

# Lesson 11: *Māyā's* influence over the *Jīvātmā* versus *Paramātmā*—The *upādhis* (36-39)

Text 36: *Jīva* is not merely the product of an *upādhi* of Brahman—*Māyā's* influence, if real, cannot be explained in terms of *Māyāvāda* theories of division (*pariccheda-vāda*) or reflection (*pratibimba-vāda*) to explain the origin of *Jīva* & *Īśvara*

Text 37: Flaws in *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—*Māyā's* influence, even if it was real, cannot impose itself on *Īśvara*, the perfect Supreme

Texts 38 & 39: *Jīva Gosvāmī* refutes *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—If *Māyā's* influence were unreal, it could not have any real effect

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- *Māyāvāda* philosophers, led by Śaṅkarācārya, hold that there is only one reality or existence, the Supreme Impersonal Brahman, which is without form & qualities (*nirākāra* & *nirguṇa*), indivisible, and non-variegated.
- They have various theories for explaining the apparent separate existence of the *Jīva* & *Īśvara*—the two are the most prominent ones elaborated by the followers of Śaṅkarācārya: *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda* ⇒ Both have been explained in several modified forms.

- *Pariccheda-vāda* theory (the delimitation or division of Brahman)
  - Developed by Vācaspati Miśra, a prominent commentator of the 9<sup>th</sup> century ⇒ The one indivisible Brahman appears divided into many embodied *Jīvas* because of various *upādhis*, just as the inseparable vast space (*mahākāśa*) appears divided by being contained in various pots (*ghaṭākāśa*) ⇒ No real difference exists between the space inside a pot and space outside ⇒ Once the pot is broken, the space formerly contained within becomes one with the vast open space, removing the apparent distinction
  - Similarly, they claim that there is no difference between Brahman and the embodied *Jīva*
  - The *Jīva*'s limiting adjunct (*upādhi*), the subtle body, is actually a false covering superimposed on the *Jīva* after coming into contact with Māyā's *avidyā* potency.

- It is only this material covering alone that makes the *Jīva* appear to be separate from Brahman.
- Thus, when Brahman is limited by subtle bodies, it becomes the *Jīvas*.
- However, when it is limited by *vidyā* (knowledge)  $\Rightarrow$  the *Īśvara*
- *Pratibimba-vāda* theory (the reflection of Brahman)
  - Proposed by one named Prakāśātmā in the 12<sup>th</sup> century
  - When the formless indivisible Brahman is reflected in the various subtle bodies made of *avidyā*, it appears to be many, just as the one sun reflected in various receptacles of water appears so  $\Rightarrow$  The sun is unaffected by any displacement of the water in which it is reflected, although the reflection is influenced.
  - By virtue of this contact with *Māyā*, Brahman assumes a personal but temporary form that, unlike the *Jīvas*, is immune to ignorance.

- Nonetheless, Brahman's manifestation in the personal feature of the *Īśvara* is a function of *Māyā* and is inferior to the all-pervading Brahman  $\Rightarrow$  All the incarnations of God described in the Vedic literature are manifestations of *Īśvara*, resulting from Brahman combining with *Māyā*'s *vidyā* potency.
- Like the *Jīvas*, such personal manifestations of God have subtle and gross bodies, but unlike the *Jīvas*, they neither acquire their bodies because of past karma nor are they bound by the reactions of their activities. Thus, the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara* are distinct.
- They of course cite various *śruti-śāstra*, such as Upaniṣads, Vedānta, including even *Bhagavad-gīta*, and so on, in support of their theories, but with their own misinterpretations.

- Similarly, Brahman is never affected by the modifications undergone by its reflections, the *Jīvas*. Indeed, the happiness and distress experienced by the *Jīvas* are merely illusions resulting from their conditioned, or reflected state.
- When the *Jīva* is freed from illusion and established in liberation, he reverts to his original Brahman consciousness ⇒ thereby explaining the *Jīva*'s apparent individual existence.
- The same Brahman that becomes the *Jīvas* when reflected in Māyā's *avidyā* potency, also becomes the *Īśvara* upon being reflected in her *vidyā* potency.

## Text 37: Flaws in *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—Māyā's influence, if real, cannot impose itself on *Īśvara*, the perfect Supreme

- In Śaṅkarācārya's theory of radical nondualism, or monism; Absolute Truth, Reality or Existence (*sattā*) are understood to be of three ascending grades
  - i. *Pratibhāsika* (illusory existence or dream state of reality  $\Rightarrow$  Ceases when normal consciousness returns  $\Rightarrow$  Analogy: rope perceived as snake in semi-darkness  $\Rightarrow$  entirely subjective and negated until valid perception & knowledge  $\Rightarrow$  thus, not executable meaning incapable of practical utility)
  - ii. *Vyāvahārika* (empirical existence if the material world in ordinary waking consciousness  $\Rightarrow$  executable for practical action)
  - iii. *Pāramārthika* (ontological or absolute existence beyond all objects of the material world, and pervading them as the conscious, blissful source of all manifest varieties  $\Rightarrow$  The unqualified Brahman)

- Objects in the material world have five characteristics

- i. Existence
- ii. Perceivability
- iii. Attractiveness

Brahman itself as perceived  
from empirical reality

- iv. Form
- v. Name

The product of Māyā & constitute only on the empirical  
reality as long as one is not in Brahman realization

- The unqualified Brahman (*Pāramārthika-sattā*), which unlike the other two realities, cannot be negated either by valid perception or by scriptural authority
  - Dream state ceases, when one wakes up
  - The material world will cease to exist when become Brahman-realized at which stage there is no distinction between knowledge, the knower and the object of knowledge ⇒ All three fuse into one absolute reality.



- Jīva Gosvāmī shows flaws in both the theories of *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda* on the basis of Māyāvādī's own explanation of the *upādhis* covering Brahman as pertaining to the two lower grades of reality
  - These *upādhis* can never be real aspects of the absolute or ontological reality, since that would introduce duality on the nondual plane.
  - In *pariccheda-vāda*, the *upādhis* can be either empirically real (Texts 37 & 38), or only apparently real (Text 39)
  - If empirically real, Brahman still cannot be limited by them, because pure Brahman is unconditioned by anything else

- Brahman is beyond sense perception and empirical existence and non-existence ∴ If the *upādhis* are empirically real, they can never limit the undivided and indivisible Brahman to produce the *Jīvas*
- Hypothetically granting if the *upādhis* can divide Brahman into the *Jīvas*, then neither the *Jīvas* nor Brahman itself should be called eternal, but Bg describes both as eternal
- Both the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara* move from one place to another as per the theories, but Brahman is all-pervading!
- On the other hand, if Brahman does not move with the *Jīvas*, one must assume that when a *Jīva* moves, its *upādhi* constantly delimits new portion of Brahman, simultaneously releasing the previously delimited portions. This reduces Brahman as per the whims of the *upādhis*, which is absurd!

- Similarly, Jīva finds flaws with *pratibimba-vāda*, the theory of reflection as well
  - Brahman can cast no reflection in its *upādhis*—the subtle or gross bodies of the *Jīvas*—because Brahman is devoid of all attributes and visibility—only an object of form and color can cast a reflection
  - In the sky analogy cited that casts a reflection in water, Jīva points out that it is only the luminaries in sky like stars and planets that cast reflection in water, not the sky itself.
  - Furthermore, Māyāvādīs state that Brahman is beyond material existence and non-existence, and thus also beyond sensory perception, it is nonsensical to then propose that Brahman reflects as the *Jīvas*.

- But if the reflected object, Brahman, is already present in the *upādhis*, how will it reflect there? A mirror cannot reflect in itself, so Brahman cannot reflect in itself. Even if we suppose so,
  - how will it be possible to distinguish the reflected Brahman from the original Brahman already present in the *upādhis*?
  - How can the reflected Brahman be singled out to be termed the *Jīvas* and made to suffer? What was his offense?
  - Why is it that the reflected Brahman becomes affected by *upādhis* and not the original Brahman, although the reflection is no different from the original?
  - A formless, indivisible object cannot have a relation with any *upādhi*, real or imaginary, and thus it cannot reflect in any medium.
  - They cite the analogy of the clear crystal that appears red when placed in front of a red flower. Just as the red color, which is formless and indivisible, is reflected in the crystal, so it is possible for Brahman to be reflected in its *upādhi*.

- But this is also a faulty argument
  - The red color belongs to the flower, which projects its image through the crystal; thus, we perceive only the flower's color in the crystal.
  - The color exists simply as the flower's attribute and cannot sustain itself independently.
  - A flower, moreover, has shape, parts and attributes.
  - In sum, neither the color nor the flower compares adequately to Brahman.

Texts 38 & 39: Jīva Gosvāmī refutes *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—If Māyā's influence were unreal, it could not have any real effect

- Jīva now exposes complications that arise from accepting Brahman's *upādhis* as either empirically real (Text 38) or apparently unreal (Text 39)
  - Māyāvādīs advocate that a *Jīva* can become free from the bondage of his *upādhis* by realizing his identity with Brahman, assimilated from the *śruti-śāstra* ⇒ Liberation achieved thru' knowledge ⇒ Analogies of 1) a son of a rich man having to grow up as poor man's son, but later became known of his true identity, which is sufficient to reverse the situation, and 2) a person forgetting that he put his watch in his pocket and searches for hours without any luck ⇒ only upon reminded that the watch had been in his pocket all the time ⇒ all his anxieties disappear at once

- Similarly, Māyāvādīs point out that the *Jīva* is nothing but deluded Brahman. As soon as he realizes this by properly hearing and reflecting upon the Vedic instructions, he becomes liberated. He then understands that Brahman is not distant from him, for in fact he himself is Brahman. He was just ignorant about it  $\Rightarrow$  “*tat tvam asi*”
- But Jīva Gosvāmī poses a question: Since Brahman is all-pervading and all-knowing while the *Jīva* is atomic and limited knowledge, how can they be identical? Māyāvādīs point out that “*tat tvam asi*” here should be interpreted as oneness between the *Jīva* & Brahman only when one sets aside their contrasting qualities, and recognize only their mutual quality of consciousness.
- Jīva Gosvāmī’s counter response: Even when a *Jīva* is absorbed in hearing the Vedic sound of his oneness with Brahman, the *upādhis* covering him, which are empirically real, will not magically dissolve.

- Just by meditation, one cannot unchain himself from his shackles. This is possible only when his *upādhis* happened to be merely apparent.
- If knowledge alone were actually sufficient for liberation, why do the scriptures recommend various austerities, penances and rituals for self-purification?
- *Vidyā* and *avidyā* are both products of *Māyā* according to their own acceptance of the scriptural injunctions. Study of the Vedic texts while may convert his *avidyā* to *vidyā*, he would be bound now to *vidyā*, which is also an *upādhi* (SB 11.11.3). Until he is freed off all his *upādhis*, he cannot realize Brahman, which is beyond both *vidyā* and *avidyā*. *Vidyā* alone doesn't cut it for liberation unless and until surrendering unto the Supreme in *ds*, which is *raja-vidyā*.



- Now how about accepting Brahman's *upādhis* as an apparent unreal (*pratibhāsika*, or illusory)? (Text 39)?
  - Illusory in the sense that they exist on neither the empirical nor the ontological level (Māyāvādī notion)
  - The objects one perceives in dreams, misperceptions, or hallucinations are intangible (for example, hunger on the *Vyāvahārika* level cannot be appeased by eating a feast on the *pratibhāsika* level).
  - Similarly, perception of snake for a rope on *pratibhāsika* level will cause fear, but that fear of the snake will persist only as long as the misperception continues. This kind of illusory reality is inferior to both empirical and ontological existence. Nonetheless, Māyāvādīs persist upon theorizing that such apparent *upādhis* can cause Brahman to take on the characteristics of the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara*.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> step that Jīva Gosvāmī takes in refuting this erroneous theory is to point out that an effect is always dependent on its cause and that specific effects arise from specific causes. One cannot make water taste sweet by adding salt.
- Similarly, if the *upādhis* imposed on Brahman are only apparent realities, then they cannot produce empirical reality.
- In the context of discussing real *upādhis*, Jīva has already refuted the two analogies the Māyāvādīs use to explain *pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—the analogy of the sun reflecting in many water pots and that of open space (sky) becoming delimited by a pot. These analogies are also inappropriate here.

- The Māyāvādīs may justifiably presume open space to be empirically real and thus delimitable by such an *upādhi* as a pot. But Brahman is neither empirical nor divisible  $\therefore$  it is impossible for empirical *upādhi* to delimit it.
- Such a *pratibhāsika* delimitation, unreal in the empirical sense, will not help explain how the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara* come into being on the empirical plane.
- An adequate analogy must be as similar as possible to what it illustrates. But in the analogy of all-pervading space and the pot, there is insufficient correspondence to the actuality depicted by the Māyāvādīs: While all-pervading space and Brahman are similar, the former's *upādhi*, the pot, is empirical, whereas Brahman's *upādhis* must be merely apparent.

- The Māyāvādīs compare this world to a dream to show its illusory nature, that it does not really exist. But it is unjustifiable to equate the dream world (apparent reality) with the external world (empirical reality) to reach this conclusion. Dreams are private. No one can enter into and participate in another's dream. The empirical world, on the other hand, is a shared reality.
- A crime committed in a dream is not punishable in the waking state grade of empirical reality. The analogy of a dream, therefore, is not adequate for explaining the appearance of the material world from Brahman. The Vedic scriptures present the dream analogy only to illustrate the temporary nature of this world, and thus inspire a sense of detachment from phenomenality in those desiring to walk the path of transcendence.