

# Lesson 12: The absurdity of the *Māyāvāda* theory of illusion (40-43)

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# Text 40: Some serious contradictions in Māyāvāda philosophy

- Jīva goes into more details about the absurdities of Māyāvāda theories of division (*pariccheda-vāda*) or reflection (*pratibimbavāda*) to explain the origin of the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara* in the empirical world ⇒ Fallacies of both the notions and their “supporting” analogies as well as misinterpreted conclusions of *śruti-śāstra*
- He argues that even if we accept either or both their theories as a description of how Brahman becomes divided into many *Jīvas* & *Īśvara*, still the inconsistencies between Brahman’s transcendence and the superimposition of *avidyā-upādhi* will remain unresolved.

- 1) How can Brahman, which is indivisible pure consciousness, have portions that fall under Māyā, and think of themselves as the *Jīvas*?
- 2) How can knowledge & delusion share the same location? How can light and darkness coexist in one place?
- 3) Two alternatives:
  - A. The indivisible Brahman cannot be fragmented to manifest the *Jīvas*. Moreover, ontological existence (*vidyā*) cannot include Māyā (*avidyā*)
    - For coexistence of Māyā & Brahman, each other's attributes of *avidyā-upādhi* & *vidyā*, respectively would have to be inter-exchanged.
    - This is impossible, because Brahman is w/out attributes and cannot change.
  - B. Amounts to dualism because then Māyā and Brahman would have equal status on the plane of ontological reality  $\Rightarrow$  Contradicts the basic principles of monism

- Possible defense of Māyāvāda with the claim that the issue at hand is not how the *Jīva* came under Māyā, but simply that he is now suffering in illusion
  - How the fire of house of material existence originated is of much less important than how to extinguish it quickly before it burns it down (opportunity of human life) to ashes is of much greater priority
- However, they cannot convince that impersonal liberation is our best interest
  - Our house may be on fire, but it does not follow that we should panic and jump out the nearest window to our certain death

#### 4) Jīva points out of some of the self-contradictory statements of Māyāvāda

- Brahman (*vidyā*) comes under the influence of *avidyā* ⇒ the *Jīva* ⇒ creates Māyā by his imagination ⇒ A portion of Brahman next gives shelter to Māyā's *vidyā* potency ⇒ the *Īśvara*, the Supreme Lord ⇒ Māyā follows the *Īśvara*'s dictate and controls the *Jīva*, who is Brahman covered by Māyā ⇒ So the *Īśvara* is the basis of Māyā, and the *Jīva* is her *viṣaya*, or object of action
- This explanation is full of logical fault called *anyony-āśraya-doṣa*, or the defect of mutual dependence
  - Māyā's existence supposedly originates from the *Jīva*, and the *Jīva*'s existence also originates from Māyā
  - A part of Brahman ⇒ the *Īśvara* by contact with Māyā, but then Māyā becomes subordinate to this *Īśvara*

5) Māyā has two features  $\Rightarrow$  *vidyā* & *avidyā*

- The *upādhi* delimiting Brahman as *Īśvara* is supposedly Māyā's *vidyā* portion = *sattva-guṇa* (illumination)
- The *upādhi* limiting Brahman as the *Jīva* = Māyā's *avidyā* portion
- $\therefore$  *Īśvara* is the basis of the *Jīva*'s illusion despite His being the embodiment of perfect knowledge
- Māyāvādis cannot explain how Māyā's division into *vidyā* & *avidyā* comes into existence
  - Brahman, being devoid of attributes, cannot create this division

6) If originally only featureless Brahman and nothing else exists, where does *avidyā* come from? Or, if *avidyā* can bind Brahman, isn't it more powerful than Brahman?

- Māyāvāda analogy: Brahman compared to a spider that weaves its own web and somehow gets bound by it.
- The problem with this analogy: Brahman as possessing attributes and potencies, revealing a tacit acceptance of the Vaiṣṇava dualism

7) More inconsistencies

- i. Being unlimited and devoid of parts, Brahman cannot possibly cast a reflection
- ii. Brahman = pure awareness, but awareness of what? When there is an object, absolute oneness is negated

# Text 41: Vyāsa's realizations contradict Mayavāda

- What was revealed to Vyāsa in his super-cognitive *samādhi* was not an undifferentiated Brahman being overpowered by Māyā and turning into many *Jīvas*.
- Rather, he saw that the *Jīva* is distinct from *Īśvara*, and is captivated by Māyā because of misidentifying the self as independent of the Lord. He also saw that the solution to the *Jīva*'s predicament is devotional service unto the Lord, not imagining a state of oneness with Him.

- Sūta’s prayers to Śuka confirm that identity in unqualified Brahman involves a state of lesser ontological completion—a partial realization of the Supreme
- Later speaking to the sages, he specifically mentions that originally Śuka was firmly fixed in the bliss of Brahman. Later, when he heard selected verses from SB describing the divine pastime and attributes of Kṛṣṇa, his heart was irresistibly drawn out of this Brahman fixation and captivated by Bhagavān, the complete realization of the Absolute Truth ⇒ thoroughly studied SB ⇒ excelled at narrating SB
  - The divine play and attributes of Bhagavān are both real and completely transcendental (beyond even Brahman)
  - Conclusion: The keys to the doctrine of radical monism—*pariccheda-vāda* & *pratibimba-vāda*—are supported neither by logic nor by the scriptures (SB)

# Text 42: The correct understanding of scriptural reference to division and reflection

- Purpose of the monistic statements found in the Vedic scriptures
  - May superficially support monism, but Jīva explains how to correctly understand the apparently monistic statements in the Vedas.
- In Sanskrit, words have two kinds of meaning—primary, called *mukhyā-vṛtti*, and secondary, called *gauṇī-vṛtti*
  - Each word has some particular potency, which creates a specific relationship between the word and its meaning.
  - Whenever the primary meaning of a scriptural statement is inappropriate, there must be a secondary meaning intended.

- Vedic texts that appear to support the radical monistic view should not be abandoned just because their primary meaning contradicts the conclusions of Vyāsa's trance.
- Rather, we should interpret these statements in a way consistent with the underlying purport of the Vedas. Accepting them literally would lead to confusion and contradiction, while rejecting them outright may lead to contempt for *apaureṣaya-śabda*. Accordingly to Jīva, one must explore secondary meanings that agree with Vyāsa's experience.
- In support of this, Jīva cites *Vedānta-sūtra*
  - *Vedānta-sutra* ⇒ 4 chapters ⇒ each having 4 sections ⇒ topics statements from the Upaniṣads ⇒ a doubt concerning that statement + an opponent's position (*pūrva-pakṣa*) + right conclusion (*siddhānta*) + a demonstration of how the statement relates to the preceding and the succeeding statement (*saṅgati*)

- The intent of referring to the *Jīva* as a reflection of *Īśvara* is not to show that *Īśvara* = *Jīva* by reflection, but to show that *Īśvara* is distinct from the *Jīva*, just as any real object is different from its reflection (*Vedānta-sūtra*)
  - The metaphor of the sun and its reflection in water is used to establish not the oneness of *Īśvara* & *Jīva*, but just the opposite.
- This very analogy proves that *Īśvara* reflects in *avidyā* and appears to become the *Jīva*  $\Rightarrow$  Where is the fault in this interpretation?
  - The very next *Vedānta-sutra* answers this doubt.
  - There is no “suchness” of Brahman that could make possible its reflection.
  - This means that it is contrary to Brahman’s very nature to be capable of reflection. Furthermore, even if Brahman could be reflected, its reflecting medium would have to be remote from it, just as water is remote from the sun  $\therefore$  the *Jīva* cannot be a reflection of Brahman, which is all-pervading

- Although this *sutra* is valid, it does not support those scriptural statements that seem to indicate that the *Jīva* is but a reflection of Brahman  $\Rightarrow \therefore$  *Jīva* calls this *sutra* as *pūrva-pakṣa*, an opponent's statement. But if Brahman does not reflect as the *Jīva*, the way the sun reflects on water, what do the Vedic statements actually mean?
- They must have some reasonable purpose  $\therefore$  the *siddhānta*, or the conclusion
  - Although the sun/water analogy is incompatible with Brahman/*Jīva*, it is valid in regard to the secondary meaning of the analogy: The sun is comparable to Brahman, because they both share the quality of immensity, whereas the sun's reflection is comparable to the *Jīva* because of the shared quality of minuteness. Why is it necessary for this secondary meaning? To uphold the Vedic conclusion!

- Other valid meanings of this analogy
  - i. The *Jīva*'s pain and pleasure do not affect Brahman, just as disturbances in a reflection of the sun do not affect the sun itself.
  - ii. As a reflection of the sun is dependent on the sun, so the *Jīvas* are dependent on Brahman
  - iii. The *Jīvas* are localized like the suns' reflections, while Brahman extends everywhere, just as the sun pervades space through its heat and light.
- In text 43, *Jīva* explains the nondifference of *Jīva* & *Īśvara* from the Vaiṣṇava viewpoint, or theistic nonduality

# Text 43: Reconciliation by recognizing the sameness and difference of the *Jīvas* & *Īśvara*

- Both *Jīva* & *Īśvara* are inherently of the nature of consciousness
- This statement as the reference point to understand the Absolute Truth, who is otherwise beyond our experience
- The Vedas give various analogies and metaphors to illustrate that the Lord is conscious like us ∴ the *Jīva* sometimes depicted as non-different from the *Īśvara*
  - “He was a tiger in battle” ⇒ man ≠ tiger. Rather, a secondary meaning and understand that in battle the man was as ferocious as a tiger
- The philosophy of *acintya-bheda-abheda*, or the inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference of the *Jīva* & *Īśvara*

## ■ Energy and energetic

- Energy cannot exist w/out its energetic source  $\Rightarrow$  identical one sense
- Energy is different from its energetic source, because energy is dependent on the energetic and because its actions are perceived to be separate from the energetic
- The *Jīvas* are like atomic particles of light in relation to the *Īśvara* = the sun
- They possess in minute quantity such fiery qualities as heat and light, they can be said to be “one with” the fire as well.
- In the same way, the *Jīvas* can be said to be simultaneously different from and one with the *Īśvara*
- Analogy: Two *brāhmaṇa* boys, one with fair complexion and the other being of dark complexion

- Oneness of Brahman and the *Jīvas*, employing the analogies of reflection and delimitation
  - i. The *Jīva*, like Brahman, is by nature purely conscious
  - ii. The *Jīva*, like Brahman, is distinct from phenomena
  - iii. The *Jīva* is one of Brahman's energies
  - iv. The *Jīva* is eternally dependent on Brahman
  - v. The *Jīva* can never be absolutely one with Brahman
  - vi. The *Jīva* is constitutionally an eternal servitor of Brahman
  - vii. The analogies of reflection and delimitation help us understand the purely spiritual nature of Brahman.