

Relevance of Dvaita Vedanta in the Present Days

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Abstract: *In this article I have focused on the Dualist Vedanta view that Vishṇu is the Supreme Soul and individual souls exist independently and distinctly. Also discussed about the prapañca accepted in the Dvaita Vedanta and the Tāratamya among the different souls, by which they accept pluralism. I have also discussed the view considering the differences between Dvaita and Advaita Vedanta, regarding Brahman. And also tried to show that why Indian people are mostly Dualist and why it is wrong to blame God for anything negative happening in our life.*

Keywords: Advaita Vedanta, God, Individual Soul, Tāratamya

1. Introduction

In Indian philosophical system among the various sects there are two main divisions – orthodox and the unorthodox. Those who believe on the Vedas, as eternal revelation of truth, are called the orthodox, and those that stand on authorities, rejecting the Vedas are unorthodox. Again among the orthodox there are two division one who asserts that scriptures are the highest truth over the reason, on the other side, some believe that only the portion of scriptures which is based on reason should be taken and the rests are rejected.

Among the three orthodox divisions, the Sāṃkhya, the Naiyayikas and the Mimāṃsakas, the first two although existed as philosophical school but they failed to form any sect. But the Mimāṃsakas or Vedāntins from sect which really covers India, called Vedantism.

‘Vedanta’ means the end of Veda. There are three principal Variations among the vedāntius all of them believe in God and considers the Veda to be the revealed words of God. Veda are the expressions of the knowledge of God, and as God is eternal, so are his knowledge and thus Vedas are also eternal. The three divisions of Vedantius are – i. Dualist school of Vedanta ii. Qualified non-dualism (Viśiṣṭadvaita) and iii. Advaita (monism) non-dualism.

2. Objective

- To show the Dvaita view that God (Supreme Soul) is over individual Soul.
- To show that mokṣa or liberation has Tāratamya among different individual soul.
- To show how Dvaita differs from Advaita.
- To show why Indian people are mostly dualist

3. Material and Method

This is a descriptive study. Some classical text has been followed to prepare this research paper.

4. Results

The Dualist maintains the doctrine that every soul must eventually come to salvation.

5. Discussion

5.1. Dualist school of Vedanta

5.1.1. God (Supreme soul) over Individual Soul

Dualist or Dvaita Vedanta is the sub school of Vedanta, founded by 13th century scholar Madhvacharya. Dvaita Vedanta is a dualistic interpretation of Vedas, espouses dualism by accepting two separate realities – svatantra-tattva, which states the Dvaita school, is that of Vishnu as Brahman. The second reality is asvatantra-tattva which is equally real universe that exists with its own separate essence. Everything that is composed of the asvatantra-tattva such as individual soul, matter and the like exist with their own separate reality. The Dualist Vedanta believes that God, (Vishnu) is the supreme soul and the individual souls (Jivātman) exist independently and distinctly. The Dualist believe that, God (Vishnu, Supreme Soul) is the creator and the ruler, of the universe and is eternally separate from the individual soul. As the individual soul and the universe is the creation of the Supreme soul, so like Supreme Soul individual soul is also eternal. But as the Nature and the soul is manifested so they are subject to change, but God remains the same.

The Dualist hold that God is with human attributes; He is powerful, He is merciful, He is almighty, He can be prayed, He can be approached, He can be loved, He loves in return and so forth. Supreme Soul (God) is infinitely greater than man (soul). He has none of the evil qualities which men have.

5.1.2. Two principles admitted by Dvaita Vrdanta

Dvaita Vedanta acknowledges two principles; however, it holds one of them as being eternally dependent on the other. They depicted that the individual souls are the images or shadows of the Supreme Soul, but never in any way identical with the Divine. Therefore Mokṣa or liberation is described as the realization that all finite reality is essentially dependent on the Supreme Soul.

Madhvacharya holds that the created universe is the dependent reality, consisting of Jiva (individual soul), and Jada (matter, material things). Thus individual soul are plural, different and distinct realities. Jivās are sentient and jada is non-sentient.

5.1.3. Prapañca in Dvaita Vedanta.

Dvaita Vedanta school depicts five fundamental, eternal and real differences between- 1. Between the individual souls (Sentient) and God (Brahmātmēśvara or Vishnu) 2. Between matter (Jada or non-sentient) and God. 3. Between individual souls (Jivarmān) 4. Between various types of Jada.

These five differences are said to explain the nature of the universe. And for this reason the Dvaita school called the world as prapañca (pañca “five”). These differences are neither temporary nor merely practical; it is an invariable and natural property of everything.

5.1.4. Tāratamya (gradation in pluralism)

Mādhava accepts gradation in plurakism (Tāratamya), which means there are no objects like another. There is no soul like another. Every soul are unique, and are reflected in individual personalities. In order to understand this view, Madhavacarya asserts, “The sea is full; the tank is full; a pot is full; everything is full, yet each fullness is different”. Madhavacarya states, even in mokṣa or liberation, the bliss is different for each person, based on each Soul’s degree of knowledge and Spiritual perfection.

In addition to the insurmountable differences of selves among themselves and their difference from the Brahman, a natural hierarchy is formed based on gradations of worth, inherent in their basic knowledge. And the gradation persists in the state of mokṣa or liberation. The Dvaita philosopher holds that, at the bottom of the hierarchy, the two classes of soul that are evil beyond remedy, - one condemned by nature to perpetual transmigrating and the other predestined by nature for eternal damnation. Dvaita considers this view as Taratamya-Vada. And according to Madhavacarya the liberation is only achievable with grace of God Kṛṣṇa :

5.2. Concept of Brahman in Dvaita System.

The Vedantic scriptures contain a good deal of Brahma-jiva dualistic teachings conceiving of the fundamental difference between Brahman and the jiva. Madhavacarya makes great contribution in his classic work Viṣṇu-tattva-vinirnaya and the jiva. In his work he splits the problem into two sections- first it takes up the estimate of the dualistic text and then attends to the monistic texts supposed to cancel them.

Dvaita refutes four wrong views considering the determination of the relation between the substantive being of God and his attributes. First, is – Brahman has no attributes. Second, it has attributes but the attributes are entirely different from the svarupa, substantive essence. Third, the relation between the Brahman and the attributes is one of identity-cum-difference. Fourth, there are two types of attributes inner and outer, the first set identical with svarupa and the second set external to it and different from it.

Dvaita refutes all these four views:

The Dvaita Vedanta holds that the attributes of Brahman are truly infinite. Even the highest among the jivatma can only

apprehend them, and cannot comprehend them. Madhav considers that God is infinite beauty. His form is blissful beyond expression. But it is no material adjunct, it is wholly spiritual.

While Madhav considers the above attributes of Brahman as real, but spiritual, he emphasizes that an exhaustive knowledge is intellect. But it is necessary to capture the most defining attributes for the purpose of meditation, and thus lists four aspects of the Brahman – sat (absolute reality); cit (absolute consciousness), ananda (absolute bliss) and atmattva (absolute self of all).

Realizing the impossibility of doing full justice to the majesty of God Madhav sums up four cardinal points as the unerring and conclusive judgment of God, that Viṣṇu abounds in all excellences – He is free from all blemishes; Everything (Sentient or non-sentient) depends upon Him, while He is absolutely self-dependent, and He is different from everything else, otherwise His freedom from blemishes cannot be true.

5.3. Difference between Dvaita and Advaita Vedanta.

The Dvaita Vedanta maintains that there are three realities – God, chit and achit. God is the Supreme and independent reality. Chit and achit are not part of God, but modification respectively into Jiva (individual soul) and jagat (World).

Dvaita holds that these three are completely different and real things. Infact it explicitly states that there is five fundamental difference between these three entities (which I have discussed earlier).

In dvaita Vedanta Brahman is identified with Śvara. Ātman is identified with Jiva. In Dvaita, individual sees oneself as a separate entity from God. In this school of philosophy one is exclusively devoted to a personal God.

In Dvaitavāda there is hierarchy of Gods. The Supreme Lord is Visnu and down the order there are many other Gods. There are also hierarchy among Jivas.

Thus Dualism is quite clear. They accepts three eternal entities that co-exist- Ishara (The Supreme Soul paramatman, Viṣṇu), Jiva (the individual soul) and Jagat (the material World or Maya). According to their view all these three are eternal among which Śvara is Svatantra (independent) and both Jiva and Jagat are paratantra (dependent on para i.e dependent on Śvara). And thus the ultimate goal of paratantra is to reach the satantra. One’s highest achievement may not be the same as other’s highest achievement, but apparently there is no one standard. As there is no common standard, among the paratantra there is no common salvation for all souls. Thus liberation of individual is dependent upon one’s individual inherent capacity. It is quite hard to find direct and explicit support for this doctrine in Upanishads and Vedas.

But comparatively non-dualism (Advaita) is simpler than the above system and is closer to the Upanishadh and Vedas.

According to their view there are no two (a-dvaita), there is only one. In Advaita System, emphasis is laid on transcendental God as Pure Consciousness. It says that Jiva, Jagat and Isvara are the same. Due to Maya (illusion), they appear to be different one you get over the Māyā or illusion, you will realize all that exists is Brahman or consciousness. God does not have a form-because due to avidyā or ignorance form is perceived. According to this system the existence of the world is in the beholder's mind. When mind dissolves (or reach it ultimate goal), the world ceases to exist for the beholder. In Advaita System emphasis is laid on transcendental God as Pure Consciousness. It has more to do with the subjective nature of God all that is objective are the creation of Māyā or illusion.

Thus Brahman is the only reality which is devoid of any kind of internal or external differences. Brahman without attributes is the real nature (swarupalakṣaṇa), and due to Māyā or avidyā Brahman appears with attributes, in the form of ISvara. But this is merely the accidental nature (due to māyā) (tatastha lakṣaṇa) of Brahman. Isvara (Brahma with attributes) creates the world with the power of Maya. Thus world is only vivarta or illusory modification of Brahman, the imaginary attribution (adhyasa) of Jagat in the place of Brahman. Like Dvaita Vedanta Advaita do not accept the plurality of individual self. According to the Advaitavadins the ultimate truth is Brahman and each of us is Brahman because we are what Brahman just "appears to be".

Again the Advaitavadins hold that mokṣa is not a state to be attained, it is the very nature of the soul. Liberation means realizing what had been soul's true nature as identical to Brahman, which it had momentarily forgotten. Thus if we summarize these two views we find that Dvaita view is that "I am a weakling. I have no will of my own. All actions are His. God is my guardian and protector. I worship him with love and devotion for I am his humble servant" and the Advaita view is that "There are no two, there is only one. I am not the body. I am not the mind. I am self. Aham Brahmasmi. I am that transcendental consciousness (nirguna parabrahman i.e without attributes) that stands as the basis for all creation yet beyond everything that is created. "Tat tam asi."

5.4 Indian people are mostly Dualist

India is a multi-religions country and it has been found that the vast man of Indian people are dualists. Actually most of the population in the world who believe in any religion are dualist, because it is difficult for the human nature to conceive themselves to be higher. The ordinary man cannot think of anything which is not concrete. It is his natural instinct to cling to that which his intellect can grasp. That is to say he can only conceive of higher spiritual ideas by bringing them down to his own level. He makes a concrete only to grasp the abstract thought. And this is the religion of masses all over the world. Human nature is such that they believe in God who is entirely separate from them and at the same time they think themselves to be less pure than the God. Human nature ordinarily conceive that God is purer, with all good qualities and evilless.

5.5 God is not to blame

But the question naturally arises how the God, who is Pure, with infinite good qualities, evilless, just, and merciful, can create so many evil is the World? The Hindus never invented a satan as an answer to it, because it is not He who makes such evils in the world, the man has to be blame for it. Consider today's life – we see in our life we can shape and form our future, everyday, everybody is trying to shape tomorrow. Today we fix the fate of tomorrow and tomorrow we shall again fix the fate of the day after tomorrow and so on. But this reason can be pushed backward too. If it be that we are working out our own destiny, if it be true that everything has a cause, it must also be true that, that which we are now is the effect of the whole of our past. Therefore, no other person is necessary to shape our destiny but we ourselves are responsible for what we are now. The evils that are in the world are caused by name else but ourselves. And just as we constantly facing the misery resulting from evil action, so can we also see that much of the existing misery in the world is the effect of our past wicked action. So god is not to blame for any evil action. But we must be thankful to the God what we are facing – whether good or evil. Because without the presence of 'evil' we cannot understand the importance of 'good'. God is eternally merciful.

6. Every Soul Attains Salvation

The Dualist hold a doctrine that every soul must eventually come to salvation. No one will left out. Through various sufferings and enjoyments, ups and downs each of them will come out in the end. Here 'Come out' means come out of this Universe. This Universe is mixed up with good and evils, but beyond this Universe there is a place full of happiness and good only, and when that place is reached, there will be no necessity of being within the rebirth and death cycle. There will be eternal happiness. The Dualist maintains that all beings, from the lower worm upto the highest angels and gods, will all, sooner or later attain to that world where there will be no more misery.

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