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Advaita view of the world

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Abstract

Advaita Vedanta argued that the world is only relatively real. Previously this was considered a play-off words by other philosophers or sometimes it was too difficult to understand. But in the modern age, it can be better understood the meaning of the word that the 'world is only relatively real' through quantum physics and the theory of relativity. Science can explain better only first step of Advaita Vedanta, but the next three steps are something which science has failed to explain yet. Advaitins do not speak any material world as distinct from supreme self. Brahman is support of the universe which merely appears upon it. A candle burns from wax and discards into smoke and heat. The candle has changed its form only and disappears in the air. Advaitins argue that Brahman is the only reality and there is nothing else what is real in the true sense.

Key words: Vivarta, Brahman, maya, swagata bheda, swajatiya bheda, vijatiya-bheda

Introduction

The basic concept of Advaita is that the world is nothing but an illusory imposition on Brahman. As per Advaitins the test of reality lies in persistence for all time. Since Brahman is like a God, Advaitins believe that Brahman is pure being, consciousness and pure blessing is the only reality. They also believe that the world is not real at all, Brahman is only the support or substratum of the universe which merely appears upon it. Advaitins argue that the material world is distinct from the supreme self. To them, the world does not have any real existence rather it is merely an appearance, vivarta, Brahman holds the same concept as no real transformation has occurred in the world.

Advaitins believe that Brahman is unchangeable but appears as the world because of avidya. To them avidya is not real since they deny the existence of the world by knowledge. It is not even unreal like the horn of a hare or the flower in the sky, since it is apprehended so long as knowledge of Brahman is not acquired. At extreme Avidya is always false and hence acceptance of the concept of avidya is not opposed to the doctrine of monism.

Advaitins have explained avidya as external and positive which is negated by proper knowledge. This positive Avidya does not test to its reality. The term 'positive' is used merely to imply that Avidya is distinct from negation.

After attaining ultimate knowledge, Avidya is becoming Brahman. Thus an ending, avidya is not a separate negative reality, but is identical with Brahman. Therefore the assumption of Avidya does not create any controversy in the non-dualistic position of Advaita Vedanta. It is also observed that Advaitins draw upon the Mimamsaka view that negation is identical with its substratum.

Advocates of Advaita maintain the principle of anirvacaniya, claim that the world is indefinable. Though it disappears so it does not have existence. The appearance of the real world is often likened to the illusory perception of silver in a conch shell. When the knowledge regarding the conch shell is properly acquired, silver disappears. When Brahman is known, the world's appearance proves itself to be false. The term 'false' can be explained in different ways. In the present context, falsity does not mean the absence of something. It aims to assume that the world is impossible to explain in specific terms. The world of duality is more maya. Real being is the non-dual.

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The self imagines itself through maya. As per Upanisad, the self is the unchanging ground of the manifold world. The principle that the whole experience of the external world is apparent leads to question on the difference between the perception of a snake as a snake and that of a rope as a snake. The answer gives Advaitins, the former case the rope is phenomenal while in the latter it's illusory. Conceptually Advaita Vedanta has three order structure of reality such as ultimate, the phenomenal and the illusory.

The ultimate is unchanged existence of object and Brahman is the ultimate reality. Objects which do not exist by the true understanding of Brahman have empirical reality only. On the other hand, phenomenal reality is that what we experience through our understanding, whereas illusory, the object which are contradicted by knowledge, other than the knowledge of Brahman. In the above example snake apparent in rope is negated with the right knowledge of rope. Here illusory reality is the snake.

The real is non-dual on the basis of this concept Advaita argues a metaphysical structure. All difference can be broadly categorized in the three heads namely swagata bheda, swajatiya bheda and vijatiya bheda. The difference of leaves, flower and fruits from the tree is an example of the first. The difference between two trees is an example of the second and the difference between a tree and stone is the example of the third category. In short, difference has been seen within an entity is swagata-bheda, whereas difference in species falling under the same class and difference between two groups is vijatiya-bheda,

There is no place for duality in any conceivable form applicable to Brahman. Since Brahman is not conceived as a whole, having parts, internal difference is not possible.

Multiplicity of selves is not accepted in Advaitins. Brahman is the only reality and it is identical with self. The same self appears to be seen different because of its connection with different bodies.

Advaitins rejected the theory of multiplicity of selves because of the belief that the Brahman is the only reality and there is nothing else which is real in true sense. Precisely Brahman is absolutely indifferently. Identity of individual self with universal self is the core to Advaita Vedanta.

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