
UNIT 1 ADVAITA VEDANTA

Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Brahman and Atman
- 1.3. *Avidya* and *Maya*
- 1.4. *Karya* and *Karana* (effect and cause)
- 1.5. Knowledge
- 1.6. Attaining Liberation through Knowledge
- 1.7. Let us sum up
- 1.8. Key words and sentences
- 1.9. Further Reading & References

1.0. OBJECTIVES

This unit is about Advaita Vedanta, its meaning and significance in Indian Philosophy. The word Advaita according to the dictionary is non-dualism, especially in relation to identifying Brahman with the Universal, or with Soul or the spirit and matter. It also means peerless and unique. Literal meaning of Vedanta is the end of Veda. Upanishads came at the end of Veda, they are the *Jnana Kandas*. They teach knowledge of Brahman or the universal Spirit, who is described as both - Creator and Creation, Actor and Act, Existence, Knowledge, and Joy. Upanishad's Major Teachings are – the Self exists, it is immortal without a beginning or an end, essentially non – material, and the self is identical with Brahman, the highest Reality, and the Absolute.

The main feature of Advaita Vedanta is to understand Brahman, the Supreme Soul. To understand Brahman one has to attain knowledge, overcome ignorance, and be liberated and be in vigilant state at the conscious level. Advaita Vedanta teaches three stages of truth. The first stage is the transcendental or *Paramarthika* in which Brahman is the only reality and nothing else. The second stage is the pragmatic or *Vyavaharika* in which both *Jiva* (living creatures and individual souls) and God are true, and the material world is also true. The third and the last stage is the apparent or *Prathibhasika* in which material world reality is actually false, like mistaking a rope for a snake. To comprehend the essence of Advaita philosophy one has to understand these topics: Brahman and Atman, *Avidya* and *Maya* (Ignorance and illusion), *Karya* and *karana* (effect and cause), Knowledge, Attaining Liberation through Knowledge.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Around 7th century Gaudapada, the author of *Mandukya Karika*, a commentary on *Mandukya Upanishad* discussed that there was no duality, awake or dream, the mind moves through illusion (*Maya*) and only nonduality (*Advaita*) is the final truth. The truth is difficult to know because of ignorance or illusion. There is no becoming of the thing by itself or from some other thing. There is only Atman, 'all –soul', there is no individual soul. An individual soul is temporarily delineated, as the space that a jar contains is delineated from the main space; once the jar is broken the space within the jar merges with the vast space.

Sankara built further on Gaudapada's foundation and gave more strength to the Advaita Vedanta. His three major commentaries are on *Brahmasutras*, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. Sankara while propounding his philosophy does not start from the empirical world with logical analysis but, rather, directly from the Absolute, Brahman. Sankara's metaphysics stands on the criterion that the Real is that whose negation is impossible. Building his argument that the Upanishads teach the nature of Brahman, he develops a complete epistemology to account for the human error in taking the world as real. He justifies that Brahman is outside time, space, and causality, which are simply forms of empirical experience; no distinction in Brahman or from Brahman is possible.

Sankara strongly supporting that the world is not real but illusion, logically analyses his statement:

1. Whatever remains eternal is true, and whatsoever is destroyed is non-eternal and is untrue. As the world is created and destroyed, it is not real.
2. Truth is unchanging. Since the world is changing, it is not real.
3. Things that are independent of time and space are real, and whatever is in space and time is unreal.
4. Just as one sees the dream in sleep, one sees a kind of dream even when one is awake. The world is compared to this conscious dream.
5. The world is superimposition of Brahman. Superimposition cannot be real.

1.2 BRAHMAN AND ATMAN

According to dictionary meaning, Brahman is sacred learning, a divine source. Brahman is considered as the Supreme, all-pervading spirit and the Soul of the Universe, the divine essence and source of all being from which all created things emanate and to which they return. Brahman as supreme Spirit is not an object of worship in the usual sense of the term, but Brahman is meditated upon by the devout with profound veneration. Mandana Misra accepting Bhartrhari's thesis says that Brahman is language (*Sabdadvaita*). Brahman is consciousness, and

consciousness is the power of speech, so Brahman is speech of the whole Universe manifestation of *Vivarta* (speech). Brahman was the center theme in Upanishads, *Jnana Kanda*. In *Chandogya* Upanishad, *Tat tvam asi*, (that thou art), *Jiva* is identified with Brahman. Brahman and the Self are the one and the same. According to *Advaita* there is no duality. One and many, infinite and finite, the subject and the object etc. are the limitation of consciousness that cannot comprehend the Brahman due to ignorance or *Avidya*. There is no language to describe Brahman, it is like '*neti, neti*', 'not this, not this.' Understanding Brahman is beyond the senses, He is the purest Knowledge and illuminates like the source of light.

Brahman is self-existent, He is described as '*Sachidananda*' – meaning *Sat* infinite truth, *cit* infinite Consciousness, *ananda* infinite Bliss. Sankara sketches Him as "*Satyam Jnanam anantam brahma*" (*Taittiriya* Up. II.1), Brahman is the Truth, Knowledge and Endless. Brahman is free from any kind of differences or differentiation. Brahman is neither *Sajatiya* (homogeneous) because there is no second to Him nor *Vijatiya* (heterogeneous) because none other than Him exist; *Ekamevadvitiam*, it is one without a second (*Chandogya* Upanishad). *Advaita* philosophy is built on the strong hold of Upanishads and *Brahmasutra*. Upanishads give various incidences where it is highlighted that Brahman = Atman; *Prajanam brahma*, consciousness is Brahman (*Aitareya* Upanishad), *Aham bramasmī*, I am Brahman (*Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad, *Ayamatma brahma*, this Atman is Brahman (*Mandukya* Upanishad). *Brahmasutra* starts with -"*athato brahma jignasa*" (chapter 1 *Samanvaya*: harmony 1.1). Taking these as examples, the philosophy puts forth the unique theory that Brahman is the One, the Whole and only reality. Other than Brahman everything else, including the Universe, material objects and individual are false. Brahman is infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, incorporeal, impersonal transcendent reality; that is the divine ground for all Being. There is no separation or distinction between Brahman and others in the Universe. That is how when one achieves the *turiya* state, one experiences that one's soul becomes one with everything else.

Atman: *Atman* exactly means breath but according to some it is connected with *aham* (I) and according to others contrast of *avatman*. From Vedic period *Atman* is interpreted as breath, soul, the principle of life and sensation. After the Vedic period, in Indian philosophy, *Atman* is described as the eternal core of the personality which survives after death and transmigrates to a new life or is released from the bond of existence. Upanishads define *Atman* as part of the universal Brahman, with which it can commune or even fuse. So *Atman* is deemed to be the central circle identified with *Brahma*. *Advaita* Vedanta understands *Atman* not as a part of Brahman that ultimately dissolves into Brahman, but as the whole of Brahman itself. One has to understand how the individual soul, which is limited and one in each body can be same as Brahman. The philosophy argues that Self is not an individual concept, *Atman* is only one and unique. It is like the same moon that appears as several moons on its reflections on the surface of the water covered with bubbles; *Atman* appears as different *Atman* in different bodies.

Atman is the silent witness of all the life happening and free from and beyond sin and merit. It is incorporeal and independent. When the reflection of *Atman* leads to *avidya* (ignorance), *Atman* becomes *jiva* – a living being with a body and senses. Each *jiva* feels that he has his own, unique and distinct *Atman* called *jivatman*. The concept of *jiva* is true in pragmatic level. In the

transcendental level, the *Atman* is equal to Brahman. The Advaita Vedanta explains the relative and the unreal nature of the objective world; it propounds the Advaita (one without a second) and states three levels of experience of the *Atman* – waking (*vaishvanara*), dreaming (*taijasa*) and deep sleep (*prajna*).

1.3 AVIDYA AND MAYA

Sankara distinguishes Brahman as Higher Brahman and Lower Brahman in his major Commentaries. According to him the Higher Brahman is understood only by knowledge (*Vidya*), He is free from attachment, names and forms; He is *Nirguna Brahman*; this understanding brings about Liberation. *Saguna* Brahman or God according to Sankara is Lower Brahman; he says that this Brahman is viewed from the aspects of ignorance (*Avidya*). Arguing further, Sankara asks when The Higher Brahman is the Absolute where is the cause for the distinction? He further says that The Lower Brahman is the cause of diversity. The entire Advaita philosophy concentrates on how one can understand Brahman. Philosophers discuss the hurdles that are faced while understanding Brahman. The main characteristic to understand Brahman is *Vidya* (Knowledge). Knowledge is possible only when the mind is cleared from doubts and apprehensions. As long as there is no transparency learning becomes ignorance (*avidya*). Gaudapada calls ignorance as *vikalpa* (wrong interpretation) and Sankara calls it as *adhyasa* (superimposition).

Samkhya gives an example for cause and effect; the pot is a transformation of the clay; it is and real. But Advaita philosophy says that except Brahman the rest of the thing is only an appearance, because of *Avidya*. Even the pot and clay, effect and cause become ‘unreal’ at ‘Higher Standpoint’ (*Paramarthika*) but ‘real’ at empirical standpoint (*vyavaharika*). Gaudapada says that people fail to understand at the ‘higher point of view’ because of wrong interpretation. He gives another example how things are seen differently; One sees a rope at dusk and thinks it as a snake, due to the wrong interpretation of the senses. Sankara calls this wrong interpretation ‘superimposition’ (*adhyasa*). He defines it as “the appearance, in the form of a memory, of something personally experienced in some other place.” Unless one has the idea of or seen a snake, it is not possible to mistake a rope for a snake. Similarly it is natural tendency to superimpose the qualities of the object on its subject and vice versa. Karl H. Potter writes, “.... We identify our self quo seat of consciousness with our self quo body, mind, memory etc. all of which are objects, not subjects, and so have at least one property that the self quo subject cannot have.” Sankara identifies such superimposition with the result of *avidya* (ignorance). The only way to overcome ignorance is to thrive by *Vidya* (knowledge).

Maya

There are references to the use of the word ‘*Maya*’ in the Rig Veda and in a few Upanishads as ‘mysteries’. Even Advaita Vedanta uses the same meaning in its interpretation of the word ‘*Maya*’. Gaudapada uses *Maya* in different occasions not only to mean the power of apparently creating things but also to speak of the things so created. This kind of usage is found in Buddhism. In this respect Goudapada is influenced by Buddhism. He does not identify *Maya*

with *avidya* but Sankara does. Sankara uses the term *avidya* to speak of that which creates the world of *Maya* or name and form, but does not refer to the world itself as *avidya*. Joshi has pointed out that Sankara is not consistent in this respect. But it is indicated, Sankara uses *avidya* while discussing superimposition and *Maya* while mentioning *prakruti* or *namarupa*. Karl Potter writes, “Sankara makes it known that superimposition does not need a cause as it is beginningless. *Avidya* is for the empirical objects in the world but for the false awareness of those objects.”

A few scholars question the identical use of *avidya* and *Maya*; they argue, if ignorance is of jiva, then it belongs to Brahman. *Maya* is God’s power to produce the world as illusion. The main concept of Advaita Vedanta is that there is no individual self or *jivas* and everything is Brahman. If such is the case then ignorance is of Brahman. The question arises “What is *avidya*?” Mandana Mishra says that ignorance is *anirvachaniya* (as neither real nor unreal). Sureshwara points out that *avidya* is unreal, so, it does not affect Brahman. However the jiva takes *avidya* for real, so it is jiva which is ignorant. Even though Sankara does not have definite terminology to distinguish between *avidya* and *Maya*; he stresses, “*Avidya* and *Maya* are causing us to experience (superimposition) the thing that we do, which is to give it a positive function beyond that of merely veiling Brahman.” *Maya* has a complex illusory power of Brahman which causes the Brahman to be seen as the material world of separate forms. *Maya* has two functions; one is to ‘hide’ Brahman from ordinary human perception, and the other is to present the material world in its (Brahman) place, *Maya* is also said to be indescribable, though it may be said that sense data entering ones awareness via the five senses are *Maya*, since the fundamental reality underlying sensory perception is completely hidden. The credibility of *Maya* being real or unreal is not for sure. But Brahman is not touched by *Maya*. It is like the magician who is not affected by his own tricks.

Both *avidya* and *Maya* are temporary. An action is not necessary to overcome *avidya*. It is naturally removed by its opposite *Vidya* (knowledge). Knowing needs intention and depends on the agent. For example to milk a cow, what is needed is a cow and the cognition of milking. Whereas, if one has a false understanding, mistake can be rectified by correct information; a false understanding of a rope as a snake is removed when one receives the information that it is rope. Knowledge is gained by personal perseverance to know the Truth. The truth is realized at two levels, one is to study the great Scripture with the guidance of a Teacher (*guru*) and the second level is to examine one’s ‘miss’ interpretation of things and situation. The self examination starts with the questioning of one’s own understanding of the present and the previous experiences; one has to examine the reasons for the false interpretation and realize the ‘higher’ knowledge governed by nothing but the truth: how is that the snake is superimposed on a rope? Is it due to fear of the snake or the failure of the senses to recognize correctly? Are rope and snake two different objects? If they are two distinct objects then why one is superimposed on the other? Clarity in understanding brings about Truth. The truth is the knowledge.

Check your progress I

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

1. How does Upanishad characterize Brahma?

.....

2. What is *Avidya* according to Advaita Vedanta?

.....

1.4 KARYA AND KARANA (EFFECT AND CAUSE)

Gaudapada justifies that an object which is not existing at the beginning can exist in the end or in the middle, that is to say an object is not completely nonexistent. He gives an example of a dream. When one dreams, he knows that it does not exist. In sleep, the dream originates, exists for some time; once the sleeper wakes up the dream ceases to exist. Gaudapada says even the objects one sees in wakeful state are unreal as they originate like in dream. He divides objects in two groups—Real (*sat*) and unreal (*asat*). Unreal objects are born and seen to be real. Discussing the relation of cause and effect, he says that both cause and effects are unreal under four possibilities:

1. If the effect is different from the cause, then it is not real
2. If the cause is unreal and becomes real in effect it will be absurd like son of a barren woman.
3. The cause is real and the effect is not.
4. The last one is, both cause and effect are unreal, in which case nothing ever comes to existence or goes out of existence.

He says that whatever originates has to end, like *Samsara*, emotions etc. Nothing can stay for ever. Sankara's argument about cause and effect is that when one's understanding of a thing called A, depends on the persistence of another thing B and it might be a possibility that A and B are similar in nature, but A might not be equal to B; in such a case, understanding of A does not depend upon understanding of B. For example, a horse can be perceived without the presence of a donkey. And it is further put forth that an agent (*karta*) is necessary for a cause (*karana*) and effect (*karya*). To make a pot, clay is the cause, the pot is an effect, the person who does the pot is the agent, *karta*, as he is the one who gives shape to the pot. Without the agent the effect will not come into existence. Sankara says, "The only thing that one properly functions as agent is the effect itself." He further states that cause has a pre existence of the effect before it is manifested.

Causality involves relationship between the agent with the nature and the effect with the nature. Agent brings about effect manifestation to our experience. The effect pot is made out of clay. The effect is thus identical in substance with its cause, pre-existent in it is the potency, and this is *sakaryavada*. This causation is called as *parinamavada* and *vivartavada*. Samkhya system adopts *parinamavada*; it says that pot is a transformation of the clay, the cause and effect exist at the appointed time and it is not 'unreal'. But *vivartanavada* argues that the pot is an object but an appearance is a work of imagination conditioned by ignorance (*avidya*). Advaita hails *vivartanavada* rather than *parinamavada* model. The reality of the cause is in reality only relative of the effect, with the pot the clay is 'real'. But Sankara says even the clay is not ultimately real. The ultimate reality brings about only Brahman and all the others are considered as *Avidya*. Further discussing the cause and effect, Advaita Vedanta says that *Karya* (effect) is non-different from the *Karana* (cause). Nevertheless *Karana* is different from *Karya*. This principle is called *Karya – Karana ananyatva* (non – difference of the effect from the cause).

It is said - if the cause is destroyed, the effect will no longer exist. For example, in the cotton cloth, if thread is removed, then there will not be cloth, the cloth is destroyed. Similarly, the effect thread, the cause, cotton is removed then there will not be any thread. Sankara taking Brahman sutra 2.1.9 "*Ananyatva Karyakaranayoh karyasya karanatmatvam na tu karanasta kartaymatvam* - despite the non-difference of cause and effect, the effect has its self in the cause but not the cause in the effect. The effect is of the nature of the cause and not the cause the nature of the effect. Therefore the qualities of the effect cannot touch the cause. At the time of the existence, one can easily grasp that the effect is not different from the cause. But the cause is different from the effect is not readily understood. As to this, it is not easy to separate cause and effect. But it is possible by imagination. For example, the reflection of the moon in the mirror, only the form of the moon is seen but it is not the moon itself as it (the reflection) has no moon in it. In Chandogya Upanishad it is said – *Sarvam ca namarupadi sadatmanaiva atyam vikarajatam svatastu anrtameva* – all names and forms are real when seen with the Sat (Brahman) but are false when seen independent of Brahman. *Karya* is not different from the *karana*, nonetheless *karana* is different from *karya*. *Jagat* (the world) is not different from Brahman; on the other hand Brahman is different from the *jagat*.

1.5. KNOWLEDGE

True Knowledge is attained by eagerness to learn. The ambition to know the ultimate 'Truth' leads to wisdom. When snake is superimposed on the rope, correct information that it is only a rope not a snake must be clarified. The person who has mistaken the rope for a snake must understand the object rope as the existing thing and snake as an illusion. Before deciding to perceive an object right or wrong one has to know how the things are perceived in the first place.

Advaita philosophy states that there are six different ways of learning –

- *Pratyaksha* – the knowledge gained by the senses
- *Anumana* - the knowledge gained by inference
- *Upamana* – the knowledge gained by analogy
- *Sabda or agama* – knowledge gained by testimony

- *Arthapatti* – the knowledge gained by superimposing the known knowledge on an appearing knowledge that does not occur with the known knowledge.
- *Anupalabdhi* – the knowledge gained by negation

Among all these the importance is given to verbal testimony (*sabda or agama*).

To acquire knowledge *pramatra* (the subject), the knower of the knowledge, *pramana* (the cause or the means) of knowledge and the *prameya* (the object) of knowledge are very essential. Knowledge is achieved by mediate or immediate, the difference is that while in the first, only 'that' of the object is known, in the second, 'what' is also understood. Both are alike *vritti* (behaviour) of the internal organ in which the *sakshin* (what is present) is imminent. In some cases to obtain knowledge, it does not involve sensory perception. The empirical self is understood immediately but it is not presented to any senses. So, the word '*pratyaksa*' (present to the sense) is replaced with '*aparoksa*' (not immediate). Knowledge is immediate whether it is by the senses or not. The object must be such that one can comprehend directly (*yogya*). For example, a chair is understood by looking at it but not kindness. Other condition is that the object must be present at the time. Finally there must be an intimate relationship between the subject and the object in question. For the external object the *vritti* flows out to understand where as internal, it originates inside; like understanding happiness or sorrow.

Accomplishment of knowledge happens when subject and object come together and by hypothesis they are removed from each other and occupy a different place in space; the *vritti* relates these two and brings about for the time being identical ground for the two. Describing how the understanding takes place M. Hiriyanna writes, "When an organ is brought in contact with an object, the *antahkarana*, like a search light as it were, goes out towards it and gets itself determined by it or assumes the 'form' of the object. The existence of knowledge is thus necessary so that psychologically, the theory is realistic. When the *vritti* coincides with the object the perceptual knowledge arises." *Vritti* is internal so it coincides with *jiva*. This brings about the connection between the knower and the known. As these stages of knowing are internal, M. Hiriyanna says that the object is 'felt' rather known. The same thing happens to the internal also like happiness and sorrow, the condition is that at the time of knowing it must be present. In some situation like religious merits '*punya*' and demerits '*papa*' the *antahkarana* cannot understand because of the lack of condition '*yogyatva*' or 'feltness'. They are understood by verbal testimony. Going back to the mistaking rope for a snake, the *antahkarana* understand the object by *arthapatti*. This wrong understanding can be rectified if the subject is made to realize by *sabda*. Once *anumana* is cleared then it makes way to the True Knowledge.

1.6 ATTAINING LIBERATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Almost all Indian philosophical systems give importance to 'Liberation' and looks at it as the main aim of the mankind and Advaita is no exception. Advaita Vedanta looks at Liberation as Being, Knowing and Experiencing one's True Self. Pure knowledge is not under other's control nor is it under any control, it is something one has. All it needs is a quest to know the Truth and Reality, once one has the thrust to know immediately the pure knowledge surfaces to

understanding. According to Sankara there are four outstanding characteristics of a person who is in quest of the Pure Knowledge. He is able to distinguish between what is eternal and what is not. He will be non-attached to present and future actions. He acquires moral virtues like tranquility, restraint etc. He desires liberation, Advaita says that liberation is free from differentiation and identifies only with 'True Self', which is without beginning and end and without any change of any sort. Sankara disputes the idea of the Mimamsas that Liberation is a result of action. Firstly, he says that liberation is identical with 'True Self; the true self does not have a commencement or finish, whereas the result of an action, has a starting and comes to existence when an act is performed. So, the Liberation cannot be the result of an action. Secondly, there are four kinds of actions – *Utpatti*, (the origination), for example, a potter making a pot; *Apati*, (the attainment) of a state, like arriving at a place; *Samskara* (the purification), performing rituals; *Vikara* (the modification), change taking place like milk turning to curds.

To attain Liberation these actions are not necessary. The only entity of Liberation is to cognize Brahman, this is the heart of Advaita epistemology and philosophy of language. Liberation is not a product. Liberation does not change a person; the liberated need not have to become someone or something else. Liberation is not to reach a place (heaven) as a result of an action. The liberated will not die and be born again. Gaudapada says, "There is no liberation." Liberation is similar to the difference in light reflections from a stained mirror to a spotless mirror. Sankara propounds that liberation is not a future state or goal, but it exists in the present, past and the future without any time bound. The Self realization brings about the awareness that Brahman is pure consciousness (*Cit*), awareness (*Jnana*) and witness (*saksin*), Brahman is self-luminous, by His light everything shines out. While such an understanding is reached then the relationship between knower and the known merges. There will be no subject and object relationship. Sankara is of the opinion that even the state of Bliss (*ananda*) is not cognized or experienced by the Liberated Soul.

Gaudapada in his work *Mandukya Katika*, book 3, commenting on non-duality (*Karika* 37 – 48) states that Liberation is, "Rather the awareness (of the mind), *Samadhi* (concentration), which is beyond language and thought, very calm and unwavering, full of light and without fear. Since there are no thoughts about objects, the awareness rests in itself and attains equanimity." He further argues that it is not easy to reach this state because we are grounded by fear. This is difficult even for the Yogis. When one reaches this state, one is free from all pain or pleasure because there will be no distinction or awareness of the emotional attachment due to physical senses. The mind will be immersed in the divine light of understanding the Absolute. There is oneness with the whole of the Universe. The liberated man functions like a burnt seed, he will be inactive. It is like liberation in living, the behaviour is to live his life to complete his present life's *Prarabdhakarma*.

Check your progress II

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

1. “*Jagat* (the world) is not different from Brahman; on the other hand Brahman is different from the *jagat*.” – justify this statement.

.....

.....

.....

2. What is ‘superimposition’, according to Sankara?

.....

.....

.....

3. Will Liberation change a person?

.....

.....

.....

1.7 LET US SUM UP

It is through pure consciousness (*vijnana*) one understands the ‘Truth’. Thrust for the ‘Truth’ does not have a beginning or end. It is always present inside, only one needs to recognize it. When one understands the greatest truth of the Absolute, Brahman that the effect of the world is illuminating like a source of infinite light then he is liberated from the ignorance (*Avidya*) and released from illusion (*Maya*). It is said, “The manifold universe is, in truth, a single Reality. There is only one Great Being, which the sages call Brahman, in which all countless forms of existence reside. That Great Being is utter consciousness, and it is the very essence, or self (*Atman*) of all being.” Advaita upholds that a person can be liberated while still living in the body. The identification of the Self with the Highest Self is the liberation. According to Advaita, “There is neither dissolution nor creation, neither a person in bondage nor any spiritual aspirant neither any seeker after liberation nor one that is liberated this realization is the highest truth.” The ethics of the Advaita philosophy stress that the liberated understands the Absolute, Brahman and lead a life and do what they have to do in their life time like a dew drop on a leaf to merge in the Sun light.

1.8. KEY WORDS

Consciousness: awareness (in philosophy) the power of the mind, whether rational or not, to be aware of acts, sensations or emotions

Manifestation: that act or process of showing, making manifest

Perception: the act of perceiving, understanding that is the result of perceiving

Prajnanam Brahma: Consciousness is Brahman (Aitareya Upanishad, Rig Veda)

Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajur Veda)

Tat tvam asi: That thou art (Chandogya Upanishad, Sama Veda)

Ayamatma Brahma: This Atman is Brahman (Mandukya Upanishad, Atharva Veda)

Athato Brahma jignasa: now therefore the inquiry into the nature of Brahman (Brahmasutra, Chapter one *Samanvaya*: harmony, 1. 1. 1.)

1.9 FURTHER READING REFERENCES

Bhattacharyya, Haridas. Ed. *The Cultural Heritage of India*. Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Institute of Culture, 1969.

Hiriyanna, M. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985.

Potter, Karl H. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. II. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Rao, K.B. Ramakrishna. *Advaita Vedanta: Problems and Perspectives*. Mysore: University of Mysore, 1980.

Rao, Srinivasa. *Advaita - A Critical Investigation*. Bangalore: Jnana Bharati, 1985.

UNIT 2 VISISTADVAITA

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Origin and History of the School
- 2.3 The scriptural foundations of the School
- 2.4 Philosophy of Visistadvaita: An Overview
- 2.5 Theory of Knowledge
- 2.6 Brahman
- 2.7 *Jivas* or Individual Souls
- 2.8 The Means of Liberation
- 2.9 The Two sects of Sri-Vaishnavism
- 2.10 Comparison with Other Traditions
- 2. 11 Let Us Sum up
- 2.12 Keywords
- 2.13 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

One of the prominent philosophical schools that gave *Bhakti* a philosophical foundation is Visistadvaita which originated in the 11th century C.E in south India. The aim of the unit is to familiarize students with this origin and historical development and to impart to them the basic tenets of this school.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Visistadvaita is the name given to the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja and his followers. It means 'advaita' = "oneness" ; "*Visistasya*" = of the Lord who is "qualified." Here the Lord is qualified by a 'body' (*sarira*) constituted by the animate (*cit*) souls and the inanimate (*acit*) universe.

While 'visistadvaita' is the name given to the philosophy of Ramanuja, its another name 'Sri-Vaishnavism' stands for the religious aspects of this theistic school of vedanta. The term 'Sri-Vaishnavism' refers to the system of thought where Vishnu, along with His consort Sri (Laksmi) occupies the supreme position. She is the mother of the entire creation, being the consort of Lord Visnu. She also acts as the mediator (*purusakara*) between man and God and brings about union between them. It is because of this reason the theistic philosophical system of Ramanuja is significantly known as 'Sri-Vaishnavism'. It is also known as 'Sri-sampradaya' because 'Sri' is recounted as one of the 'teachers' in the transmission of this tradition. Thus both the expressions Sri-Vaishnavism and 'Sri-sampradaya' signify the role of 'Sri' (Laksmi) in the process of liberation.

2.2 THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Though the origin of 'Visistadvaita' is historically associated with the philosopher Ramanuja, long before him, from the 2nd to the 9th century CE, a group of 12 Vaishnavite mystics—known as Alvars in South India—poured out, in the regional language of Tamil, their love of God and their vision and experiences of the divine through ecstatic, soul-stirring and moving metaphors and symbols. Their outpourings constitute one of the most important scriptures of Tamil Vaishnavism, known as *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* (literally it means 'The Book of Four-thousand Divine Stanzas') that contains the four thousand songs of these Vaishnavite saints. These songs are regarded as the primary source book for the philosophy of Ramanuja and his followers. Though these songs probably were in circulation among the people of this region in oral form, it was Nathamuni who set them to writing and put them to singing in the temples. But the tradition has it that Nammalvar, alias Sathakopa revealed these songs to Nathamuni in his yogic trance.

Another great figure in the pre-Ramanuja period was Yamunacharya alias Alavandar, the grandson of Nathamuni. Alavandar picked up Ramanuja as his chosen instrument for propagating the philosophy of the Vedas. He wrote several works such as *Siddhi-traya* and *Girartha Samgraha* and *Stotra Ratna*. Ramanuja never forgets to express his indebtedness to Yamuna by proclaiming his glory in his works. The works of Ramanuja such as *Sri-Bhasya*, *Vedartha-sangraha* and *Gadya-traya* and his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita* serve as a strong philosophical foundation for the development of Visistadvaita philosophy. Yet it should be noted that some of Ramanuja's works in many ways are further developments on and reminiscent of Yamuna's writings. For instance while Ramanuja's commentary on *Brahma Sutra* finds in it good deal of arguments from Yamuna's *Siddhitraya*, former's work of *Saranagati Gadya* is an imitation of Yamuna's *Stotra Ratna*.

After Ramanuja the school of Visistadvaita got divided in course of time into two groups *Vadagalai* (the Northern School) and *Thengalai* (Southern School) the separation of which was based on eighteen doctrinal matters. While the former sub-school is founded vastly on the views of Vedanta Desika, the latter owes allegiance to the ideas of Pillai Lokacarya.

2.3 THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

According to Visistadvaita tradition, the hymns of Alwars, Divya Prabhandam, were considered to be equal in importance to Sanskrit Vedas. Sri-Vaishnavites call Divya Prabhandam as the Tamil Veda and they regarded it as authoritative as *Prasthanatraya* (the triple canon of Vedanta philosophy: Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma-Sutra). Since this school considers both Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures as normative and foundational, the Visistadvaita system itself is regarded as Ubhaya-Vedanta (double Vedanta). To the group of authoritative texts, they also add the Vaishanava Agamas and the Puranas especially the Bhagavata Purana.

As mentioned above, one of the distinguishing characters of this school is the pre-eminence given to Alwars and their vision as supreme models of Vaishnavite tradition. According to Vaishnavite belief, these Alwars were incarnations of Lord Vishnu's attendants such as Adi-sesa and Garuda and the accoutrements such as conch (*sakha*) and the discus (*cakara*). The Alwars, twelve in number including a woman saint (Andal), were born in all castes and strata of society, and in areas widespread in the South. Among the alwars, the most important saint is 'Nammalvar' whose work '*Tiruvaymozhi*' is compared to '*Sama Veda*' in its richness and depth. As their name Alwars (meaning the ones 'who dived into the divine,') denote, they were immersed in God-love and God-bliss and their primary mission was nothing but spreading the glory and love of God. It is to be noted that their vertical love for God encompassed their horizontal relationship with other fellow Vaishnavites and other human beings needing God's mercy.

2.4 PHILOSOPHY OF VISISTADVAITA: AN OVERVIEW

Visistadvaita philosophy believes that the supreme reality is *Saguna Brahman*, a personal being with countless auspicious attributes, and it is a qualified whole of which Brahman is the soul, and the *Jiva* and the *Jagat* (the soul and material nature) constitute the body, which has an inseparable relationship with the whole. Though it is a non-dual whole, yet it is characterised by internal differences in it. This is why this one reality is called 'Visistadvaita' meaning 'qualified non-dualism'. Here the non-dual reality is made known by its qualities—the souls and the world which are of two different natures. These two kinds of entities are distinct yet real parts of the whole. The 'Visistadvaita' was not coined by Ramanuja but came to be used by others afterwards. Some regard the doctrine of Visistadvaita as absolute realism, without any place for illusion of any kind. There is no category like *maya* which is described in Advaita as an indeterminate existent-non-existent entity. Ramanuja considers such a description as a philosophical fantasy. *Maya* for him is the power of Brahman and its effects are absolutely real, though changing.

2.5 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

According to this school, perception, inference and scripture are valid as sources of knowledge, and each valid source is an affirmation of reality in its own domain. Unlike Sankara Ramanuja does not admit a distinction between illusory perception and true perception, for even in the so called illusory perception there is some perception of reality. Even in the famous mistaken cognition of 'shell as silver' when someone makes a statement that 'this is silver,' it is not only 'this' that refers to what is real, but also 'silver.' In other words, both are the reality of 'this' (the object) and that of the silver (and the identification of the object as something) are real. Visistadvaita argue for their point with the help of the doctrine of *pancicarna* (quintiplication), according to which in any given gross element the other four elements are also present as subordinate parts. This school would say that all things should be present in all things. In shell there are particles of silver; and in the so-called illusion (*maya*) 'this is silver' it is the particles of 'silver' that are perceived. And so, the silver-cognition in 'shell' is of the "real", and not of what is fictitious or imaginary. Even in the case of mistaken identity of 'mirage' as 'water' there is some truth in it, because in the desert-sand which belongs to the category of element 'earth' there is the element of 'water' also. Thus knowledge necessarily refers to what is real, even in cases where cognitions are considered to be erroneous. This theory of error is known as *yathartha-khyati-vada* (the doctrine of the apprehension of what is real)

If so how does one distinguish between valid cognition and invalid cognition, if both refer to what is real? The distinction is not a logical one. We cannot even say that in erroneous cognition, the reference is to a part of what is perceived whereas in valid cognition, the reference is to the whole; for in valid cognition too, it is only a part of that is perceived. In shell, for example, the shell-particles do not constitute the whole of the object presented; they too are only a part, although the predominant part. Psychologically, the experience of shell as silver takes place because of greed, defective sense-organ etc. and one sees only the silver-element, although it is minute, and omits to notice the other elements, of which the shell-element is predominant. The distinction between truth and error can be accounted for in terms of success and failure, respectively, in practice. What is of service to people in life is true and what fails to serve people in their practical needs is said to be false. That is why Visistadvaita defines valid knowledge 'as that which reveals an object as it is and is useful in practice.' Thus all knowledge, according to Ramanuja, is of the real.

Visistadvaita is known for its peculiar view of dual aspects of knowledge (*jñāna*) of the *jīvas*. The knowledge or consciousness of the *Jīva* has two aspects. The first is its basic or substantive consciousness (*dharmi-jñāna*) and the second its attributive-consciousness (*dharma-bhuta-jñāna*) By virtue of *dharmi-jñāna*, the *Jīva* is only self-aware. It is the *dharma-bhuta-jñāna* that makes it aware of others including *Isvara*. If the substantive consciousness is like light, the attributive consciousness is like luminosity. In the state of ignorance it is almost one with unconscious matter (*Prakṛti*) but its *dharmi-jñāna* keeps up its individuality and the possibility of developing the *dharma-bhuta-jñāna* further. What stands in the way of this expansion of *dharma-bhuta-jñāna* is its load of *karma* from beginningless time. It is the creative process of *Isvara* that helps this development. When fully developed, it embraces the all-knowing *dharma-bhuta-jñāna* of *Isvara* Himself. The *Jīva* however never merges in Him. Its *dharmi-jñāna* keeps up its individuality, just as a wick-light maintains its separateness even when its effulgence becomes submerged in the brilliance of the sun.

2.6 BRAHMAN

Brahman is the basis of all existence. The universe is composed of *cit* (the sentient) and *acit* (the non-sentient) and both have their source in Brahman, and he is the indwelling Self within all and the ruler of all. Brahman is both the first and the final cause of the universe. Like in any other system of Indian thought, the universe alternates between the phases of evolution and dissolution. In the phase of dissolution, the universe goes back to Brahman and remain latent in Brahman and creation or evolution is the actualization of the latent. The one becomes many in the sense that Brahman, by exercise of his will, evolves into twenty-four categories and the *jivas*, or individual souls. Thus Brahman is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. To put it differently, God, as the source and support of the universe, has transformed himself into the cosmic manifold; and he is the indwelling Self in his creation, the ruler and director of the cosmic process. The evil that the universe contains is the result of the *karma* of the individuals, for whom God is the dispenser of the Law. But God himself remains unaffected by evil and is forever absolutely good. God, though he has transformed into the universe of sentient and non-sentient forms, remains distinct from them. He is defined in Upanishads as *satyam* (real), *jnanam* (conscious) and *anantam* (infinite). Ramanuja, while commenting on this text, states that because of this distinctive attributes God is above and beyond matter—a changing phenomenon, and distinct from individual souls caught up in the cycle of birth and rebirth. Though, the universe is the transformation of Brahman, he remains by his nature beyond change, and though immanent, he is transcendent.

As mentioned earlier, Brahman is related to the cosmos as the soul is related to the body. As human beings have a soul and a body, and as the soul, though distinct from the body, yet controls and guides it, lives in it, and uses it as an instrument, similarly Brahman is the soul of the universe, the source and sustenance of all beings within it, and the ruler of all. In the metaphor of body-soul relationship between God on the one hand, and the world and the individual *jivas* on the other hand, are present threefold relations defined by Ramanuja: *adhara* and *adheya*—support and the supported; *niyamaka* and *niyamyā*—the controller and the controlled; *sesha* and *sesa*—the Lord and his servant. God as the controller of the universe is absolutely good and the redeemer of all beings. Evil and suffering are caused by individual's *karmas*. *Karmas*—good or evil deeds—create happiness or misery; but by *karmas* alone man cannot redeem himself. Only the grace of God can save him; God is therefore the saviour. In his infinite love, his absolute goodness, he is forever merciful and takes *avatara* to redeem them.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1. What is the meaning of Visistadvaita?

.....2. Describe Ramanuja's idea of *maya*.

3. Is Brahman the material and efficient cause of the universe? Is God transcendent and immanent?

2.7 JIVAS OR INDIVIDUAL SOULS

The Visistadvaita philosophy establishes that the finite self is an eternal spiritual entity yet not a separate self-existent entity, but an organ, an element of Brahman. It is part of Brahman, essentially different from him but inseparably bound to him. *Jiva* always maintains its distinctiveness even though it is part of Brahman. Even in the state of *Moksa*, it does not lose its individuality. *Jivas* are infinite in number. It is monadic in substance (*anu*). Svetasvatara Upanishad (V 9) says that the self is infinitely smaller than the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times and yet it is infinite in range. The monadic character of *jiva* is its natural form. That is, it is not caused or conditioned by any physical limitation. The finite self is essentially an attribute (*prakara*) of God. As substance and attribute, they are inseparably associated with God on the one hand, and distinct from one another and from God on the other hand. As inseparably associated with God, the individual self is eternal; and as distinct from him, it has a personality of its own.

The *jivas* are essentially of the nature of knowledge (*jnana-svarupa*). They are not merely of the nature of knowledge but are also the substrata of knowledge (*jnanasrya*). The individual self which is the knower is also the agent of action (*karta*) and enjoyer of pleasure and pain (*bhokta*). It is to be noted that *jiva* is regarded as knower in the sense that it is the *asraya* or a substratum for knowledge through which all experiences take place. By being a substratum (*asraya*) for *jnana* which is subject to modifications, *jiva* is not subjected to any change. In the same way *karttrva* and *bhoktrva* admitted in *jiva* do not involve change in it. *Jiva* is *karta* or doer in the

sense that it is the *asraya* or substratum for *krti* or effort. Effort is caused by a desire (*iccha*) to do an act. It is therefore a mental modification or an *avastha* of *jnana*. It is not to be confused with the actual physical activity which follows subsequent to the desire to do an act. In so far as *jiva* is the *asraya* for the *krti* which is a particular state of knowledge, *jiva* becomes the *karta*. The change involved in the physical activity does not affect the *karta*. The same explanation holds good for *jiva* being the *bhokta*. Pleasure and pain are different states of mind resulting either in an agreeable disposition of mind (*anukulatva-jnana*) or in a disagreeable disposition of mind (*pratikulatva-jnana*) respectively. As *jiva* is the *asraya* for such states of experience, it is regarded as *bhokta* or enjoyer of pleasure and pain. The change involved in such mental dispositions applies to the attributive-knowledge and not to *jiva*. Such an explanation is logically tenable in the Visistadvaita system because of the admission of *dharma-bhuta-jnana* as distinct from *jivatman*. The modification applies to the former, while the latter remains unaffected.

2.8 THE MEANS OF LIBERATION

According to Visistadvaita system, *Bhakti* (loving devotion) and *Prapatti* (whole-hearted self-surrender) are the alternate means of liberation. They are adopted by people according to their own eligibility and taste. *Bhakti* basically means loving devotion towards God. The term (*Bhakti*) derived from the root *bhaj* = 'to share, partake, to enjoy' calls for a reciprocal relationship between the deity and the devotee. *Bhakti* is not a mere emotional pursuit, according to Ramanuja. It involves training one's mind and intellect towards love of God. Non-stop constant contemplation is the very essence of *Bhakti*. It implies an unperturbed total concentration on God. Ramanuja compares it to the continuous flow of oil poured from one vessel to another. "*tailadharavad avicchinnas-mriti-santana-parampara*,"

In Ramanuja's view, various terms such as "*upasanam*", "*dhyanam*", "*niddhyasanam*" found in the Upanishads, along with the term "*janam*" are all synonymous with *Bhakti*. By *Bhakti* is meant unbroken chain of thoughts on God. When that is assured, liberation is near at hand. Traditionally, *Bhakti* has several aspects like *sravana* (listening to the discourses on the Lord), *Kirtana* (singing His glories), *Smarana* (remembering Him), *Padasevanam* (serving Lord's lotus feet, i.e., worshiping him in the sacred places), *arcanam* (doing pooja to him according to the rules laid down in the sacred texts), *vandanam* (doing namaskaras/prostrations), *dasyam* (serving him like a servant), *sakhyam* (becoming his friend) and *atmanivedanam* (offering everything one has, including the body, to the Lord).

Sri Vaishanava tradition points out that this *Bhakti* can be cultivated through seven steps, called the "*Sadhana-saptaka*." They are: *Viveka*, *Vimoka*, *Abhyasa*, *Kriya*, *Kalyana*, *Anavasada* and *Anuddharsha*. They can be explained as follows:

Viveka: Discrimination of food. Taking *sattvic* food (sweets, fruits, ghee, etc.) makes one's mind pure. Purity of mind leads to steady contemplation on the Lord.

Cf. “*Aharasuddhau sattvasuddhih, sattvasuddhau dhruva smritih.*” (When the food is pure, mind becomes pure; when the mind is pure, recollection of the Lord becomes steady).

Vimoka: Cessation of all desires for material enjoyment.

Abhyasa: Repeated thinking on the Lord.

Kriya: Performing “five great *yajnas*” (*Panchamahayajnas*) according to one’s capacity. They are:

1. Study of sacred scriptures/ teaching them (*Brahma-yajna*),
2. Offering food etc. to the departed spirits (*pitr-yajna*).
3. Performing fire sacrifices for the gods (*daiva-yajna*)
4. Offering food to the other beings like animals (*bhuta-yajna*) and
5. Hospitality to the guests (*narayana*).

It may be noted that according to the traditional view, those who are not invested with the sacred thread and women are not eligible to perform the first of the five *yajnas* listed above, namely, *Brahma yajna* which involves teaching/ studying the Vedas. “Brahma” here means the “Veda.”

Kalyana: Cultivating auspicious qualities like truthfulness, non-injury to animals and straightforwardness.

Anavasada: Displaying unwavering faith, not losing one’s heart even in the worst calamity but continuing contemplation on God with cheerfulness.

Anuddharsa: maintaining moderation and not becoming over-joyed even when there appear indications that God is becoming favourable.

Visistadvaita holds that although these seven steps are prescribed to cultivate *Bhakti*, they are not easy for an ordinary man to follow. Hence it is declared that *Bhakti* is difficult to practice in the manner expected of the devotees. In contradistinction to *Bhakti*, *Prapatti* or whole-hearted surrender is easier. It can be adopted by one and all, without any distinctions of caste, creed or sex. It can be adopted at any time and place. All are eligible for it. *Prapatti* is also known as *Saranagati*, *Nyasa*, *Bharanyasa*, *Atmanikshepa*, *Thyaga*, *Samnyasa*, *Namaskarta* etc.

Prapatti, like *Bhakti*, is only a kind of mental attitude towards God. If one thinks one can please God by one's own personal efforts like *kirtana*, *vandana*, etc. one is called a *Bhakta*. If however, one feels convinced that one cannot please God by one's own personal efforts, and that nothing apart from God’s grace can save him or her, one becomes a *Prapanna*. *Prapatti* needs to be done only once. It need not be done again and again, as *Bhakti*.

There are five subsidiaries (*angas*) or *Prapatti*. They are:

1. *Anukulya-sankalpa*: Resolve to do only things favourable to God and wishing good for all
2. *Pratikulya-varjana*: Avoiding things disliked by God.
3. *Raksishyati iti visvasah (Mahavisvasah)*: Firm faith in the saviourship of God.
4. *Goptritva-varanam*: Requesting the Lord to be the protector.
5. *Atmaniksepa-karpanyam*: Placing one's burden at the feet of the Lord in all meekness and humility.

These five angas make *Prapatti* complete and efficacious. Of all these, *Mahavisvasa* is the very heart of *Prapatti*. Without it, all the other *angas* become insignificant.

The later Srivaishnava teachers add one more point to the means of liberation. Apart from *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* "*Acaryanistha*" is also capable of procuring *Moksa*. It consists of trusting one's own *acarya* as the savior. Those who entertain this view argue that since one's *acarya* himself has done *Prapatti* to the Lord, one need not separately do it. *Tengalai* holds that since Sri Ramanuja did *Prapatti* in his life-time, his followers, direct and indirect are exempted from doing individual *Prapatti*. The *Vadagalai*, however, contend that what Sri Ramanuja did was for his own sake and that the successors of his have to do *Saranagati* separately, for their own good. According to those who advocate this *Acarya-nistha*, even the Supreme Being becomes unimportant when compared to the guru. Madurakavi Alvar, for instance, declared in his *Kanninn Siruthambu* that his own guru Nammalvar was more important to him than Lord Krsna Himself, whom Nammalvar resorted to.

2.9 THE TWO SECTS OF SRI-VAISHNAIVISM

As mentioned earlier, after Ramanuja Sri-Vaishnavism got divided into two sects namely *Vadagalai* and *Thengalai*. While *Vadagalai* considered the Sanskrit scriptures (vedas) more authoritative than the Tamil scriptures (*Divyaprabhandam*), *Thengalai* believed just the opposite. Subsequently, *Vadagalai* privileged the teachings of Rishi over those of the Alvars and the *Thengalai* considered the teachings of Alvars more important than those of Rishi. Further, while the northern school believed in *Markata-nyaya* (monkey's model) for *Moksa* (liberation) giving more emphasis on effort than grace, the southern school promoted *Marjara-nyaya* (cat's model) that regarded grace more important than human effort to attain liberation. The northern school recommended *Bhakti* (unbroken chain of thoughts on God) as a means of liberation for the male twice-born and advocated *Prapatti* (self-surrender) to others as another means of liberation. The southern school regarded *Prapatti* as the only means of salvation and prescribed it for all. Even if one were to practice *Bhakti*, it has to mature into *Prapatti* for one to attain liberation.

2.10 COMPARISON WITH OTHER TRADITIONS

The philosophy of Visistadvaita can be easily compared with and contrasted to other schools of thought. For instance while Sankara's Advaita believes in Nirguna Brahman as the supreme reality, Ramanuja's school regards Saguna Brahman as the supreme reality: For Sankara, the world is unreal and for Ramanuja the world is real. For Sankara, *Jnana marga* is the only means of liberation while Ramanuja believes in the *Bhakti/Prapatti marga* to attain liberation. Further while Sankara believes in *Jivanmukti* (liberation while living), Ramanuja believes in *Videhamukti* (liberation only after death). Besides, one can find similarity between Sri-Vaishnavism and Christianity. Both believe in the idea of personal God as the supreme being. Both believe in liberation after death. Both believe in the role of grace in salvation and both understand liberation as state of union with the ultimate, without losing one's distinct identity.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. Does knowledge, action and enjoyment affect the *jiva*? Explain.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. According to Sri-Vaishnava tradition can all regardless of caste and sex practise *Bhakti*? Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Which sect in Sri-Vaishnavism believes in *Prapatti* as an all-inclusive means of liberation and why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.11 LET US SUM UP

In the history of philosophy in India, Visistadvaita is described as a system of thought that gave a strong philosophical and theological foundation to the practice of *Bhakti* found in the popular traditions of different linguistic cultures across the country. While one can become wary of intense *Bhakti* as a form of emotional outburst, Visistadvaita has brought intellectual content to the practices of *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* as it is described above. By doing this, on the one hand they have built an intellectual domain for *Bhakti*, but on the other hand, they have shown the limitations of human mind and its efforts in matter of 'faith' by their belief in *Prapatti*. Besides, historically speaking, Visistadvaita grew as a competing philosophical discourse to the Advaita of Sankara. While the latter makes this world as unreal in order to preserve the transcendence of God, the former found a way out by making the world as real part of God, thus enabling its practitioners to deal with the world in a non-dualistic and non-conflictual manner. Thus Visistadvaita can be praised as a balanced philosophical system of thought in India.

2.12 KEY WORDS

Dharma- bhuta-jnana: The knowledge or consciousness of the *Jiva* has two aspects. The first is its basic or substantive consciousness (*dharmi- jnana*) and the second its attributive-consciousness. By virtue of *dharmi- jnana*, the *Jiva* is only self-aware. It is by means of the *dharma- bhuta-jnana* that the *jiva* becomes aware of others including Isvara. *Dharma- bhuta-jnana* has to evolve and grow in human beings. What stands in the way of expansion of *dharma- bhuta-jnana* is its load of *karma* from beginningless time. It is the creative process of Brahman that helps this development. When fully developed, it embraces the all-knowing *dharma- bhuta-jnana* of Brahman Himself.

Bhakti : *Bhakti* is a loving devotion towards God. *Bhakti* is not a mere emotional pursuit, according to Ramanuja. It involves training one's mind and intellect towards love of God. It calls for an unperturbed total concentration on God and unbroken chain of thoughts on God. But these demands of *Bhakti* cannot be met by ordinary common man and woman.

Prapatti : *Prapatti* stands for wholehearted self-surrender to God. *Prapatti* is easier than *Bhakti*. It can be adopted by one and all, without any distinctions of caste, creed or sex. It can be adopted at any time and place. All are eligible for it. *Prapatti* is also known as *Saranagati*, *Nyasa*, *Bharanyasa*, *Atmanikshepa*, *Thyaga*, *Samnyasa*, *Namaskarta* etc.

2.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Adidevananda, Svami. Trans. *Sir Ramanuja Gita Bhasya*. Madras: Ramakrishna Math, n.d.

Carman, John Braisted. *The Theology of Ramanjua: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.

Chari, Srinivasa S.M. *Fundamentals of Visistadvaita Vedanta*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.

Devamani B.S. *The Religion of Ramanuja - A Christian Appraisal*. Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1990.

Hiriyanna M. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Hooper, J.S.M. *Hymns of Alvars*. Madras: Pioneer Book Series, 1985(1929).

Mahadevan, TMP. *Invitation to Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1974.

Prabhavananda, Swami. *The Spiritual Heritage of India*. Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1977.

Rao, Nagaraja P. *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Indian Book Company, n.d.

UNIT 3 DVAITA VEDANTA

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Madhvacarya: Life and Works
- 3.3 Dvaita: its Notion and Meaning
- 3.4 General Philosophy of Madhva
- 3.5 Metaphysics of Dvaita Vedanta
- 3.6 Epistemology
- 3.7 Bondage and Liberation
- 3.8 General Estimate of Dvaita Vedanta
- 3.9 Let us sum up
- 3.10 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit has an objective of introducing the dualistic school of vedanta developed by Madhva.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Dvaita is one of the living systems of *Vedantic* thought in India, having its own well-defined community of followers, religious institutions and extensive philosophical literature in Sanskrit, and a substantial body of devotional literature in Kannada. *Dvaita* system has been the chief rival in thought to the *Advaita* of Sankara, in the history of Indian Philosophy. It stood up for realism in Indian thought against all forces of idealism and acosmism. The followers of Madhva, especially Jayatirtha and Vyasatirtha, present the logical skill and depth of acute dialectic thinking almost unrivalled in the whole range of Indian thought.

Madhva derives his philosophical tenets from the three authoritative *prasthanas* (the *upanisads*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and the *Brahma sutras*), from the *puranas* and *Mahabharata*. The quintessence of Madhva's philosophy is that Visnu (*Hari*) is the supreme God, the world is real and the difference between God and soul does actually exist. All the living beings are dependent upon Visnu, and they are divided into higher and lower classes; liberation consists in the enjoyment of bliss that is inherent in oneself; pure devotion is the means of attaining it.

3.2 MADHVACARYA: LIFE AND WORKS

Madhvacarya of 12th Century AD is the founder of the Dvaita Vedanta. Traditionally he is also known as Anandatirtha and Purnaprajna. His birthplace is said to be the village of Pajaka near Udupi in Karnataka. Madhva proclaims himself as the third incarnation of Vayu after Hanuman and Bhima. Madhva was a many-sided personality. He had a stupendous memory and he was a splendid debater. Although he accepted *Sannyasa* at the hands of Acyutapreksacarya, a

renowned Advaita teacher he opposed sankara's monistic tenets and interpretations. He was convinced that the sacred texts don't propagate the *mayavada*, but the realistic theism. Madhvacarya installed the idol of Lord Krsna at Udupi which has become a centre of the *Dvaita Vedanta* with the tradition of *ashtamaths*, with his eight disciples.

Madhva is a prolific writer in Sanskrit both in prose and in verse. He quotes profusely from Vedic, Buddhist, Jaina and other systems of philosophy and religion of India. In short he was scholar, saint, philosopher and mystic. The works of Madhva are thirty-seven in number. Some of his major works are his commentaries on *Prasthanatraya* (*Gita*, *Brahmasutra* and *Upanishads*), commentaries on Vedas, Epics and *puranas*, and his Ten *prakarnas* (other writings). In his tradition, there have been commentaries (*tikkas*) on Madhva's works written by Jayatirtha and Vyasatirtha.

3.3 DVAITA: ITS NOTION AND MEANING

The term '*Dvaita*,' meaning dualism, posits more than one fundamental metaphysical principle to explain the universe or a fundamental distinction between the human souls and the Supreme Being. Dualism is a theory which admits of two independent and mutually irreducible substances. In it a fundamental twofold distinction is drawn. In Western philosophy dualism is clearly seen in Plato's any fundamental twofold distinction between the intelligible and the sensible; in Descartes' distinction between two substances, mind and matter; and Fichte's distinction between ego and the non-ego, may be described as dualistic. Among the classical Indian tradition, Samkhya propagates dualism with its two fundamental eternal categories constitutive of reality namely, *Purusa* and *Prakrti*, spirit and matter.

Madhva has put more depth into the meaning of the term '*Dvaita*' as it is applied to his thought. The dualism of Madhva admits two mutually irreducible principles as constituting reality as a whole. Yet God is regarded as the only independent (*svatantra*) and the other as dependent (*paratantra*). The Supreme Being is the one and only independent principle. All finite reality comprising of the *Prakrti*, *Purusas*, *Kala*, *Karma*, *Svabhava*, etc is dependent. For dvaita vedanta these dependent categories are reals and also eternal. Madhva advocates pluralistic theism. To maintain the unity, sovereignty and independence of the Supreme Being, dualism of Madhva upholds that the dependent reals are not in spite of the Lord, but because of Him. Therefore, for dvaita vedanta, although there are two principles, yet one of them (finite) dependent completely on the other for its being and becoming. There is another aspect of dualism of Madhva. It is its 'realistic' attitude to the experiences of life. Our finite experiences of embodied existence and our efforts to achieve liberation from bondage have both a real value and validity of their own and are not mere illusion created by *avidya* as held by Advaitins. Again, in *Dvaita vedanta* since '*Bheda*' or difference is the very nature of being, along with Brahman, the principles like *Jiva* and *Prakrti* are co-eternal and uncreated, but they are dependent on God.

3.4 GENERAL PHILOSOPHY OF MADHVA

Philosophy of Madhva is contained in his commentaries on sacred texts. Specially, he shares the prominent place along with Sankara and Ramanuja as one of the systematizers of Vedantic thought. His commentary on *Brahma Sutras* as established his unique system of dualistic vedanta. As Sankaracarya, Ramanujacarya developed their own theory and interpretations on the Upanishadic teachings and the teachings of the *Brahma sutras*, and called their systems Advaita and visistadvaita, Madhvacarya's system is called *Dvaita Vedanta*. The basic issue dealt in all these three systems is regarding the relationship between Brahman, the individual soul (*Jiva*) and the world (*jagat*). Madhvacarya refuted the *mayavada* theory of Sankara in his system of advaita. He upheld the world is not bundle of illusory objects created out of maya and avidya. For him the world is real but of course dependent on the Brahman. In the same way, Madhva differed from Sankara who said that the individual self is not different from the supreme self. The identity of the *Jiva* and Brhman is somehow established in advaita vedanta. In dvaita vedanta, for Madhva, *Jiva* (soul) is different from Brahman and not identical with Him. In the same way, Madhva also rejected the claims of qualified monism. Without reconciling with the *Visistadvaita* of Ramanuja the philosophy of Madhva held that that *cit* (spirit) and *acit* (matter) are different realities from Brahman and donot form His body (*sarira*). For, in qualified monism we find that Ramanuja considered the world and the souls are part of the whole reality, the Brahman. We shall elaborately see these distinctive teaching in the following sections, how Madhva different from the other schools of vedanta. The speciality of the philosophy of Madhva lies in his advocacy of various differences. He spoke of the reality of five-fold differences between – soul and God, soul and soul, soul and matter, God and matter, one material thing and another. Thus the concept of difference (*bheda*) is central to the philosophical system of Madhva. That is the reason one can call his philosophy as pluralistic. Since he speaks of the reality of the external world and of the souls, we consider the dvaita vedanta as realistic. In his concept of God, we find Madhva propagating theistic principles and worship. Therefore one can call the philosophy of Madhva as theistic. It accepts a personal God who is the only independent (*svatantra*) reality, the other real beings entirely dependent on Him.

3.5 METAPHYSICS OF DVAITA VEDANTA

Concept of God

As we have seen earlier, Madhva recognizes two kinds of reality, independent (*svatantra*) and dependent (*paratantra*). God is the independent reality. Individual souls and the world are dependent realities. He speaks of God as a personal God. God is the supreme person called Isvara. He is completely independent, perfect, absolute and pure consciousness. He is *savisesa*. He possesses infinite qualities. He assumes various manifestations. The supreme Lord is Visnu. Laksmi, the consort of Visnu, is eternally blessed and absolutely accomplished. She eternally contemplates Visnu. Laksmi is dependent on Visnu. She is intelligent *Prakrti*. *Prakrti* is the material cause of the world. The Lord enters into *Prakrti* and makes himself into many. The Lord's will is *Prakrti*.

The understanding of God in dvaita vedanta is theistic. It is his 'theology' so to say. This is described as uncompromising theism. For Madhva, Visnu is the Supreme God. The purpose and goal of all the scriptures (*sadagamas*) is revealing and making that Supreme known to people. That is to say the prime import (*mahatatparya*) of the sacred texts is Vishnu. Not only the

scriptures, even Madhva asserts that every word in the language primarily signifies Visnu and refers only secondarily to other objects. The language of people is only to signify God.

With regard to the attributes and qualities of the Supreme God, Visnu, Madhva is a great theologian. Visnu possesses all auspicious, blessed, infinite and eternal attributes. The relation between God and His attributes is governed by the principle of *visesa*, by virtue of which a thing is distinguished from its permanent attributes though they are identical in essence. There is no fundamental distinction between God and His attributes. He is the Supreme Reality possessing all excellences like infinite knowledge, bliss, power, etc. He manifests in various forms, incarnates as *avatars* and is present in the Sacred images. He is apprehensible through the Vedas (*sruti*) though not fully comprehensible. (Dominic Vas, 2010)

As any theistic understanding would go the Supreme God is everything in relation to the world. For him, Visnu is the efficient cause (*nimitta-karana*) of the universe. He is the cause of creation (*srsti*), preservation (*sthithi*) and destruction (*pralaya*). In His relation to the souls, He is the liberator. As He himself is the primary cause of, the bondage of *samsara* (chain of existence) for the soul. The so called apparent causes of bondage such as ignorance (*avidya*), action (*karma*) and the subtle body (*linga-sarira*) are only the secondary causes of the chain of existence. Ultimately God's grace is needed for removal of bondage though the efforts are fruitful initially from the part of the *jiva*. For Madhva, it is Vishnu's grace (*prasada*) alone which can give salvation (*mukti*) to the *Jiva*.

Concept of Jiva

Jiva by essence is spiritual consciousness that is partless. This *Jiva* possesses knowledge and bliss. In this possession *Jiva* is similar to God but is dependent on God. For Madhva, God is the perfect *Jiva*, and the individual *Jivas* are only images of God. Madhva defended the distinction and plurality a

mong the *jivas*. (We shall later speak of various other differences Madhva's philosophy has.) This becomes also a feature of his realism. He classifies *Jivas*. Some are not liable to pain, some are liable to pain as they are on their way to purification. Yet some others are eternally punished. These are the evil souls who become so weighed down by karma that they are not able to rise. Accordingly, each *jiva* is distinct and unique because of its *Yogyata*. Each *Jiva* resembles and reflects God. It becomes a *pratibimba*, reflection of the *bimba*, Visnu in accordance with its *svarupa*. This distinction (*taratamya*) of the *Jivas* remains a foundation for his theory of gradation among the *Jivas*, starting from *Laksmi* and coming down to those bound for hell. In agreement to each one's *svarupa*, according to Madhva, there are three kinds of *Jivas*. The first kind of *jivas* are those who are fit for liberation (*muktiyogyas*). The second ones are those that are caught in the cycle of birth and rebirth (*nithyasamsarins*) and travel endlessly in their journey. In the third category, there are souls that are eternally condemned to hell (*tamoyogya*). By making such a distinction, *taratamya* among the *Jivas* Madhva tries to give an original solution to the problem of evil, and to lift God (*Visnu*) above all blame for evil in the world. (Dominic Vas, 2010)

Concept of World

The world is *Prakrti* and is not created by God as it has eternal existence. The external world is affirmed to be ultimately real (*satya*) and continues to exist at all times. The world process is

beginningless and eternal (*anadi* and *nitya*). All the material products originate from prakṛti or primal matter. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are its three *guṇas*. The *Dvaita* conception of causation differs from the well-known views of *Advaita* and *Viśiṣṭadvaita*. It is known as *Sad-asat-karya vada*, ie. the effect is considered as neither existent only nor non-existent. It exists as the cause, but not as the effect.

In his metaphysical thought the unique contribution of Madhva is the notion of '*bheda*' and '*viśeṣa*'. Madhva accepts five fold difference or *bheda* in reality, namely, the difference between God and soul (*Isvara* and *Jiva*), between soul and soul (*Jiva* and *Jiva*), between God and matter, between soul and matter, and between different material objects. Difference doesn't mean Independence. God (Vishnu) alone is independent reality (*svatantra-tattva*), and all other beings are dependent on God (*Paratantra-tattva*). The system of Madhva accepts ten categories: Substance (*Dravya*), attribute (*guṇa*), action (*karma*), universals (*samanya*), speciality ('*viśeṣa*'), the specified ('*visista*'), the whole (*amsin*), potency (*sakti*), similarity (*sadrśya*) and non existence (*abhava*). Substances are twenty in number. Of these, Brahman, and souls are sentient (*cetana*). The rest are insentient (*acetana*). The twenty substances are: *Brahman*, *Lakṣmi*, *Jivas*, space (*ākāśa*), Time (*kāla*), primal matter (*Prakṛti*), and its eight evolutes, the cosmic egg (*Brahmaṇḍa*), ignorance (*avidyā*), speech sounds (*varṇa*), Darkness (*timira*), mental impressions (*vasana*) and reflection (*pratibimba*). (Dominic Vas, 2010)

3.6 EPISTEMOLOGY

Foundation of Madhva's metaphysics of differences among realities of God, soul and the world lies in his epistemology. For Madhva, the world of objects and things exist independently of human mind. It is a realistic perspective of *dvaita* as opposed to the doctrine of *mayavada* of Sankara. This doctrine of realism is characterised by the epistemological position that the mind perceives the objects and knows them. Humans experience the object and the objectivity of the human knowledge is manifested in different *pramanas*. The means of knowledge (*pramanas*) are perception, inference and verbal testimony (revealed scripture). For him to perceive is to become aware of something 1) as unique, 2) as being different from the other thing, 3) as being different from the perceiving self. Hence knowledge is the articulation of these perceived differences. Perceptual knowledge is direct and immediate knowledge. Knowledge is intrinsically valid. If we deny perception there is no knowledge. For Madhva the *pramanas* are means of knowledge (*anu-pramanas*) or knowledge itself (*kevala-pramanas*). Each of the *pramanas* is therefore self-valid, true and objective knowledge. Eventhough they are all valid knowledge they are not equal. Madhva says that there is a hierarchy among them, each having one's own importance in its sphere and supports the other *pramanas*. Perception is valid and important in its own sphere and is useful for the later inference, and so on.

The sense-organs, *manas* and *Saksin* constitute the instruments of knowledge. The notion of *Saksin* as a sense-organ is unique in Madhva's system. Etymologically, the word *Saksin* means a witness, a seer or one endowed with vision. Madhva defines it as *Saksad iksate iti Saksi*. Thus the *Saksi* is the name of the spiritual sense organ of the self or its *caitanya-indriya* (essential sense organ partaking of the nature of consciousness) through which it intuits its experiences. But it is not different from the self. It is the self itself. *Saksin* is the ultimate and unassailable

basis for the intrinsic validity of knowledge. For self-validity is the nature of *Saksin* itself. *Saksin* is the source of all knowledge in the individual, and ever-vigilant witness of one's own validity. This is so true that there can be no error where the knowledge of *Saksin* is concerned. *Saksin jnana* is infallible. For nothing can come in between the witnessing self and its light. All error, therefore, is due to the malfunctioning of *manas* and the other senses. Error or illusion consists in the mis-perception of the non-existent as existent and of the existent as non-existent. A distinction is made by Madhva in *agama* as *paruseya* and *aparuseya*. The latter constitutes the *vedas (sruti)* whose validity is infallible. Madhva's doctrine gives great importance to *vedas (sruti)* as a means for the true knowledge of Supreme Reality since perception and inference are confined to the facts of ordinary experience only. (Dominic Vas, 2010)

3.7 BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

Madhva accepts the reality of human misery and bondage. *Maya* causes the individual to be unaware of the relationship of the soul with God. Ultimately it is God who makes *maya* cause bondage. Hence, he alone brings liberation through his grace although there is self-effort on the part of the soul. The devotee, on his part, must prove himself worthy of it by good works (*karma*), acquisition of right knowledge (*Jnana-yoga*) and single-minded devotion (*bhakti-yoga*). The *adikarins* should work out his salvation by an ascetical striving – through the hearing of the scriptures (*sravana*), reflection (*manana*) and contemplation (*nidithyasana*) under the guidance of a guru. This will lead the person to *bimbopasana*, and further to the immediate cognition (*aparoksa-Jnana*) of Visnu, and to *mukti*.

In dvaita Vedanta understanding, liberation is achieved through the knowledge of the greatness of God. Liberation is possible by devotion to God by *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*. Through *bhakti* combined with meditation one can dispose oneself to the experience of God. Visnu's favour and grace (*prasada*) a human being can be liberated from them and attain *moksa* or liberation. Hence, finally it is God's grace that removes *maya* and liberates the soul.

Liberation consists in the realization of soul's innate bliss. Then according to his *Yogyata* he will attain bliss and occupy a place reserved for him in the galaxy of the elect. He will not be absorbed in the Absolute to the extent of losing his self-identity. And yet he will be united with the Lord in knowledge and love, and with other emancipated *Jivas* in a family of intimacy.

3.8 GENERAL ESTIMATE OF DVAITA VEDANTA

Madhva through his system, has made a great impact in Indian philosophical tradition. He classified reality into "*Svatantra*" and "*Paratantra*". He rationalised the conception of substance and attributes with the doctrine of "*Visesas*" in terms of an identity-in-difference. The concept of "*saksi*" as an *apriori* principle of knowledge is his contribution in Indian epistemology. By his commentaries he brought in the reconciliation of the existence of "eternal substances" (*nitya - padarthas*) like *Jivas*, *Akasa*, *Prakrti* etc., with that of the acceptance of the universal causation of Brahman. He achieved it by his doctrine of creation defined as "*Paradhina-Visesapti*." He brought in a realistic notion of reality. His understanding of god and soul, metaphysical notion in general, and his ethical concepts and practices are well supported by his defence of means of

knowledge. One could say, thus, his metaphysics and ethics are fruits of his well-worked out epistemological theories.

Dvaita Vedanta is called as theistic, dualistic (pluralistic) and realistic, from different perspectives. Madhva was convinced that we can have knowledge of other realities, and thus man can really reach truth. This truth has objectivity, or correspondence of our knowing mind with the object of knowledge. He believed in a personal God and essential difference between God and man. Again, he believed in the Saguna Brahman who can be reached through *bhakti* (devotion), emphasising self-surrender and God's grace. These two concepts make Dvaita vedanta different from the other Indian systems. For him, all *jivas* are destined by God to attain bliss after a life of *samsara*, or to continue to remain in it or to go into the hell of eternal darkness. The doctrines of souls that are liberated (*mukta*) and those eternally damned has a parallel in Jaina religious thought also. Jains distinguish two groups of souls. They are those who are redeemed (*bhavya*) and those which cannot be redeemed (*abhavya*).

His vedantic interpretations of the *Brahmasutra*, brought in a unique system of philosophy as his counterparts like Sankara and Ramanuja. He has written many learned commentaries on the basic texts of Vedanta – the *Vedanta sutras* of Badarayana, the *Upanisads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. While all the other Acaryas have attempted in their *Bhasyas* only to establish a *samanvaya* (harmony) of the various terms and doctrines found in the *Upanisads*, Madhva has established the *samanvaya* of the upanisadic thought with the *Puranas* and *Itihasas* as well. (Dominic Vas, 2010)

3.9 LET US SUM UP

Madhva's philosophy is one of dualism. The thinkers of *Dvaita* School have made many outstanding contributions to the problems of Philosophy. The views propounded by Madhva on the nature of *Saksi*, *Visesa*, *Bheda*, substance and attributes, the universal, space and time are very much ahead of his times and remarkably suggestive. The devotional movement of the Haridasas of Karnataka was a spontaneous expression of Madhva's religious thought in the regional language of the majority of its adherents and its appeal reached the common people. *Dvaita* literature is very extensive; much of it still remains unpublished and unexplored. Plurality of the reals is the basic doctrine of *dvaita*. According to Madhva, difference is the very nature of things. He identifies five eternal levels of difference: Difference between God and the individual soul, God and matter, one individual soul and another, individual soul and matter, and one material thing and another. He looks upon the world as real. For *Dvaita* God is the highest Being, the most perfect Being, the only free Being, the ultimate goal and destiny of humans; He is the giver of salvation / liberation through grace (*prasada*). The path of bondage and liberation is also realistic.

3.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Madhvacarya, *Sarva-Mula-Granthah; Collection of the Complete Works of sriMadhvacarya*. Ed. by Bannanje Govindacarya. Vols. 1-5. Bangalore: Akila Bharata Madhva Maha Mandala, 1969 – 1974.

Glasesnapp Helmuth Von. *Madhva's Philosophy of the Vishnu Faith*. trans. by Shridhar B. Shrothri and ed. by K. T. Pandurangi. Bangalore: Dvaita Vedanta Studies and Research Foundation, 1992;.

Govindacarya, Bannanje, *Madhvacarya*. trans. by K. Krishnamurthy and U. P. Upadhyaya. Udupi, Sri Pejavar Mutt, 1984;

Puthiadam, I., *Vishnu the Ever Free: A Study of the Madhva Concept of God*. Madurai, Dialogue Series, 1985.

Ramachandran, T. P. *Dvaita Vedanta*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinman, 1976/

Sharma, B. N. K. *Philosophy of sri Madhvacarya*. Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991.

Raghavendrachar, H.N. and Wadia, A.R., *The Dvaita Philosophy and Its Place in the Vedanta*. Mysore: The University of Mysore, 1941.

Sharma, B. N. K. *History of the Dvaita School of Vedanta and Its Literature*. Deldi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

Vas, Dominic C. *Origin and Destiny, St. Thomas Aquinas and Sri Madhvacharya: A Comparative Critique*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2003.

Vas, Dominic. "Dvaita." *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.1. (Bangalore: ATC, 2010), 425-426.

Vas, Dominic. "Madhva." *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.2. (Bangalore: ATC, 2010), 847-851.

UNIT 4 SAIVISM AND VAISNAVISM

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Origin of Saiva Religion and Philosophy
- 4.3 Schools of Saivism
- 4.4 Saiva Siddhanta
- 4.5 Siddhanta Concept of God and Soul
- 4.6 Siddhanta Concept of Bondage and Liberation
- 4.7 Sources of Vaishnava Religion and Philosophy
- 4.8 Vaishnava Epistemology and Metaphysics
- 4.9 Vaishnava Concept of God and Soul
- 4.10 Let us Sum up
- 4.11 Key Words
- 4.12 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit gives a brief picture of saiva and vaishnava religious thought. By going through this lesson the students would be able to have the general characteristics of these religions, their scriptural basis and their emergent philosophical systems.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Saivism is a religion, being practised by millions of people in India and those migrated to other countries all over the world. It is a realistic, ritualistic and pluralistic religious system. This religion acknowledges the supremacy of Lord Siva as the Supreme God, who has been included as one among the major Gods of Hindu pantheon. The literal meaning of the word 'siva' is auspicious who is adored as an embodiment of grace and wisdom. Saivism is very well recognized as a philosophy of religion and goes by the expression Saiva Siddhanta. The first part of this expression viz 'saiva' refers to Saiva faith which has full of religious significance such as temple, idolatory, rituals, prayers, objects of worship, chanting of mantras and devotional songs, devotees festivals, service, yoga etc. the term 'siddhanta' indicates the philosophical outlook of Saivism which mainly deals with the three fundamental realities viz, *Pati* (siva), *pasu* (souls) and *pasa* (bonds) and their interpenetration. Hence Saivism is a well developed intellectual faith

which avoids two extremes such as dogmatism or dry intellectualism and superstition or blind observances.

4.2 ORIGIN OF SAIVA RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Like any other sect included in the generic term 'Hinduism,' Saivism too has no founder or founders. Only a galaxy of saintly souls have enriched the glory of this religion through their incessant pilgrimages and impressive devotional utterances and propagating the ideals, doctrines and practices through institutional methods especially by establishing several religious mutts. As there is no human founder to Saivism, it is a healthy convention to attribute to Lord Siva as the founder since the saints express their gratitudes in their spontaneous outpourings for recognizing their services rendered to Him to His creation as well as uniting them with Himself as His 'person.' This attitude shows the intimate rapport the saints had with Lord Siva. In their devotional utterances they make references, knowingly or unknowingly, to God, who had His descent to this earth to make them as His person, His gracious nature, forms, appearances, testings, transcendence, immanence etc., their own personal reactions, modifications, cravings, cryings, troubles, tortures, agonies, ecstasies, illuminations, enlightenment, etc. Besides these, they also reveal the pernicious nature of the empirical world (though it is real), its attractive nature, but at the same time serving as a resourceful platform to work out their salvation through renunciation. These three major messages directly fall under the legitimate province of the philosophers who have evolved the grammatical expositions of God, soul and the world.

A few sages in Saivism, along with their staunch devotion to God and their metaphysical bent of mind have made explicit the implicit doctrines embedded in the outpourings of the saints. The philosophy of Saivism technically known as 'Siddhanta' means accomplished end. As a prelude to this type of venture, the sages have presented and criticised the non-Saiva and other saiva schools of thought from the Siddhanta point of view. The alien faiths which are atheistic in outlook, some schools even after accepting a God do not recognize the supremacy of Lord Siva, a few faiths claiming to be Saivism, go against the well established Siddhanta doctrines are taken up for presentation and criticism. They are known as *parapakkam* or *purva-paksa* (the views of the opponents). After this dedicated venture, the sages devote themselves in bringing forth their own view-points viz, the Siddhanta or the well cherished doctrines by means of three eternal categories known as *Pati* (Siva), *Pasu* (souls), and *Pasa* or the impurities. The devotional songs have been codified as the twelve canonical literature (*panniru tirumuraigal*) and the philosophical treatises are known as fourteen philosophical texts known as Siddhanta Sastras. Hence, Saivism is studied, clarified, understood and realized through these devotional and metaphysical scriptures.

4.3 SCHOOLS OF SAIVISM

Saivism, also known as the southern school of Saivism or Tamil Saivism, recognizes the authority of the Vedas, Saiva Āgamas, Upanishads and Siva-puranas which are in Sanskrit language. Of these the Vedas are regarded as the specific scriptures while the Āgamas are the specific scriptures. The former is prescriptive like having injunctive statements. The latter is

descriptive since they describe about the modes of worship. The Agamas promote systematic worship. They explain the method of constructing a Siva temple, the methods of worshipping the presiding Deity at the appropriate times, the objects of adoration, the ways of chanting the holy syllables (*mantras*) etc. The Saivites believe that both the Vedas and Agamas are poured out by Lord Siva and no human author has been attributed for their existence. There is a belief among certain scholars that the word Siva has been derived from Rudra, one of the Vedic deities, who was malevolent in the beginning and made later as a benevolent deity. The word 'rud' means red and Siva has red complexion hence 'Siva' is a derivative of Vedic Rudra. Also Rudra was worshipped as *Pasupati*, the Lord of the souls and later Siva has been called as *Pati* and souls, *pasu*. Some are of the opinion that Siva in Tamil means auspicious, therefore He is a Tamil God. The ancient Tamil literary works like the Tholkappiam, Manimekalai, Silappatikaram, Purananuru etc., refer to the characteristic features of Lord Siva without referring to His name. Especially during the time of the Nayanmars (the sixty three devotees of Siva) the worship of Siva flourished with the same title. References of Siva are also found in the Ithihasas like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

We have also other schools of Saivism such as Virasaivism or Lingayata religion, Kashmir Saivism (Trika System) Sivadvaita of Srikantha etc. Virasaivism emerged in the Karnataka region to curtail the influence of Jainism and Sri Vaishnavism in the South. It is more or less a social renaissance movement propounded by Basava. It insists on the worship of Siva in the Sivalinga form only especially wearing a Sivaling on the body to indicate the constant touch of the divine on the human. This religion insists on ethical discipline more than philosophical expositions. Kashmir Saivism emerged in the valleys of Kashmir and it is also known as Pratybhijna system which emphasises the recognition of the soul after annihilating the onslaught of the impurities, that it is none other than Siva Himself. This school of thought commences with Saivism, passes through Sakti visistadvaita and culminates in monistic doctrines of Advaita. Srikantha has interpreted the prastana traya, the basic texts of Indian philosophy in terms of Saivism rather than Vedanta. Brahman has been replaced with Siva and an advaitic union takes place between Siva and the soul at the time of emancipation.

4.4 SAIVA SIDDHANTA

Saiva siddhanta is Tamil school of Saiva religion and philosophy which gained popularity and accepted to be one of the Indian systematic philosophical schools. Regarding the Saiva literature in Tamil, the following is the list of devotional literature that are called *panniru tirumurais*.

Literature	Composed by
<i>Tevaram</i> 1-3	St. Sambandhar
<i>Tevaram</i> 4-6	St. Tirunavukkarasar
<i>Tevaram</i> 7	St. Sundarar
<i>Tiruvacakam</i>	St. Manickavacakar
<i>Tiruvisaippa</i> and <i>Tiruppallandu</i>	Few saints like Senthanaar, Karuvurthevar
<i>Tirumandiram</i>	St. Tirumular

11 th Tirumuari	Several saints like Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Nambiandar Nambi
Periyapuranam	Cekkizhar

The above literature exemplifies the nature of devotion, Siva's gracious nature, the peripheral nature of the phenomenal world, worship of fellow devotees, biographies of the devotees and the significant features of Lord Siva etc. They too reveal performances of rituals, celebration of festivals, miracles, mantra, tantra, yantra, mystic experience, trials and tribulations by Lord Siva, the devotees' perseverance even during the times of penury etc., social, political religious, moral, aesthetic, psychological, spiritual, historical, geographical, archeological, musical, linguistic and metaphysical realms are very well portrayed in these texts.

The philosophical treatises are fourteen in number and they are commonly known as Siddhanta Sastras or Meikanta Sastras which are as follows

Text	Author
<i>Tiruvundhiyar</i>	Uyyavandha Devar of Tiruviyalur
<i>Tirukkalirrupadiyar</i>	Uyyavandha Devar of Tirukkadavur
<i>Sivajnanabodham</i>	Meikandar
<i>Sivajnana Siddhiyar</i>	Arulnandi Sivacaryar
<i>Irupa Irupathu</i>	Arulnandi Sivacaryar
<i>Unmai Vilakkam</i>	Manavacakam Kadantar
<i>Sivappirakasam</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Kodikkavi</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Unmai Neri vilakkam</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Nenju Vidu Tutu</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Sankarpa Nirakaranam</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Tiruvarutpayan</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Vina Venba</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar
<i>Porri pahrodai</i>	Umapathi Sivacaryar

The first two works are the foremost treatises on Siva philosophy which elucidates the philosophical tenets of Saivism in a simple and lucid way. Sivjnanabodham is considered as the basic text which gives the quintessence of Saiva Siddhanta doctrines for which Sivajnana-yogin has given an excellent commentary in the name of *Dravida Mapadiyam* or *Sivajnana*

Mapadiyam. Arulnandi was the preceptor of Meikandar's father, but became Meikandar's disciple. His famous Sivajnana Siddhiyar follows the structure of his preceptor's work but adds the epistemology, *parapakkam*, (others' view) in his work. The rest of the works in the list brings out the implications of Sivajnana bodham with analogy, illustrations, critical notes etc. They contain a variety of themes as per the titles.

4.5 SIDDHANTA CONCEPT OF GOD AND SOUL

With regard to the doctrines of Saiva Siddhanta, it was Tirumular who gives a most but emphatic definition of the three realities. Among the three realities of Saivism known as *Pati*, *pasu* and *pasa*, *pasu* and *pasa* are as beginningless as *Pati*. The *pasa* which binds the *pasu* can seldom reach *Pati* and bind. But the moment *Pati* comes forwards, the *pasa* hitherto binding the soul will be annihilated. As the impurities are eternal, seldom can they be destroyed, but they will lose their vitality and assist the souls in their pursuit for emancipation. This view has also been illustrated through the structure of Siva temple thus: the gracious Sivalinga in the *Sanctum* represent *Pati*; the bull outside the hall indicates *pasu* and the pulpit adjacent to the bull is a mark of *pasa*.

Pati or Siva is only one, but assumes several forms out of His bounteous grace. Actually He is formless in Himself, but takes several forms for the sake of His beloved devotees. Another unique factor about His existence is the state of form-formless (*ruparupa*) specifically known as the Sivalinga. It has a form such as the unique linga form and has no form like human or animal. This type of existence is meant for a common devotee to worship Him in the temples. Among the forms the famous ones are Nataraja, Dakshinamurty, Pikesadanar, Somaskandar, Kalyanasundarar etc. Of these Nataraja or the cosmic dance form is significant in the sense that it depicts the five-fold function of Lord Siva (*panca kritya*) viz., creation (*srsti*), preservation (*stithi*), destruction (*samhara*), concealment (*tirodhana*), and bestowal of grace (*anugraha*). Though each one is a distinct function all involve Grace. As Saiva Siddhanta subscribes to *satkaryavada*, (the effect is already in the cause), Lord Siva is the efficient cause (*nimitta karana*), His consort or *sakti* is the instrumental cause (*upadana karana*) and *maya* is the material cause. According to Saiva Siddhanta, 'whatever exists will never vanish and whatever does not exist will never emerge.' So from the subtle level the gross world has been created for the sake of the souls to work out their salvation (*tanu* - body; *karana* – instruments of knowledge; *bhuvana* – earth and *boga* – enjoyment.)

Siva is recognized and revered as a passive Lord while His consort or *sakti* is an active principle. She is none other than the female aspect of Siva's grace and to substantiate their inseparable nature Siva has united Her on His left side and is known as *arthanarisvara murti*. Siva is also viewed as omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God. He is both transcendent and immanent. He manifests as the five elements besides the sun, moon and the soul (*astamurtha*) – eight-fold manifestation. He is the very embodiment of pure love and is the very nature of grace. Though He transcends human comprehension, He is very accessible to the souls. His form is effulgence, the inner light (*atmajyoti*).

Siddhanta Concept of Soul

The soul or *pasu* which is pure in essence is unable to be so because of the enslavement by the impurities especially the ego (*anava*). It has been sandwiched between the Holy God and the horrible world. Hence it undergoes transmigration due to the impact of *karmas*. The Siddhantins put forth several arguments for the existence of the self other than the body, sense organs, mind, internal organs etc. It has three levels of existence such as *kevalavasta* (disembodied state); *sakalavasta* (embodied state) and *suddhavasta* (liberated state). In the first state in the absence of body, mind etc. it is like an eyeless child lying in a dark cave suffering due to *anava*. In the second state it is given a body due to *karmas* and undergoes by levels of experience viz., waking (*jagrat*), dream (*swapna*), deep sleep (*susupti*), the fourth (*turiya*), beyond the fourth (*turiyatita*). Also if the soul is entangled with all the three impurities, it is known as *sakalar*; if it has two impurities, it is *pralayakalar* and with one impurity, *anava* alone, it is known as *vijnanakalar*. The soul is also known as *sadasat*. *Sat* when it is in the company of God and His devotees and becomes *asat* in the company of *asat* (impermanent world). It is the soul which suffers in bondage and enjoys the bliss of Siva through His grace in the state of liberation.

4.6 SIDDHANTA CONCEPT OF BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

Anava, as an ontological and eternal entity observes the intelligence of the self completely and in association with *karma* and *maya* partially. To the question why there should be *anava*, the siddhantin replies that if there is no such thing called *anava*, the souls would be eternally in a state of pleasant consciousness without knowing what is suffering at all. Hence there is no possibility of realizing the efficacy of Siva's grace and emancipation as well. It has been described as the prime evil or dark evil. It is worst than darkness, for darkness will reveal not the objects, but itself, whereas *anava* will not reveal itself and make the persons affected by it reveal. Hence it is obligatory for a saivite always to check and control the emergence of *anava* and always promote God-consciousness than self-centredness.

Karma is the repurcussions of the deeds executed by the souls with personalistic motivation. They are classified as stored up *karmas*, *sancita*, accumulated *karmas*, *agamiya*, and fructifying *karmas*, *prarabdha*. In fact *karma* becomes the cause for births and re-births. By the invitation of the guru with divine grace, the *sancita karma* is burnt, the *agamic karma* will not be accumulated and the *prarabdha karma* will affect the body and vanish like an arrow sent out of the bow. In fact *karma* and *maya* are beneficial to the soul in making it moving towards God, but due to the influence of *anava*, they too become detrimental to the soul in binding. *Maya* is the matrix of the universe and the material cause of the world which is real. From *maya* the world has been created by the grace of Siva and unto the same the world resolves during dissolution. *Maya* has a three-fold classification, *suddhamaya*, *asuddha maya* and *prakrti* or *suddhasuddha maya*. From *suddhamaya* five *suddha tattvas* emerge. Likewise from *asuddhamaya*, seven *vidya tattvas*, and from *suddhasuddhamaya*, twentyfour *atma tattvas*. Hence Saiva siddhanta subscribes to thirtysix *tattvas*.

Liberation is made possible by realizing the grace of Siva through wisdom by resolving to the following steps:

Path	Relationship	Attainment	Example
<i>Carya</i>	Master-servant, <i>dasamarga</i>	<i>Saloka</i>	St. Appar
<i>Kriya</i>	Father-son, <i>satputra marga</i>	<i>Samipya</i>	St. Sambandhar
<i>yoga</i>	Friend-Friend, <i>Saha marga</i>	<i>Sarupya</i>	St. Sundarar
<i>jnana</i>	Master-Disciple, <i>Sanmarga</i>	<i>Sayujya</i>	St. Manickavacakar

All these pathways to liberation are not mutually exclusive, but inclusive. Ultimately there are sixteen paths. To sanctify the body the holy ashes and the holy beads serve as the sacred symbols while the five lettered holy syllabus, *pancaksara mantra*, serve as a spiritual resource to strengthen the soul. The invitation of the guru will expel divine darkness and infuse divinity into the seekers after release. The equilibrium of the twofold deed, *iruvinaiooppu*, will make the impurities lose powers and the descent of divine grace becomes imminent, *saktinipada*.

Saiva siddhanta subscribes to *jivamukti*, since in this birth itself the vitality of egoity in binding the soul is transformed to feel proud as the member of Siva's close devotees. No *karmas* will get accumulated since all actions are executed in the name of and for the sake of Siva. *Maya* will seldom affect since the eyes are opened, but would be blind to the luring of material objects. As all the three impurities are transformed towards Siva's aspirations, the soul gets united with Siva and after entering into the state of illumination and enlightenment it enjoys the unalloyed bliss of Siva abundantly.

4.7 SOURCES OF VAISHNAVA RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Like Saivism, Sri Vaisnavism also is a philosophy of religion which has been included as one among the sects of Hinduism having Mahavishnu as the Supreme God. As religion it has its source of inspiration from the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas in Sanskrit and the devotional utterances of the Alvars in Tamil. The Upanisads and Bhagavat Gita and the Brahmasutras and the three major vedantic texts have been commented upon by Ramanuja in the realm of Visistadvaita philosophy. In the Hindu pantheon Vishnu has been recognized and adored as the God meant for protecting the human beings. However, the Vaishnavites comprehend Vishnu as the Ultimate God who is above these triple functions of creation,

preservation and destruction, but at the same time as an immanent Being He is responsible for these functions. God is also named as Srimath Narayanan and in Tamil Tirumal.

In the Tamil vaisnavite tradition, we have the compilation of 4000 verses in the name of *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, composed by the twelve ardent admirers of Vishnu by name Alvars. They have poured out their vibrant experiences in mellifluous terms wherein they depict the nature and characteristic feature of Mahavisnu in a manifold ways. Also they point out the disastrous nature of the worldly phenomena and the significant role of *bhakti* in uniting with God. The saints also elucidate a variety of devotion, but ultimately a devotee has to totally surrender to God to become the recipient of His Grace. The Vedas declare it is not possible to comprehend the personality as well as qualities of God while the experience of Brahman is possible, *yato vacate vartate*. But the Alvars who have been incarnated to give the quintessence of the Vedic message in Tamil assert the essential qualities of Visnu as the person having immeasurable high qualities. He also removes the impurities in the human minds and grants salvation through wisdom. By the grace of Lord Visnu the Alvar saints were born to praise His glory with divine fervour under the following categories: They have the joy of melodies. They have the hailing verses. They have the songs with internal meaning. They have the songs exposing the implied meaning of the Vedas. They have the songs depicting God as a child. They have the songs highlighting hero-heroine type of songs. They have songs with description of nature. They have the songs which awakes the Lord from His yogic slumber. They have the songs which glorify the incarnations of God.

The following is the list of Alvar Saints and the title of their hymns.

Poyhai Alvar	<i>Iyarpa</i>
Bhutattu Alvar	<i>Iyarpa</i>
Pey Alvar	<i>Iyarpa</i>
Tirumazhisai Alvar	<i>Tiruceanda Viruttam and Nanumkan Tiruvandati</i>
Nammalvar	<i>Tiruvaimozhi</i>
Madhurakal Alvar	<i>Kanninun Siruttambu</i>
Kulasekara Alvar	<i>Permal Tirumozhi</i>
Periyalvar	<i>Tiruppallandu, Periyalvar Tirumozhi</i>
Andal	<i>Tiruppavai, Nacciyar Tirumozhi</i>
Tondar Adippodi Alvar	<i>Tirumalai Tiruppalliyezhucci</i>
Tiruppan Alvar	<i>Amalan Adipiran</i>
Tirumangai Alvar	<i>Periya Tirumozhi, Tiruyezhukkurririyjaum, Siriya Tirumadal, Periya Tirumadal.</i>

As per convention, in Vaishnavism also Lord Mahavisnu has been revered as the first acarya who has revealed the philosophical doctrines, *sastras* and instructed His disciples with the eight lettered mantra. The acaryas not only promoted *bhakti* but also promulgated the Vedantic Philosophy from a theistic perspective. Sankara's monistic and absolutistic philosophy has been replayed by the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja which is also known as Visistadvaita. (Refer the unit on Visistadvaita for the details.) The following is the list of acaryas of Sri Vaishnavism: Sri Nadamunigal, Sri Alavandar, Sri Tirukkacci Nambigal, Sri Ramanujar, Koorathalvar, Sri Vedanta Desikar and Sri Manavala Mamunigal. Sri Vedanta Desikar founded the northern tradition of Vaishnavism, while Sri Manavala Mamunigal established the southern tradition. Based on the adaptation of language, practices, customs and modes of worship this distinction was made.

The epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata speak about the birth and human activities of Lord Visnu as Rama and Krishna respectively. Though they represent the royal class by birth, these avatars illustrate the truth regarding *dharma* at all spheres of life and of eliminating the evil forces. In the Bhagavat Gita, a classical philosophical text appearing in the Mahabharata, it is stated through the mouth of Lord Krishna that he would incarnate through out the *yugas*, eras, to protect the righteous people and to wipe out the wicked ones. The main ambit of these texts is that man ought to live according to the *purusharathas* (human values). We have also the Tamil Version of the Ramayana, *Kamba Ramayanam*, and Mahabharata, *Sri Villiputhurar Bharatam*, written according to the Tamil tradition, but without altering the tempo of the thematic contents. Through drama, dance, paintings, carving etc., the focal themes of these epics have been passed on to the people so as to enable them to lead a virtuous and pious life. In fact the Bhagavat Gita speaks about *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *raja yoga* and *jnana yoga* with special reference to *niskama karma* and *svadharma*, (desireless action and one's own duty). Besides the major scholars of vedantic schools such as Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva, the contemporary scholars like Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Arurobindo, Gandhi and others too have made extensive commentaries to this grand text which gives room for several interpretations from philosophical perspectives.

In Vaishnava religion has its unique religious scripture known as the Agamas, particularly called as the *pancaratna agamas* or *samhitas* which deliberately deal with the section of wisdom, *jnana*, Concentration, *yoga*, devotional activities, *kriya* worship, *carya*. Especially the vaishnava tradition upholding the authority of Ramanuja treat the *pancaratna Agamas* as the authoritative sources and sacred text. The philosophy of Vaishnavism commences from the *purusa-sukta* of the Rig Veda. Actually it lays the foundation of Visistadvaita. Only by performing sacrifice prescribed by the *pancaratna*, Narayana became the Great God, the Lord of the Universe – both transcendent and immanent, according to the *Satapatha Brahmana*. A few Vaishnava Upanishads such as *Avyakta Upanishad*, *Krishna Upanishad*, *Naryana Upanishad*, *Gopalataini Upanishad* etc. also speak high of the supremacy of Vishnu and highlight the philosophy of Vaishnavism known as Visistadvaita.

4.8 VAISHNAVA EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

As far as its epistemology is concerned this system recognizes only three *pramanas*, viz., Perception, inference and verbal testimony. It rejects altogether the indeterminate perception as a psychological myth. Ramanuja agrees with the Nyaya system regarding inference as a *pramana*. Regarding verbal testimony he makes a compromise between Sankara's advaita and Mimamsa that both *karma* and *jnana* are to be equally treated as valid since the former is concerned with the methods of worship while the latter, the knowledge of personal God. Knowledge always has attributes and is self-luminous, but not self-conscious. His theory of error is known as *sat-khyati*, or *yatharthakhyati*, i.e. error is real. Since all knowledge is intrinsically valid.

In Metaphysics, this system rejects the attributeless Brahman, but considers Brahman as having all auspicious qualities and no evil or bad quality. Taking clues from the three vedantic texts, viz., Gita, Brahmasutra and Upanisads, Ramanuja endeavours to establish a theistic trend in the philosophy. Since he could not ignore the subject matter of the *Agamas*, it was possible for him to maintain religious views in his philosophical wisdom. Since Nirguna Brahman has been replaced by a qualified Absolute, Viz., God, it was easy for him to introduce two dependent realities, viz., *cit* and *acit* – the conscious beings and non-conscious things. Even as the body forms the substratum for the soul to exist, these two realities form the body to God who is their soul. He is present in them and at the same time controls them, *antaryamin*. God is endowed with three qualities viz., *sat*, *cit*, *ananda* – Existence, knowledge and bliss and He is truth, goodness and beauty as well.

4.9 VAISHNAVA CONCEPT OF GOD AND SOUL

Of all the Puranas, which speak about the grandeur of Visnu's gracious deeds, *Visnupuranam* has been considered as a great one. The Vaisnava religion and philosophy have received several sources of inspiration from this *purana*. This work exemplifies the five-fold nature of existence of Visnu such as Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryamin and Arca. Para means Vyapaka, the state of existence as all pervasive and extending grace. It is like the rain-water pouring out in all parts of the world. He dwells in the Holy Land of Paramapada and adorns as sovereign monarch. Vyuha means surmounting in the universe with a form especially the form of yogic slumber at the ocean of milk. He becomes the prime object of worship for every month in the names of Kesavan, Narayanan, Madhavan, Govindan, Vishnu, Madhusudhanan, Trivikraman, Vamanan, Sridharan, Rishikesan, Padmanabhan and Dhamodharan. Vibhava means appearing in human form like the flowing water in a river. In order to alleviate the afflictions of His affectionate devotees He assumes several avatars. Mahavisnu's avatars are stated below.

<i>Maccavatar</i>	Fish
<i>Kurumavatar</i>	Turtle
<i>Varaha Avatar</i>	Pig
<i>Narasimha avatar</i>	Lion-Man
<i>Vamana</i>	Dwarf

<i>Parasuraman</i>	First Rama
<i>Dasarata Raman</i>	Rama of Ramayana
<i>Sri Krishna</i>	Dhamodharan of Mahabharata
<i>Balarama</i>	Later Raman
<i>Kalki avatar</i> (yet to come)	Kalki

Antaryamin is like the water beneath the earth, He bestows His grace in a concealed manner. Right from Brhama, upto the ant He conceals Himself as their inner controller and activates them. Finally Archavatar is like the water in the pond. Vishnu's idols are adored in the temples in several distinct forms, mainly for promoting devotion among the masses and strengthen the notion of surrender among His devotees He is installed in the form of idols in the temples.

The soul is an attribute of God and not identical with Him. It is a spiritual substance but eternal substance since it is neither created nor destroyed. But it is finite and has individuality. It is the knower (*jnata*), agent of action (*karta*), and an enjoyer (*bhokta*). As its knowledge is obscured by *karmas*, bondage takes place and in liberation all the *karmas* are annihilated due to deeper devotion and total surrender and wisdom emerges as to enjoy its *dharma bhuta jnana*. Both increasing love, infinite knowledge and everlasting bliss constitute the nature of liberation. The following is the relationship between God and Soul in Visistadvaita thought:

1. *Sarira-Sariri bhava*: Soul is the body and God is its soul
2. *Amsa-Amsi bhava*: Soul is the part and God is the whole
3. *Sesa-Sesi bhava*: Soul is the means and God is the end
4. *Nayaka-Nayaki bhava*: Soul is the lover and God is the beloved
5. *Adhara-Adheyi bhava*: Soul is the supported and God is the supporter
6. *Niyamya-Niyamita bhava*: Soul is the controlled and God is the controller
7. *Prakara-Prakari bhava*: Soul is the mode and God is the substance

There are three kinds of souls, viz., ever free souls (*nitya muktas*), always in bondage (*buddhas*) and the released souls (*muktas*). In order to overcome bondage Visistadvaita basically insists upon promoting pure love towards God and through the grace of God the soul attains liberation. Through sevenfold argument known as *saptavita anupapatti*, Ramanuja rejects the conception of *maya* as envisaged and exemplified by Sankara as *anirvacaniya* etc. and considers it as the special power of God in creating the universe. In liberation the soul does not merge with Brahman who is *Nirguna* etc., but retains its individual identity and enjoys the holy company of God for ever. Thus a thorough going theistic philosophy has been maintained by the Vaishnava philosophy.

4.10 LET US SUM UP

Both Saiva and Vaishna religions are as old as Vedic religion in India. They accepted the Vedic scriptures and integrated them in their own. Systematic philosophies emerged out of these religions when they had a revival during the medieval period as bhakti movements. Saiva Siddhanta and Visistadvaita are the prominent philosophical systems of these two religions.

4.11 KEY WORDS

Avatar : Vaishna concept of God taking different forms with specific purpose.

Satkaryavada : General Indian principle of causality that the effect pre-exists in the cause.

Antaryamin : Vaishna concept of God as indweller

4.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Heehs, Peter. Ed. *Indian Religions: The Spiritual Traditions of South Asia*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.

Singh H. *An Introduction to Indian Religions*. Patiala: Punjabi University, 1973.