

Three Grades of Satta According to Sree Sankara

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In Indian philosophy of Advaita Vedanta is that branch of Vedanta that points 'non-duality' on the basis of reality and was familiarly and expounded by Sri Sankara. The term Advaita in Sanskrit, with a meaning "no" and dvaita meaning "two", which literally means "non-duality". Advaita Vedanta is the most influential Hindu Philosophy.. Hence Advaita literally translates "not two", which suggests that all is one, and all is the Brahman. Sri Sankara regarded as the profounder of Advaita Vedanta, which is one of the six orthodox philosophical systems of Indian Philosophy. While its followers find its main tenets already fully expressed in the Upanishads and systematized by the Brahma Sutras, and its historical beginning with the seventh century-CE thinker Gaudapada, author of the Mandukya karika , a commentary in verse form on the Mandukya Upanishad. The world is not an illusion(maya) according to Sankara. Maya is the mistaken tendency to regard appearance as reality. The unconscious tendency to perceive the world of appearances as the world of ultimate reality provides an illusory form of knowledge. So the term Maya signifies the illusory character of the finite world. He describes the concept of maya by the analogies of the rope and the snake, dreamer and the dream. The world possesses three grades of satta or levels of reality. The world is real i.e. Vyavaharika Satta, while Brahman is absolutely real i.e. Paramarthika Satta, the world is the product of Maya or Avidya. Maya is a mysterious undefinable power of Isvara which hides the real and manifests itself as the unreal. Maya is not real because it vanishes when you attain knowledge of the Eternal.

What is real? What is true? In order to do full justice to these questions, the Advaitist considers three levels of Reality. viz. (1)Paramarthika Satta (2) Vyavaharika Satta (3)Paramarthika Satta.

Firstly what is Reality? In philosophy Reality is the State of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined. Reality is often contrasted with What is imaginary? delusional only in the mind, dream, what is abstract, what is false? or What is fictional? The truth refers to What is real? family refers to what is not fictions are considered not real. Reality can be defined in a way that links it to world views or parts of them conceptual frame works. In this way Reality is the totality of all things structure (actual, and conceptual) events (part or present) and phenomena whether observable or not.

I. PARAMARTHIKA SATTA (ABSOLUTE REALITY)

This absolute level which is absolutely real and into which both other reality levels can be resolved. The experience can't be sublated by any other experience. At this highest level the one eternal alone is real which pervades all that can be experienced and which is its ultimate cause. This Paramarthika perspective can only be taken from the one who has recognized who he truly is namely one eternal self.

Here only Brahman exists with no reference to material existence or individual souls. At this stage, the individual soul has lost complete identity with the body mind and intellect, complex and completely merged into Brahman.

II. VYAVAHARIKA SATTA (EMPIRICAL REALITY)

This forms the highest level of relative reality, here the false notion of material creation, the body, mind and intellect complex and the conception of being an individual soul are portrayed as an actual reality due to the ignorance of perception. In summary this Vyavaharika constitutes the common world experience of world. It exists for our world of experience the phenomenal world that we handle every day when we awake.

III. PRATIBHASIKA SATTA (SUBJECTIVE REALITY)

This forms the lower level of relative reality based on imagination alone. It is the level in which appearance are actually false, like the illusion of a snake over a rope or a dream.

If in a dream, a white elephant carries us on its wings to a tropical paradise, we are quick to dismiss this as unreal. But who determines that it is not real? The one who has woken up. For the dreamer however, it is absolutely real. We call the form of reality Pratibhasika. Also when we mistake something for something else it is Pratibhasika because at the moment when the mistake takes place, we are convinced of the correctness of our impression Pratibhasika is a reality based on imagination alone.

How can we distinguish three levels of Reality, it is necessary to understand the notion of sublation (contradiction, cancellation).

In short sublation refers to a radical change in the value of mentally assigned content of consciousness because a new experience has contradicted her previously held beliefs about that content. It is a psychological process by one rectifies erroneous judgements in light of new experience and attaches belief to that new experience. Although the change in belief is radical it must be emphasized that intellectual and ethical reasons accompany the rejection replacement action. According to Sri Sankara the process of sublation serves as a criteria for distinguishing between the various levels and sub levels of Reality.

In these realities What is ultimately real the answer is that experience is ultimately real which can never be contradicted by other experience and that experience is none other than Brahman, the experience of complete transcendental identity. Brahman is an experience that is utterly indescribable and boundless for it exists beyond the limitations of mind, word and concept. To describe Brahman and refer to it with such expression Sat-cit-ananda meaning roughly infinite Existence, Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Bliss or things to the effect that "All is one" Others describe Brahman as a negative as neti-neti (not this not this) This is Brahman and this is real for the Advaitist. Sankara refer to the ultimate Reality is Paramarthika.

For the dream the other two levels of reality Pratibhasika and Vyavaharika mutually exclude one another in every respect. they cannot co-exist. The very moment, we recognize that the glittering something on the ground is not a diamond but only a piece of broken glass. We have overcome the delusion and will not so on falling prey to the idea that it could still be a diamond. Waking up from our dream, we being mature will not be tempted to reach for the additional room which was part of my house in the dream. As definitely as this, with enlightenment, the internal perspective shifts from Vyavaharika to Paramarthika.

But externally Vyavaharika reality continues to exist in long as the body goes on. The enlightened one does not disappear from the earth's surface with enlightenment. He has a body and mind, he goes on thinking, speaking and acting at the Vyavaharika level of reality, he sleeps goes to the shops, laughs, cries, reads catches a cold, travel from A to B etc. Looked at from the outside, on the face of it, there is no difference from one who take the Vyavaharika for the ultimate reality and knows nothing about Paramarthika reality. However, within himself both reality levels do not touch he perceives Vyavaharika by the mind, but this reality is irrevocably Paramarthika. Everything that presupposes duality or plurality belongs to Vyavaharika unless it is to be assigned to the world of imagination. Only the non dual is Paramarthika.

Spiritual and worldly matters are equally attributed to Vyavaharika status because every spiritual journey takes place at the Vyavaharika level. At the level the law of cause and effect applies. Everything we do to attain the truth even the struggle for knowledge that take place with Advaita Vedanta happens as the Vyavaharika level, just as does getting up in the morning, planting a tree or writing a doctoral thesis. So spiritual and worldly matters are equally attributed to Vyavaharika status.

These three levels of Reality is that it is impossible to establish causal relations among them. In fact it is the complete lack of causal relationship that defines them as distinct levels in the first place. However, from the level of Paramarthika, there can be no distinct levels at all, for levels as finite concepts exist only in the mind. hence, arrive at the conclusion that Advaitist philosophy itself exists only in the realm of Pratibhasika Satta (Appearance), which is always tainted by Maya, a product of ignorance and super imposition. Maya as a metaphysical power of Brahman that brings about the world of multiplicity (i.e., the level of Appearance). Like Brahman it is the Ultimate, transcendent and immanent. Epistemologically it is the power that veils and perverts Reality.

Sri Sankara stated emphatically "An object is perceived by an act of the subject. The object is one thing, and the subject another."

IV. CONCLUSION

Advaita Vedanta does not deny the existence of the world. For the Advaita the world does exist, for it is a content of experience and as such, it must exist. The world is neither Real or Unreal, it is Apparent. Only from the stand point of the transcendental absolute cause one justifiably refer to the world as illusion. Before that level has been experienced, however it is fool hardly to deny the existence of the world and once that level is reached all philosophies, empirical relation, conceptual system will be transcended.

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