



Vedānta Philosophy: Metaphysics, Epistemology and Axiology

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Vedānta Philosophy

- It is a school of philosophy with in Hinduism.
- It is Āstika (Orthodox) type of school.
- Founder-Bādarāyaṇa.
- Source Book-Bādarāyaṇa's Vedānta Sūtra.
- Beginning time- 1500 BCE
- It is also called Uttara-Mīmāṃsā.
- The word Vedanta is a compound of Veda+Anta. Here Veda means Knowledge and Anta means end or conclusion.Vedānta arise out of the Upanisads and end of the Vedas as a whole.
- **Sub School of Vedānta:** There are three major branches of Vedānta Philosophy, these are- Advaita of Śaṅkaracharya, Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānujacharya, Dvāita of Mādhavācārya and many more.

Advaita

- Absence of Dualism.
- It was given by Adi Śaṅkara (700-750 CE).
- It believes in Non-dualism.
- All atman (Soul) are one and identical to Brahman, i.e. oneness of existence.
- Brahman alone is the ultimate reality.
- The phenomenal world is described an illusory appearance or māyā.
- Experienced through avidyā (ignorance).
- Followers seek Moksha by acquiring Vidyā (Knowledge).

Viśiṣṭādvaita

- Qualified absence of dualism.
- It was given by Rāmānujacharya (1017-1137 CE).
- God, Soul, Nature are all different but not separate.
- The world is not unreal but a part of God.
- Brahman possesses all the good qualities in a perfect degree.
- Believes in worship (Bhakti) of God.
- Worship is the way of Salvation.

Dvāita

- Its means Dualism.
- Pluralistic.
- It was given by Mādhavācārya (1238-1317 CE).
- Souls and Brahman are completely different entities.
- World and God both are real.
- God is supreme and is creator of the Universe.
- Devotion alone can attract to oneself the grace of God.

Sub-branches of Vedānta Philosophy

- a) **Dvaitadvaita:** It was given by Nimbārkācārya (1130-1200). This branch is based on duality and non-duality at the same time, or dualistic non-dualism. According to Nimbārkācārya, there are three categories of existence, namely Īsvara (God, Divine Being); Cit (Jīva, the individual soul); and acit (lifeless matter).
- b) **Śuddhādvaita:** It was given by Vallabhācārya (1479-1531CE). The philosophy of Vallabhācārya is Śuddhādvaita or pure monism, because he does not admit māyā like Śaṅkaracharya, and believes that the whole world of matter and souls is real and is only a subtle form of God. Vallabhācārya holds that Brahman can create the world without any connection with such a principle as Māyā. Hence the philosophy of Vallabhācārya is called pure monism.
- c) **Acintya bhedābheda:** It was given by Chaitnya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534). The theological tenet of Acintya bhedābheda tattva reconciles the mystery that God is simultaneously “one with and different from His creation”. However, at the same time, creation is never separated from God. He always exercises supreme control over his creation.

Metaphysics of Vedānta

- The Vedānta spoke of One Reality which is spoken of in various ways by the sages. The world is said to originate from this Reality, rest in it and return into it when dissolved. The reality of the many particular objects perceived in the universe is denied and their unity in the One Reality is asserted ever and again: All is God (sarvam khalu idam Brahma). The soul is God (ayam Ātmā, Brahma). There is no multiplicity here (neha nānāsti kīncana). This Soul or God is the Reality (satya). It is infinite consciousness (jñāna) and Bliss (ānanda).
- Śaṅkaracharya interprets the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtra to show that pure and unqualified monism is taught therein. God is the only Reality, not simply in the sense that there is nothing except God, but also in the sense that there is no multiplicity even within God. The denial of plurality, the unity of the soul and God, the assertion that when God is known, all is known, and similar views found in the Upaniṣads, in fact the general tone that pervades their teachings, cannot be explained consistently if we believe even in the existence of many realities within God. Creation of the many things by God (Brahman) or the Soul (Ātman) is, of course, related in some Upaniṣads. But in others, and even in the Vedas, creation is compared to magic or jugglery; God is spoken of as the Juggler who creates the world by the magical power called Māyā.

Epistemology of Vedānta

◦ The Vedānta Philosophy divided knowledge into two parts-

- a) **Parā vidya** (spiritual knowledge): The Veda, The Brahmana, The Aranayak and Metaphysics of Gita are Para vidya or spiritual knowledge.
- b) **Aparā vidya** (practical/worldly knowledge): The knowledge of different phases of this material world and human life is called Apara vidya or practical knowledge.

To gain both of these Knowledge Śaṅkaracharya has encouraged the method of – Śravaṇa(Listening), Manan (Thinking), Nidhidhyan (Practice). Apart from these, Shadhana Chatushtaya (four observation methods) is compulsory for attaining spiritual knowledge.

Axiology of Vedānta

- The Vedānta accepts the distinction made by the Kathopaniṣad between happiness (Preyas) and the highest good (Sreyas).
- The highest Good is the realization of the eternal universal self in man. Vidya leads to that realization.
- Atman can be realized by one who does practice self-control, desirelessness and concentration of mind.
- Karma(action) is not excluded from moral life.
- Prescribed action should be performed without any desire or motive.
- Karma purifies the mind; however it is only a preliminary step to self-knowledge

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Thank you