

Ultimate Reality & Meaning of Non-duality

Advaita Vedanta View

Acknowledgement

- My background
- SHEN's contribution

Introduction

- Parlance Reality
- Ultimate Reality per Advaita Vedanta

Brahman

- Ultimate reality in *Vedanta* is named *Brahman*
- Levels of Reality
 - *Paramarathic* or Ultimate Reality
 - *Vyavaharic* or Transactional reality
 - *Pratibhasic* or Dream Reality

Brahman –Ultimate Reality

- **Names & Attributes**
- Various names dependent upon the context
 - *Atma, Self, Turiya, Akshara, Om* etc.
- Various Attributes
 - Not perceivable by sense organs.
 - Incomprehensible by mind
 - Unrelated to anything
 - Not accessible
 - Not graspable
 - Not expressible
 - Not subject to transaction
 - Transcendental and immanent

Brahman - Definitions

- Two definitions:
 - (*satyam-Jnanam-Anantam*) -Existence-
knowledge- infinite consciousness
 - (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*)-Existence- Consciousness-Bliss

Existence (*Sat or satyam*)

- In the beginning this universe was Existence or *Sat*: alone, one, only without a second
- Existence experienced by 'isness', 'amness' or 'areness'; (he, she, it is; I am, you are)
- Self is common to you, he or I
- Self does not change during various stages of life

Consciousness (chit)

- Like Existence Consciousness pervades all sentient and insentient beings
- This all pervasive Consciousness is pure consciousness or OC
- Sentient beings have a reflecting medium (intellect or *Buddhi*).
- OC gets reflected in this medium as reflected consciousness (RC) and creates awareness which is unique to each individual
- Inert objects do not have awareness as they do not have a reflecting medium
- Five sense organs body enable awareness in their respective fields.

Nature of Sat & Chit

- They are not part, product or property of the body
- They are independent entities and are not affected by the conditions of the body
- They are not limited by the boundaries of the body and extend beyond it
- They survive and continue to exist after the death of the body
- Medium of the body is essential for their manifestation.

Ananda or Bliss

- Third intrinsic feature of *Brahman* is Bliss
- It is the infinitude or absence of 'want'
- Realization of the absence of limitation creates all pervasiveness
- Self love is the only real love; Love for others is conditional

Indirect definition of Brahman

- Brahman is the material and intelligent cause of creation of the universe.
- Brahman creates *Jiva* at the micro level and the world at the macro level)

Steps for comprehension

- Sravannam – Listening and studying
- Manannam - questioning
- Niddidhyasanam – practicing and assimilation

Man-World-god (Jiva-jagat-Iswara)

- Study of the triad required to understand to understand human being's (Jiva's) place in the universe
- Main focus is the study of the jiva

Jiva (Human being)

- Human goals
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Vedanta's summation of human goals
 - *Artha* – Security
 - *Kama* – Enjoyment
 - *Dharma* – ethical living
 - *Moksha* – Freedom from ignorance of real nature

Jiva-Jagat (Man-world)

- Human circumstances – fortunate and unfortunate
- Need for self confidence.
- Outside help results in lectures on our deficiencies
- Disappointment with the world pushes one to seek help from God
- Feeling of God's presence and not the actual help creates a sense of security.

Jiva's Personality

- Amalgam of three bodies
 - Gross body
 - Subtle body -
 - Causal body

Gross Body

- Made up of gross matter
- Gross matter made of five gross elements; space, air, fire, water and earth.
- Composition known through anatomy
- Residence of the Self or Atma
- All karmas performed resulting in merit or demerit (*punyam* and *papam*)
- Changes from birth to death

Subtle body

- Made up of five subtle elements
- Comprises 19 components
- Five sense organs,
- Five organs of action,
- Five *pranas* or life forces;
- Four internal organs (*anthakarnam*);
- This body also undergoes change
- Believed to pass on to the next gross body after death

Causal body

- Made up of causal matter as impressions (*vasanas*)
- It is invisible and is unmanifest
- Its components are gross and subtle bodies before they were created
- It is like butter in milk

Nature of the bodies

- All three bodies are by themselves inert
- Become sentient by the presence of consciousness
- Consciousness enters the intellect and gets reflected
- Reflected consciousness associated with the reflecting medium (intellect) is RC or *ahamkara* (ego)
- Use of 'I' in our transactional plane is ego. In reality 'I' when dissociated from the reflecting medium is our real Self
- Feelings of 'I' and mine represented by the words is the cause of the misconception
- The misconception leads to the impression that my body, mind or my other biographical data is me

Three states

- Jiva experiences the world in three states
 - Waking state
 - Dream state
 - Sleeping state.
- My real Self is neither of these
- Real Self pervades all three states
- Self that pervades the three states is called the fourth or 'Turiya'

World-God (*Jagat-Iswara*) Creation

- Vedanta views creation as the cyclic manifestation
- Creation involves, manifestation, sustenance and dissolution as an endless cycle
- *Prakritti* is the basic or seed form of matter
- Prakritti is more subtle than energy
- *Prakritti* is an integral part of *Brahman* and is the inherent power (*Sakti*) of Brahman

Prakritti

- Prakritti has three characteristics (*gunas*)
- These are *satwa* (pure), *rajas* (active) and *tamas* (inert)
- The three *gunas* are mutually coupled
- They are present in everything in the universe in varying proportions.
- *Prakritti* can be divided in three categories based on the preponderance of a particular *guna*
- *Satwa dominated prakritti is called maya*
- *Rajas dominated prakritti is called avidya (ignorance)*
- *Tamas dominated prakritti is called prakritti*

Prakritti & Creation

- When *Brahman* (OC) is reflected into *maya*, it becomes *Iswara* or God at the macro level
- When *Brahman* is reflected in the *avidya* at the micro level it becomes *Jiva*
- *Iswara* or God maintains control of *maya* but *Jiva* struggles under the control of *avidya*
- *Tamas* dominated *prakritti* is the cause of the tangible universe.

Creation of tangible universe

- Tamas dominated prakriti produces the five basic elements
- Creation of elements starts with the subtlest – space (*akasa*) followed in sequence with air, fire, water and earth.
- The elements are in subtle form and each of them has the three gunas
- *Satwa* part of these elements produce the *anthakarna* (inner organs) and the organs of knowledge
- *Rajas* part of the five elements produce the organs of action and the five life forces (*pranas*)
- *Tamas* part of the elements produce the gross element through a grossification process which produce the gross body and all the gross objects.

Two types of creations

- *Iswara* (God) creates the world impelled by the totality of karmas of the universe
- In fact the world was always existent in dormant form
- Creation is the unfoldment of the universe by giving names and forms
- *Iswara* unfolded the universe for the experience of the many *jivas*. *Iswara* has no use of the objects for Himself. He just enjoys the drama
- *Jiva* creates his own universe by his own mental actions. The objective world is not *jiva*'s problem
- Two types of duality; first is due to *iswara*'s creation and the second is due to *jiva*'s own creation
- By his mental actions *jiva* creates his karmas

Iswara or God

- We often question existence of God e.g mother Terresa or St John the Cross
- We start our spiritual search for a God that has a name, a form and variety of attributes.
- Initially we believe that **one form (*Eka rupa*)** of god **created** the world sitting somewhere like a carpenter. We believe **there is only one God**
- With more maturity, we begin to believe that God Himself has **become** the world in many forms (*aneka rupa*) and that **there is only God**
- The third stage is when God **appears** as the universe and does not undergo any change (*arupa iswara*)
- Third stage is a culmination of the understanding of non-duality
- First two stages makes us get confidence by the thought of help from God who is there. Third stage makes us self-dependent

Oneness of Atma and Brahman

- Four aphorisms from Vedanta
 - Consciousness is *Brahman (pragnanam Brahma)*. This is a statement of definition
 - That Thou Art (*Tat Twam Asi*). Statement of advice
 - This Self is *Brahman (Ayam Atma Brahma)*. This is a statement of practice
 - I am *Brahman (Aham Brahman Asmi)*. This is a statement of experience

Non-Duality

- Advaita Vedanta philosophy
 - Brahma satyam, Jagat mithya (Brahman is Real, the world is mithya)
 - Brahman is the only reality (Ultimate Reality)
 - World is neither real nor unreal nor both. It is uncategorizable (*mithya*)

Transcendence to Ultimate Reality

- Despite definitions or attributes, Vedanta does not point to Brahman
- You drop definitions or attributes by '*neti, neti*' (not this, not this)
- While in transactional plane you can describe Brahman by remaining silent. Like Buddha did when asked about God.

Jnani- Liberated person

- Self Knowledge makes him natural and spontaneous
- From the mind point of view he has **equanimity**
- Equanimity known by FIR (frequency, intensity and recovery period of disturbances)
- No or reduced *ahmakara* and *mamakara* (I and mine)

Conclusion

- Human search for meaning is to be happy
- Outside sources do not lead to happiness
- Vedanta teaches one to find one's real nature as well the nature of the universe.
- Both are the same *sat-chit-ananda*, which is the non-dual ultimate reality
- Assimilation of this knowledge requires repeated and continued practice.