creator of the universe, like, 'That from which all beings originate', is *taṭastha lakṣaṇa*. *Brahman* is described as one, only, without duality which implies *Brahman* is free from homogeneous difference, heterogeneous difference and difference within itself (*sajātīya vijātīya svagata bheda śūnya*). The non-dual Brahman free from attributes, modifications, and form, ever-pure, alone exists. It is transcendently real and is the absolute being. According to Advaita, *Nirguṇa Brahman* alone is real. *Brahman*, when realised as non-different from the true nature of individual self is known as *Ātman*. Thus, *Brahman* and *Ātman* are essentially one. *Brahman* is anadi or without a beginning. Brahman, defined in its secondary attributive form, is known as *Saguṇa Brahman* or *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is defined as Brahman-Consciousness reflected in *Māyā*, where *Māyā* is the power of *Īśvara*.

Avidyā

Avidyā (sometimes refer to as *Māyā*; It is disputable that whether Śaṅkar used the term *Māyā* or not. This dispute is based on the dispute that which book is written by Śaṅkar.) or the primal matter is also without a beginning that has Brahman as its locus and content. The existence and evidence of *Brahman* is concealed by *Avidyā*. *Avidyā* or *Māyā* is the limiting adjunct that distorts Brahman-consciousness. *Māyā* is defined as indescribable or that which cannot be categorised as existent, or non-existent or both. It cannot be said to be existent, since on rise of Brahman-knowledge, *Māyā* and its effects gets sublated. It cannot non-existent, since it is experienced. It cannot be both since opposed features cannot exist in the same locus. It is not perceptible but inferred through its products, the world and the material bodies. *Māyā* possesses two powers, one to conceal (*āvaraṇa śakti*) the nature of consciousness and the other to project (*vikṣepa śakti*) a world of plurality. *Māyā* does not have an independent existence of its own and it depends on Brahman for its existence. According to Advaita, that which has a dependent existence is unreal (*mithyā*).

Jīva

According to Advaita, the Brahman-consciousness reflected in the mind is *jīva*. *Jīva* is also said to be without a beginning. By considering six factors as beginningless, Advaita shows the cyclicity of time and does not probe into the 'first' creation that is dismissed as illogical. In the sense, *jīva* is limited

in knowledge, power and located in a place. *Jīva* is many, constituting three bodies – gross, subtle and causal, the material body is subject to birth and death. While the physical body serves as the abode of experiences, the subtle body serves as the means of experiences. The three bodies based on their functions are classified into five sheaths (*pañchakośa*), viz, food-sheath (*annamayakośa*), air-sheath (*prānamayakośa*), mental-sheath (*manomayakośa*), intellect-sheath (*vijñānamayakośa*) and bliss sheath (*ānandamayakośa*). The individual soul or *jīva* undergoes three states of experiences, namely, waking, dream and deep sleep states. The *jīva* through its various constituents is a doer and reaper. The *jīva* is bound by three kinds of karma, viz, *sañchita*, *prārabdha* and *āgāmi*. *Sañchita karma* is the result of past action yet to fructify, the *prārabdha karma* is the fructified result that is experienced now and the *āgāmi karma* is the result of action to be gained by future actions.

Jagat

Advaitins advocate the theory of transfiguration (*vivartavāda*) in order to account for the origination of the phenomenal universe. According to this theory, the cause produces an effect without undergoing any change. Brahman is the substratum on which the world appears. The world does not exist independent of *Brahman*. The cause of the appearance of the world is *Māyā* which undergoes change and hence it is the transformative material cause (*parināmi upādāna kāraṇa*). Advaitins hold that the universe exists in an unmanifest form in *Brahman*. Such a view is known as *Satkāryavāda*. Since *māyā* does not exist independent of *Brahman* and *Brahman* devoid of *Māyā* cannot be the cause, *Īśvara* is said to be both the material and intelligent cause of the universe. *Īśvara*, the wielder of *māyā* spins the universe in an orderly and purposeful manner. The causal state of *Māyā* is also beginningless, that evolves in two stages, firstly there is the evolution of the subtle universe, from which the gross universe emerges. This process develops at the macrocosmic and microcosmic level. Let us see the evolutionary process:

The causal body in unmanifest condition firstly manifests as the subtle body, like a sprout from a seed. The five elements, space, air, fire, water and earth at the causal state consists of three *guṇas* having emerged from *Māyā*. The subtle body evolves through a process of non-grossification (*apanchīkaraṇa*). It is a combination of sixteen organs that are invisible and intangible. They are five sense organs of knowledge (sense of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell), five sense organs of action (speech, sense of grasping etc, sense of locomotion, organ of excretion and organ of procreation), five vital air (respiration, circulation, digestion, evacuation and reversal process), and internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*) with four-fold functions as mind, intellect, sense of 'I' and memory. The sense organs of knowledge and mind/intellect are the product of *sattva guṇa* of *Māyā*, the sense organs of action and vital airs are the product of *rajoṅuṇa* of *Māyā*. The subtle universe possesses the corresponding presiding deities of each of these organs. For example, the god of sun is the presiding deity of eyes and so on. At this stage, there is the evolution of subtle body and subtle universe. The evolutes from *tamoguṇa* of *Māyā* undergo the process of grossification (*pañchīkaraṇa*). The five elements at the gross level are divided into two equal parts. One-half of each element further is divided into four parts. The one-eighth of each element is transferred to other elements retaining one-half of the division. At the end of

this grossification process, each element will contain one-half of its own and one-eighth of other elements. For example, the earth element will contain one-half of earth element, one-eighth of space, air, fire and water. At this stage one experiences the gross body and gross universe. The material world and body is known as not-self.

21.5 LIBERATION

Due to self-ignorance, the nature of self and not-self is mixed up that result in bondage. The nature of self is eternal, immortal, pure, unlimited, blissful etc. The nature of not-self is non-eternal, mortal, impure, limited, sorrowful etc. The nature of not-self is falsely transferred to the self and also the nature of self, that is, Existence and Consciousness is falsely transferred to the not-self. This superimposition is the cause of bondage. Bondage is an error superimposed on *Brahman* due to self-ignorance and hence knowledge alone is the means to liberation. Based on the indescribable theory of error, the rope-ignorance creates a 'snake' here ignorance is the material cause of 'snake'. The rope is the substratum on which 'snake' is superimposed and hence rope is the transfigurative material cause of 'snake'. The perceiver of 'snake' superimposes the characteristics of snake is frightened and tries to run away. On rise of rope-knowledge, the 'snake' vanishes and the person 'feels' saved. In this instance, there is no sorrow but still one experiences grief because of lack of knowledge of reality (rope-knowledge). Advaitin states, in the same manner, the world of plurality is superimposed on non-dual Brahman due to ignorance, plurality is cause of sorrow, on wake of Brahman-knowledge plurality vanishes (just as the 'snake' vanished) and one realises the non-dual nature of self and 'attains' bliss. 'I am father', 'I am student' all (father, mother, student, powerful, rich, poor, Indian etc) are imposition on I or self. This is superimposition (*Adhyas*), but the superimposition can be sublated by subsequent right knowledge. When we know our real nature, no superimposition is possible.

Liberation or *Mokṣa* is not purification, and there is no option of doing, not doing or doing in a different manner. Because it is *vastutantra* (dependant on the object), not *puruṣatantra* (dependant on the doer or subject). That is why no *upāsanā* or *bhakti* or *yajña* and no action can lead you towards liberation. Liberation is *aprokṣanubhuti* (immediate perception), it is realization of true nature.

One, who gains the 'non-dual-knowledge' through the *mahāvākya*, is a *jīvanmukta*. Technically, it is said that, the *jīvanmukta* burns down the entire *sanchita karma* and is unaffected by the *agami karma*. Since the *prārabdha karma* has fructified it can be exhausted only by experience. The *jīvanmukta* continues as long as the *prārabdha* continue. After the fall of the body, the liberated one does not assume another body and thus attains freedom from re-birth or *videha mukti*.

According to Advaita, the remote means to knowledge is action and meditation which enhances the purity of mind. The proximate means are the four-fold qualifications namely, *viveka* or discrimination between eternal and ephemeral, *vairagya* or dispassion towards worldly benefits, *śamadiṣaṭkasampatti* or six-fold mental disciplines and *mumukṣutva* or intense desire for liberation. Such

a seeker is known as *adhikari* who takes up the direct means, namely listening to the scriptures (*śravaṇa*), engaging in removal of doubts (*manana*) and being established in Brahman by dwelling on the teaching (*nididhyāsana*).

The identity of individual self and Brahman is revealed through the *mahāvākya* in the Upaniṣads. The *Aitareya* belonging to *Ṛk Veda* contains the *mahāvākya* – *Prajñānam brahma*, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* of *Yajur Veda* has *aham brahmasmi*, the *mahāvākya tattvamasi* occurs in *Chāndogya* of *Sāma Veda* and *Māṇḍūkya* of *Atharva veda* contains *ayamātmā brahma mahāvākya*. Here, we shall analyse the *tattvamasi mahāvākya* which is of instructive nature.

In *Chāndogya*, *Sādvidyā* section, a dialogue is carried out between father Uddālaka and son Śvetaketu. The dialogue opens up to indicate ‘that by knowing which everything else is known’. Uddālaka describes Brahman as the cause of the universe manifesting as ‘Sat’ or Existent. Through the *mahāvākya* ‘*Tat tvam asi*’, he refers to his son Śvetaketu and says, ‘You are that’. The primary meaning of the words ‘*tat*’ (That) and ‘*tvam*’ (You) do not convey the meaning of identity. Let us see this process sequentially.

The primary meaning of the word ‘*tat*’ refers to Brahman, who is defined as Consciousness reflecting in *māyā* and is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. The primary meaning of the word ‘*tvam*’ refers to *Jīva*, that is defined as Consciousness reflecting in the mind and is limited in intelligence, power and limited by space. The features revealed through the primary meaning are opposed to each other and are contradictory in nature. The identity of ‘*tat*’ *Paramātmā* and ‘*tvam*’ *jīvatmā* is impossible. Since primary meaning does not fit, we apply the secondary meaning. The secondary implication is developed in three stages:

- 1) The first stage is known as *Samānādhikarāṇya* or the Appositional usage; in which two words that are in grammatical coordination refers to the same locus. For instance, ‘white lotus’ are two words that are coordinated grammatically refers to the same flower. Similarly, the words ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’ are in apposition and hence refers to the same locus. But the word-meanings are opposed to each other.
- 2) The second stage is known as *Viśeṣyaviśeṣaṇa sambandha* or the relation of qualified-qualifier. The word meanings act as qualifier and qualified and delimit each other. In the case of ‘white lotus’, the word-meaning of ‘white’ is ‘whiteness’ and ‘lotus’ is ‘lotusness’. In the first instance, white is qualifier and lotus is qualified and in the second instance, lotus is qualifier and white is qualified. Thus, both word-meaning delimit each other referring to the same locus. But in the case of the words ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’, the process of qualified and qualifier does not hold good since the word-meanings with opposed meaning cannot refer to the same locus. Hence, we have to proceed to the third stage of secondary implication.
- 3) The third stage is known as *Lakṣyalakṣaṇa sambandha*, or the relation of indicator-indicated. As mentioned earlier, the *lakṣhana* is of three kinds, exclusive, inclusive and exclusive-inclusive. In the exclusive kind, the primary meaning is completely abandoned and a related secondary meaning is taken up to understand the meaning of a sentence. For example, ‘well is

walking’ does not make sense. The primary meaning of the word ‘well’ is unsuitable since ‘well’ cannot walk. The meaning related to ‘well’ is ‘water’ which is contained in a leather bag. This leather bag is hung on the oxes that are walking which is derived by the exclusive secondary application. This method does not fit in the case of the mahavakya since the primary meaning is to be completely abandoned. If it is so, then the primary meaning of ‘tat’ and ‘tvam’ that includes consciousness has to be abandoned and identity cannot be arrived at.

In the second kind of inclusive, the primary meaning is retained and a related word is included to arrive at the sentential meaning. For example, ‘browns are running’ does not convey the meaning. ‘Brown horses are running’ is understood based on the context by adding the word ‘horses’. Here, the primary meaning is not given up but a new element is included. This method is inapplicable in case of the mahāvākya since if the primary meaning is retained then the incompatible features of *Paramātmā* and *jīvātma* has to be retained and identity can never be arrived at.

The third implication process is known as exclusive-inclusive wherein one part of the primary meaning is retained and another part is given up resulting in identity knowledge. For instance, a person meets his friend after many years and recognises him as ‘this is that Devadatta’. The word ‘this’ refers to Devadatta related in present time and current place and the word ‘that’ refers to Devadatta related to past time and a different place. The oneness of Devadatta is arrived at by excluding present time and place and past time and place and retaining only the person Devadatta. In the same manner, the features of ‘tat’ is excluded and the features of ‘tvam’ is excluded, the consciousness behind ‘tat’ and ‘tvam’ alone is retained which is essentially the same. Thus, one arrives at the consciousness principle that is non-dual as the true nature of the self.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Briefly explain the first stage of secondary implication to arrive at the nature of Self.

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21.6 MADHVA

Madhva was born on 1238 A.D. at Pajaka a tiny hamlet near Udupi to Madhyageha Bhṭṭa and Vedavati. He was drawn to the path of renunciation and even as a young boy of eleven years, he chose initiation into the monastic order from Achyuta-Prajña, a reputed ascetic of the time, near Udupi. The preceptor Achyuta-Prajña renamed Vasudeva as ‘Purnaprajña’ at the time of his initiation into mendicant life. In a few months, he won the debate with expert scholars

and he was given the name Ānandatīrtha. Later, he was popularly known as Madhvācārya. He committed himself to write a commentary on the Prasthana Traya. He composed many works that were recorded by his disciple Satyatīrtha. Some of his works are *Pramānalakshana*, *Tattvaviveka*, *Viṣṇutattvanirnaya* etc. At the age of 79, he took leave of his disciples and left to Badri.

**Vedānta:
Śaṅkara, Madhva,
Rāmānuja**

21.7 EPISTEMOLOGY

The tenets of Dvaita philosophy is that Viṣṇu is the supreme head and that is the import of the scriptures. Every word in the scripture primarily signifies Viṣṇu and secondarily indicates the object. Viṣṇu is the cause of bondage as well as liberation. The world of plurality is real and is eternal. The ultimate reality of five-fold difference, namely, the difference between jīva and Īśvara, jīva and jīva, jīva and jagat (matter), jagat and jagat, Īśvara and jagat, is accepted. Liberation is gained only by developing bhakti towards Viṣṇu. For Madhva, devotion is possible only when the seeker possess the knowledge of Viṣṇu, which can be gained only through the instruments of valid knowledge. Dvaita School has a Realistic approach in its Epistemological construction in which it postulates the existence of object as different from knowledge. According to Dvaita, the reality of the object remains as it is whether cognised or not and an object has to be necessarily with characteristics to be cognised. Dvaita dismisses the possibility of an attributeless object. The attributes of the object determines the form of the knowledge and hence Dvaita advocates objectivity and not subjective knowledge.

Madhva focuses on the two meanings of the word ‘pramāna’, one refers to knowledge as such and the other to the instruments of knowledge. He, therefore, distinguishes the two by introducing the terms, kevalapramāna and anupramāna. While kevalapramāna applies to the meaning of knowledge, anupramāna is the term used for means of knowledge.

Kevalapramāna

Kevalapramāna is defined as that knowledge which does not go beyond its object and anupramāna is that which enables for a valid cognition. Kevalapramāna is further classified into four kinds, first of which is Īśvara-jñāna. It is the knowledge possessed by Īśvara which is complete, valid and eternal. This knowledge is not different from Īśvara’s form (*svarūpa*) and Īśvara has the cognition of both the unmanifested and manifested forms. This is known as *svarūpa-jñāna*. The second kind of pramāna is Lakṣmi-jñāna, which is also eternal but it is dependent on the Lord, whereas the knowledge of Īśvara is independent. In fact, according to Madhva, all the beings also possess svarūpa-jñāna. But the difference is that, while the svarūpa-jñāna of Īśvara and Lakṣmi or not concealed by ignorance, the same is concealed by ignorance in the case of all beings. Thus, the svarūpa-jñāna of all jīva is the efficient cause that leads to modification of mind known as manovritti-jñāna. Mind is the material cause that is contacted by the jīva, the mind contacts the sense organs which in turn contacts the sense objects, giving rise to perceptual cognition. The third pramāna is Yogī-jñāna, it is the knowledge obtained through yogic powers as a result of meditation on the Lord. It is further classified into three, based on the power gained as a result of meditation. The final pramāna is ayogin-jñāna which is the knowledge of all the jīvas. The jīvas are those who do not come under the

category of yogis. Their knowledge is invalid, inadequate and non-eternal.

Aṅupramāṇa

Madhva maintains three aṅupramāṇas or instruments of knowledge namely, perception, inference and verbal testimony. The other means accepted by Advaita and other Schools are categorised under these three. For instance, Madhva states, in the case of analogy, both perception and inference are employed and since the comparative knowledge is gained by these two means there is no necessity to accept analogy as a distinct source of knowledge. The means of postulation is also plugged under inference and non-apprehension is said to be known from perception, inference and verbal testimony. Thus, Madhva, confines his means of knowledge to three.

Perception

The mechanism of perception in Dvaita School is the sense-contact with the objects. For Dvaitin, a valid perceptual cognition arises only when both the senses and its objects are devoid of defects. Presence of defects in either will result in invalid apprehension of illusion or doubt. In the perceptual cognition, Dvaita enumerates function of seven senses, they are the five sense organs of knowledge, mind and *Sakṣin*. The conception of mind as a sense organ and *Sakṣin* are unique to Dvaita School. While the mind functions in coordinating with the five sense organs and acts as means of recollection, the *Sakṣin* is the witness consciousness or the faculty of intuitive perception. This *sakṣin* is said to be identical with the sentiency possessed in the *jīva*. Since *sakṣin* is the purest form of sense organ it never produces invalid knowledge. The external objects are perceived by the *sakṣin* with the aid of sense organs and that for which the senses are not the instrument, *sakṣin* perceives directly, like perception of the self, mind, the attributes of the mind, ignorance, time, space etc. Dvaita advocates a perceptual knowledge of the self through *sakṣin*. For Dvaita, every perception is determinate and it refutes an indeterminate perception.

Verbal Testimony

Madhva considers a statement free from defects is known to be a valid verbal testimony. He classifies defects into seven, they are, non-intelligibility (*abodhakatva*), result of use of meaningless word (*nirabhidheyatva*), use of non- syntactically related words (*anvayabhava*), results in erroneous knowledge (*viparīta bodhakatva*), revealing an already known thing (*jñāta-jñāpakatva*), conveying that which is redundant (*aprayojanatva*), giving a result without proper intention (anabhimata prayojanatva), stating the impossibility (*ashakhya sadhana pratipadya*), and resorting to a terse method overlooking the easy available method (*laghupaye sati gurupayopadeśa*). Madhva explains that a sentence-meaning is non-separate from word-meaning in total. The verbal authorities accepted by Madhva are four, apart from the Prasthāna Traya, the Rāmāyāṇa, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Pañcarātra Āgama* and the various Purāṇas that are non- contradictory. Madhva gives prime importance to the statements of duality in the scriptures. He reconciles the statements of non-duality and part-whole concepts as figurative or eulogy. The Dvaita School reads the mahāvākya tattvamasi, as ‘*atattvamasi*’ and establishes that this mahāvākya reveals the dependent nature of the soul on God.

21.8 METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES

Vedānta:
Śaṅkara, Madhva,
Rāmānuja

Madhva upholds that metaphysics is determining the reality and whatever is opposed to real is unreal. The metaphysical task is to distinguish the real from the unreal. The criterion of reality accepted by Madhva is valid knowledge, relation to space and time, and practical efficiency. The application of these criteria results in a pluralistic realistic metaphysics. The metaphysical category for Dvaita is that which can be known, named and asserted.

Padārtha

Dvaita recognises ten categories or padarthas, they are, substance (dravya), Quality (guṇa), Action (karma), Universality (sāmānya), Particularity (viśeṣa), the specified (viśiṣṭa), the whole (amśī), potency (śakti), similarity (sādrśya) and non-existence (abhāva).

Dravya

Dravya is a positive category and is the independent substratum on which the eight positive entities depend. Here too, Brahman is the only independent reality (*svatantra tattva*) which is one of the substances. All the other realities are dependent on *Brahman* (*paratantra tattva*). Dravya being the substratum of other categories inheres and constitute the essence of the categories. Dvaita categorises, dravya into twenty of which Brahman, Lakshmi and jīva are sentient beings and others are non-sentient categories. The non-sentient substances are space, time, matter and its eight evolutes, cosmos, ignorance, sound, darkness, mental impressions and reflection. We shall briefly examine the sentient substances of Dvaita system.

Brahman is also referred to as Īśvara, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa etc in Dvaita system. God is said to be the supreme reality, endowed with personality, possesses infinite attributes, is the creator and controller of the universe, and is the object of worship. Dvaita denies an attributeless supreme being and hence accepts *Saguṇa Brahman*. The material cause of the world is other than Brahman, which is Māyā, considered to be real according to Dvaita.

Lakshmi is the second order of substance, who is dependent on *Brahman* but independent of everything else. She is said to be the consort of *Brahman* and hence eternally related to Brahman. Jīvas are sentient beings who have existence, consciousness and bliss as essential attributes that are distinguishable through the unique faculty of particularity or viśeṣa. They are eternal, without a beginning or end. Jīva is said to be of atomic size, it is the knower, doer and reaper. Dvaita defines jīva as the substance which is endowed with the powers of agency and enjoyership, with a form but different from the physical body and is expressed through the word 'I' by the sākṣin. The jīva is similar to Brahman in terms of possessing consciousness and bliss apart from existence, but is entirely dependent on Brahman for its existence, knowledge and action. Madhva states that jīva is the reflection of Brahman without any medium of reflection (*nirupādhi pratibimba*). Dvaitin establishes the reality of plurality of jīvas and their eternal nature. The jīvas are classified based on their nature into three known as svarūpa-traividya. The sattva guṇa predominant jīvas intrinsically engage in the good and are fit for release from bondage. They

are classified as mukti-yogya like the celestials, sages and human with high degree of goodness. Some jīvas possess predominantly the rajas guṇa, in whom there is a mixture of good and bad. They are not fit for release and are ever subject to pleasure and pain. They are known as nitya-saṁsārin or those who are entangled in the chain of births and deaths eternally. The third group of jīvas are tamas predominant and they are known as tamoyogya who are condemned to suffering in hell since they eternally engage in evil activities. Dvaita thus accepts plurality and gradation of jīvas.

Jagat

The universe is a reality for Dvaita since it fulfils the condition of reality. The physical world is known perceptually which is a valid means of knowledge. *Brahman* is regarded to be the efficient cause of the world and prakriti or Māyā is the material cause which is completely different from *Brahman*. *Brahman* controls the matter and every change in matter is induced by *Brahman*, and hence *Brahman* is said to be both transcendental and immanent. The world of plurality is in unmanifest condition in matter and the transformation takes place by assuming distinct specialities. Thus, prakriti evolves from subtle to gross universe.

21.9 LIBERATION

Ignorance of the nature of self is cause of bondage according to Dvaita. The jīva is ignorant about its relation to God and it is known as *svabhāva-ajñāna-vāda*, the theory that bondage is because of the ignorance of the true nature of self as being totally dependent on Brahman, the independent reality. Ignorance has two powers, one it conceals the nature of jīva as dependent on God (*jīva-ācchādika*) and two it conceals the nature of God as the only independent reality (*Paramātma - ācchādika*). Freedom is only for those jīvas who realise this difference and puts forth effort to win the grace of God to reach His abode after the fall of the body.

The direct perception of God or aparokshadarshana alone is the proximate cause of freedom from bondage, according to Dualism. According to Madhva, divine grace plays a pivotal role in attainment of the Highest. As a realist, Madhva holds that survival of the individual jīva at the abode of Nārāyana is to be agreed because if the individuality is lost, there is no one to enjoy the state of liberation. Liberation is self-expression, self-manifestation and self-realisation for Dvaita School. In realisation, the plurality of the world is not dissolved but the false sense of separateness and its independence is removed. The liberated soul sees everything through the eyes of God. The various jīvas that attain liberation by reaching the abode of Nārāyana, do not experience a uniform bliss state, Madhva maintains gradation in liberating joy also.

The Dvaita Philosophy prescribes a series of means or sadhanas to attain the Highest end. The School considers the following as important means, one leading to another, they are, detachment (*vairāgya*), devotion to God (*bhakti*), study of scriptures (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*), meditation (*nididhyāsana*) and direct realisation (*sākshātkāra*). Among these, meditation is considered as the primary means to direct realisation and the others serve as secondary means. Madhva, while commenting on *Vedānta Sūtra*, gives prime

importance in gaining the grace of guru. The specific features of Madhva's means to liberation are philosophic inquiry or vichara, practice of karmayoga, bhaktiyoga and jñānayoga, validating the importance of bhakti and upāsana, the direct realisation of God as the ultimate means and the ethical value attached on realisation of the Ultimate. Madhva does not consider bhakti as merely an outpouring of emotions and sentiments, but it presupposes knowledge and a high degree of moral perfection. Madhva also considers purity of life or ācāra, as one of the key constitutive element of bhakti. Based on the intensity and commitment, Madhva speaks of three kinds of devotees, uttama, madhyama and adhama. This gradation is a necessary feature of Madhva's doctrine of bhakti. Bhakti itself is divided into three stages, first is the stage prior to the mediate knowledge of God, second is the mediate knowledge and third is after direct realisation where grace of God is gained.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. State the categories accepted by Dvaita.

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21.10 RĀMĀNUJA

Rāmānuja was born (1017 A.D.) to Asuri Keshava Somayaji Deekshitar and Kanthimathi in Perumbadur village, Tamilnadu. Rāmānuja wrote nine works including his famous commentary on VedāntaSūtra, known as Śri Bhashya. The *Vedāntasara* and *Vedāntadipika* are brief commentaries to the *Vedāntasūtra*, commentary on *Bhagavadgīta*. The other works are independent treatises elucidating the concepts of Viśiṣṭādvaita. They are, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, *Nitya grantha* and three prose works expounding the glory of surrender as means to liberation. At a ripe age of 120, Rāmānuja left his mortal coils and attained the abode of the Supreme Being in 1137 A.D.

21.11 EPISTEMOLOGY

The ultimate is one, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, but is not the attributeless; absolute since a Being devoid of attributes is imperceptible and logically untenable. Viśiṣṭādvaita admits of three fundamental realities, matter (*acit*), individual beings (*cit*) and God (*Īśvara*). The ultimate reality is one with cit and acit as its parts. Often the word 'Viśiṣṭādvaita' is referred to as 'pan-en-theism', which means the ultimate God is different from and independent of the relative entities and yet as a whole, it includes the relative entities. The epistemological analysis is a pre-requisite to the metaphysical conclusion of Viśiṣṭādvaita. Visistadvaitins admit three means of knowledge, viz, perception, inference and testimony. Here we will discuss perception and verbal testimony.

Inference is similar to Nyāya's theory of inference.

Perception

As a Realist School, Viśiṣṭādvaita describes perceptual knowledge as sensory contact with objects. In the process of perception, there is knowledge (*artha prakāśa*) that reveals an object, knower, object of knowledge and means of knowledge. The knowledge of the jīva flows out through the mind to the sense organs that come in contact with the object, there arises a perceptual cognition, like, 'there is a pot'. In this mechanism, Visistadvaitin states, knowledge can reveal only that object which is qualified by attributes. Since an object devoid of attributes is imperceptible. Visistadvaitin refuses to accept a transcendental absolute reality.

Testimony

The scriptural statements or testimony is accepted as an independent means of knowledge by Viśiṣṭādvaitins. The primary scriptures are the *prasthāna trayā*, but Viśiṣṭādvaitins include *Purāṇas* and *Pancharātra Āgamas* as equally authoritative and valid source of knowledge. The *Purāṇas* are classified as *sāttvika*, *rajasa* and *tamasa* and the *sāttvika purāṇas* eulogise the greatness of Viṣṇu and hence they are taken to be the most authentic source. For Visistadvaitins, the *Pañcarātra Āgamas* hold a unique position since they are considered to be revealed by Īśvara. The theory of verbal knowledge as admitted by Viśiṣṭādvaita signifies that the words have power to denote their respective meanings along with qualities or difference. The power of the word to denote an object is not limited to the quality alone but it indicates the substance also. This sense of denotation is known as '*aparyavasana vritti*'. The *cit* and *acit* are inseparable attributes of *Brahman* and hence every word indicates *Brahman* immanent in everything. Since all the words denote *Brahman* primarily, in this sense *Brahman* is known as '*sarva śabda vācyā*'.

Check Your Progress III

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. How many pramāṇas does Rāmānuja accept?

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21.12 METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES

Viśiṣṭādvaita is developed based on the concept of substance-attribute and it lays down three fundamental metaphysical concepts, namely, the concept of substance and attribute, the concept of relation and the concept of cause and effect. According to Viśiṣṭādvaitin's epistemological stand, a substance cannot be conceived devoid of attributes.

- The first concept is explained based on the principle of aprthaksiddhi, as an attribute is inseparable from its substance; a substance is also inseparable from its attributes.
- The second concept of relation is obtained between substance and attribute and substance and substance. Thus, physical body and soul are inseparable substances. Similarly, cit and acit are inseparable from Īśvara.
- The third concept of cause and effect expounds how the 'one' became 'many'. The effect does not exist in the cause nor is it different from the cause. The two are different states of one and the same substance. This is a modified theory of Satkaryavada.

Based on the above three concepts, Visistadvaitins proceeds to explicate the metaphysical categories that is broadly divided as substance (*dravya*) and non- substance (*adravya*). The substances are six, divided as inert (*jaḍa*) and non- inert (*ajāḍa*), of which the non-inert entities are further classified as self-revealing (*pratyak*) and revelation for others (*parak*), of which Jīva and Īśvara are self- revealing non-inert substances and *nityavibhūti* and *jñāna* are *parak*. The *prakṛti* and *kāla* are inert substances. The non-substances are ten, viz, sattva, rajas, tamas, śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa, gandha, saṁyoga and śakti which are the basic metaphysical attributes.

Dravya

Dravya is that which serves as a substratum of modification and modification is that which an adventitious quality inseparable from the substance. Viśiṣṭādvaita presents a distinctive doctrine of jīva, that is different from Brahman and even in the state of liberation it does not lose its individuality. Jīvas are infinite in number and they are essentially of the nature of knowledge. Jīva is the knower because it serves as the substrate of knowledge. The jīva constituting of knowledge is known as substantive-knowledge (*dharmijñāna*) which is self-evident but does not reveal the external objects and it knows what is revealed to it. The jñāna or knowledge by itself is an essential attribute of the jīva, which is known as attributive- knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*). *Jñāna* reveals itself and the external objects but does not know them. Jīva is a doer and reaper of results. It is of the dimension of an atom (*aṇu*). Jīva is different from panchakoshas. The jīvas are eternal. Rāmānuja, while commenting on the VedāntaSūtra establishes that jīva is neither different from nor identical with Brahman, but it is a part (*aṁśa*) of *Brahman*. The part-whole theory means, jīvas are the essential attribute of a complex whole.

Visistadvaitin holds a theological philosophy and considers the ultimate reality as the personal God, *Nārāyaṇa*, etymologically means the ground of cit and acit. *Brahman* or the ultimate reality is also referred to as Viṣṇu, etymologically meaning that which pervades everything. Rāmānuja derives validity of its theology from the *Upaniṣads* and *Purāṇas*. The attributeless *Brahman* held by Advaitin is rejected as metaphysical abstraction and *Brahman* is conceived, by Visistadvaitin as God with attributes like possessing a bodily form, with infinite good qualities and glories. The bodily form of *Brahman* is not subject to karma like the jīvas, but is assumed out of free-will for the benefit of the devotees. The bodily form of *Brahman* also known as Īśvara is eternal with

pure quality (*shuddha sattva*). The nature of *Brahman* is determined by five distinguishing characteristics, namely, Reality (*satyam*), Knowledge (*jñānam*), Infinite (*anantam*), Bliss (*ānandam*) and Pure (*amalam*) based on Upaniṣadic statements. Visistadvaitin admits six attributes in Īśvara, viz, knowledge, strength, lordship, virility, power and splendour. God, for Visistadvaitins, manifest in five forms, the transcendental form (*para*), divine manifestation as Vāsudeva, Sankarṣana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha (*Vyūha*), several incarnations (*vibhava*), entering into the substance made by devotees (*arcā*) and residing in the hearts of jīvas (*antaryāmi*). The purpose of varied manifestations is to destroy evil and re-establish righteousness.

Prakṛti or the primordial cosmic matter is an inert substance, eternal and subject to modification. It consists of three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is controlled by Īśvara and is dependent on Him for its existence. According to the evolutionary process of Visistadvaitin, twenty-three categories evolve from prakṛiti, they are, mahat, ahamkara, from the sattvika ahamkara emerges manas, five senses of knowledge and action, from the tamasa ahamkāra emanates the five tanmātrās or subtle elements. The rajasa ahamkāra serves as an aid for both the sāttvika and tamasa in their evolution. The two stages of evolution in the form aggregate and gross is described. The first stage is regarded as the primary evolution of the aggregate universe and the second stage is the formation of the physical universe where the elements undergo the process of *pañchīkaraṇa*. Visistadvaitin rejects the vivartavāda of Advaitin and advocates the reality of the universe. The perceived world is not an appearance but an integral part of Brahman. Based on the third metaphysical concept of cause and effect, Brahman with cit and acit in subtle form is the cause and in manifested form is the effect. Rāmānuja rejects the theory of illusion advocated by Advaitin on the grounds of seven untenabilities against the concept of Māyā. The seven untenabilities are elaborately discussed in *Śri Bhasya*. According to Rāmānuja, firstly the very nature of Māyā is subject to contradictions, secondly the inexplicable nature is illogical, thirdly, there is no means of knowledge in support of this theory of Māyā, the locus of Māyā cannot be ascertained as Brahman or jīva, fifthly, the obscuring nature of Māyā is unintelligible, sixthly there is untenability of removal of Māyā by valid knowledge, and finally, the very concept of the cessation of Māyā is illogical.

Nityavibhūti or *Shuddhasattva* is the transcendental matter in contrast to the prakṛiti that is the cosmic matter. It is a spiritual substance characterised by pure sattva unlike the physical matter which constitutes three guṇas. It is non-material and insentient. It is classified under the parak and hence it illumines everything but does not know. Visistadvaitins accept *shuddhasatta* category since *Āgamas* maintain that idols that are consecrated is permeated with *shuddhasattva* thus making the place of worship a spiritual sanctorum. Moreover, the bodily form of Īśvara cannot be made of cosmic matter that is subject to origination and destruction, but it is made of *shuddhasattva*. However, Īśvara is the controller of and substratum of both the *prakṛiti* and *shuddhasattva*.

Kāla or the Time Principle is also one of the inert substances that is eternal. It is an independent and real substance but is not a part of *prakṛiti*. It exists along with prakṛiti without a beginning or an end. It is within the realm of *Brahman* and undergoes modification in the form of seconds, minutes, hours, days etc.

Adravya

sattva, rajas and tamas are the three basic qualities of prakṛti. Sattva stands for light and causes happiness. Rajas represents activity and causes suffering and tamas means inertia giving rise to ignorance. The attributes of the five elements namely sound, touch, sight, taste and smell is cognised by its corresponding sense organ. *Samyoga* or relation is a non-substance that brings together two things. There is *Samyoga* between puruṣa and prakṛti that result in the universe. The body and soul are together due to *Samyoga* relation that varies from Brahma to a blade of grass. Knowledge takes place as a result of *Samyoga* between intellect and external objects. This relation is possible between two all-pervasive substances like the relation of Īśvara and *kāla* that is eternal.

Vedānta:
Śaṅkara, Madhva,
Rāmānuja

21.13 LIBERATION

The jīvas have fallen away from the Lord and are ignorant of the relation of themselves as the body of Nārāyaṇa. This forgetfulness of *śarīra-śarīri sambandha* or the relation of part-whole unit leads to sorrow and bondage. Freedom is thus, gaining knowledge of the nature of self and attaining the feet of the Lord in his abode, Vaikuntha.

Viśiṣṭādvaitin maintains that jīva is an eternal individual being that remains in its true nature in the state of liberation with infinite knowledge, relishing the eternal bliss of Brahman. Thus, each jīva has to realise its highest goal of reaching Nārāyaṇa and put forth effort to attain liberation. Liberation for Viśiṣṭādvaita is attaining the abode of Nārāyaṇa. It is not merely freedom from bondage but it is a positive state of existence in the higher realm without losing individuality. The liberated soul attains omniscience and enjoys the unlimited bliss like the Lord. The jīva after liberation is not subject to karma and therefore knowledge manifests in its fullest. Rāmānuja does not accept the concept of jīvanmukti because the abode of Lord can be attained only after exhaustion of all karma and fall of the physical body. The liberated jīva gains all the perfections of the Lord except that they remain atomic in size and does not gain the power to create, sustain or dissolve the universe.

The jīvas are classified, in Viśiṣṭādvaita, as baddha or bound selves, mukta or released selves and nitya or eternally free ones. Those jīvas who develop detachment towards ephemeral pleasures is said to be an aspirant of liberation. If the jīva knows the nature of five factors then with the grace of the Lord will attain liberation. The five factors (*arthapañcakam*) are nature of soul as subservient to God, nature of God as the ultimate and only reality, nature of goal as to attain the Lord and serve Him, nature of means being total surrender to win the grace of Lord, and the nature of obstacle as ignorance of the above four factors.

The means or upāya according to Viśiṣṭādvaita is bhakti or an unceasing meditation with love on the Supreme Being. Bhakti is generated with total observance of religious duties as prescribed in the scriptures adhering to the classification of class and stages of life. Bhakti is preceded by karma and jñāna and hence karma and jñāna are subsidiary or subservient to bhakti and bhakti is the direct means to liberation. Since bhakti is the direct means to liberation, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita,

it prescribes the process of development of highest devotion or parābhakti towards the Lord. Initially, one develops love for the Lord, caused by study of scriptures and by intimate association with other devotees. This is known as general devotion or sāmānya bhakti. Then one should rigorously practice karma yoga by accepting any consequence as the offering of the Lord. By gaining God's grace, one reflects upon the true nature of the individual self, is known as Ātmanusandhāna. The next stage is the realisation of self as subservient to God, this is known as knowledge of being a part of Lord or seṣatvajñāna. The gradual progress to the next stage is realisation that the highest attainment is oneness with the Lord. Parābhakti is that wherein one develops the utmost desire and determination to see the Lord. The concept of prapatti or total surrender to the Lord is also considered as the direct means to liberation. In fact, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, both bhakti and prapatti are two sides of a same coin and hence they function as the direct means to attain the feet of the Lord. These two means are however, different and distinct with a specific role in the spiritual development. The bhakti is considered as sādhana bhakti and prapatti is known as sādhya bhakti, that is, one is the means and the other is the end. In fact, at a later stage, the School emphasised the role of prapatti since bhakti yoga demands a high level quality that may distance many seekers from attempting to pursue liberation. Rāmānuja interprets the mahāvākya 'tattvamasi' in the following manner. The word 'tat' in the mahāvākya refers to God having the entire universe as his body, and the word 'tvam' refers to God having the individual beings as his body. Thus, acit and cit as attributes of God is revealed by these two words. Finally the verb 'asi' in the mahāvākya reveals the identity of the embodied in both, viz, God.

21.14 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a general understanding of the Philosophy of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. The purpose of Epistemology is discussed and the Metaphysical categories are defined and examined separately. Knowledge as the means to liberation is an important tenet of Advaita that differentiates itself from other Schools of Vedānta. Rāmānuja's approach is an attempt to unite the personal theism with the philosophy of the Absolute. The Philosophy of Ramanuja is widely known as 'Qualified Monism'. The sole aim of Madhva was to establish the independent nature of the Lord and dependent individuals. This, according to Madhva, paves way for developing a bond with the Highest Being, namely, Nārāyana.

21.15 KEY WORDS

<i>Anādi</i>	:	that whose beginning cannot be determined in the concept of time and space.
Artha prakāśa	:	manifestation of object
<i>Brahmaloka</i>	:	the region said to be the seventh heaven presided by Lord Brahma who imparts knowledge resulting in gradual liberation.
Dharmabhūtajñāna	:	knowledge as an essential attribute of the Self.

Śarīra-śarīri sambandha : the organic relation of the body to the soul and of the cosmic universe of cit and acit to Īśvara , according to Rāmānuja.

Vedānta:
Śaṅkara, Madhva,
Rāmānuja

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21.17 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The first stage of the secondary implication is Samānādhikaraṇya or the Appositional usage, the words 'tat' and 'tvam' are in apposition and hence refers to the same locus. But the word-meanings are opposed to each other.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Dvaita recognises ten categories or padarthas; dravya, guṇa, karma, sāmānya, Particularity viśeṣa, viśiṣṭa, amśī, śakti, sādrśya and abhāva.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. Viśiṣṭādvaitin accepts three pramāṇa; Perception, Inference and Verbal Testimony.



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