



A Critical Study of Dvaita Philosophy

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Madhva maintains that the three entities, viz., God, Individual Souls and world are real and eternal. Among the three, God alone is the independent (Svatantra) Reality. This is the highest expression of Reality. The other two are dependent (paratantra) on God. Between world and souls, the former is of a lesser order of Reality. It is in this sense, the 'degrees' of Reality is presented in Madhva's philosophy.

Madhva has introduced the conception of the five-fold differences (Paricabheda) among the three eternal entities. These are: 1) Difference between God and Individual Souls, 2) Difference between God and Matter, 3) Difference between Soul and Matter, 4) Difference between Soul and Soul, 5) Difference between Matter and Matter.¹

As these differences are maintained and controlled by Brahman, these are real. Real knowledge lies in knowing these differences. Madhva is against Sankara's conception of Nirguna Brahman, The every character of attribute less (Nirvisesatva) itself is an adequate character of Brahman.

The sruti's declaration that Brahman is 'indefinable' means that it is impossible to get the whole knowledge of Brahman. By Nijaguna Brahman, Madhva means that He lacks the three qualities of prakriti, viz, satva, rajas and tamas. Nirgunatva does not mean that the Brahman is completely devoid of qualities. Madhva admits those Sruti's passages which present Brahman with divine qualities. It is at the level of individual souls, the knowledge and the knower, the action and the agent and the qualities and the substance are different. But at the Brahman level, activities like creation, sustenance and destruction are not different from Brahman. They are the Brahman Himself.² To Madhva, Brahman is the only efficient cause of the universe. Prakriti is the material cause. With His mere thought, Brahman creates the souls and the world. They are not the modifications of the Brahman as Ramanuja maintains. They are also not illusions superimposed on Brahman as Sankara thinks.

To Sankara, world is a mere appearance and illusory. To Ramanuja, the world is a modification of Brahman .. But to Madhva, the world is neither modification of Brahman nor an illusion super-imposed on Brahman.³ Madhva takes the example of the spider and its thread to show that the world is reality by and in itself. The world stands outside the Brahman just as the thread stands outside the spider.

In Madhva's philosophy, the Individual souls are finite centers of consciousness. Each jiva receives the light of Brahman. No two souls are similar. Madhva propounds both quantitative and qualitative pluralism. He introduces the ideas of svarupabheda and Taratamya in his qualitative pluralism of souls. According to svarupabheda they are intrinsic distinctions in the nature of souls. According to Taratamaya, there are gradations in the nature of souls, basing on different degrees of knowledge and bliss. Each soul enjoys Brahmananda depending upon its own capacity and capability. Even in the state of mokhsa this kind of gradation continues.

To Madhva, the individual souls are of three kinds, namely, Nitya, Mukta and Buddha. The souls which are eternally free are called Nitya. The souls which attain moksa by the grace of God are called Mukta. The souls which are in bandage are called Baddha. The Baddha souls are further divided into three kinds, namely, (i) Muktiyoya, (ii) Nitya samsari and (iii) Tamoyogya. Madhva, unlike Shankara and Ramanuja, established that the identity between the jiva and Brahman is false. The difference between two is eternal.



Madhva holds that the Individual soul is a real doer and enjoyer in both bondgae and moksha. His doership and enjoyership are always dependent on Brahman. When a jiva fails to know this relation it is said to be under bondage. Avidya, karma, prakrti etc., are only the secondary causes of jiva's bondage. It is the will of Brahman which is the primary cause of jiva's bondage. Madhva maintains that Avidya, karma, prakrti etc., which are unconscious and have a beginning are not capable of binding the jiva. It is Brahman, who is all capable of binding the jiva by means of avidya, karma and prakrti.

Sankara considers the bondage of jiva as illusory and show mokhsa as a state of not a 'becoming' but only a 'being'. But to Madhva, bondage and salvation are real events. It is on this concept Madhva's doctrine of moksa is built. In the state of moksa, jiva manifests Ananda that is similar to the unlimited Ananda of Brahman. Being at the mercy of the divine God, only under the direction of his Divine Will, Jiva's attain liberation. In the state of liberation, the liberated souls may be similar but never be identical as viewed by Sankara. Jiva has to resort to Bhakti and Jnana in order to attain moksa. As there is difference in the acquisition of Bhalkti and Jnana by the jives, there is bound to gradations in the attainment of moksa. Vadiraja in support of these observes : "Because we see difference in the Sadhana of gods, etc., therefore, we should also acknowledge difference in their results which means that the emancipated souls are lower and higher amongst themselves. If we do not accept gradation in moksa we would be guilty of allowing to some one what is not due to him and denying to the other what actually is due to him."⁴

Madhva accepts four types of mukti, namely Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya. To quote Madhva " ... through the increase in knowledge as a gradual development the jives who approximate the supteme being acquire Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya".⁵ Thus, the Sadhaka gradually raises from the lower level of liberation to the higher level of liberation. Vaikunta is the centre of the highest bliss for the mukta jives. From here no one returns.

Salokya is the lowest type of mukti. Here the soul reaches the place of the God called Vaikunta. Among these souls some have greater knowledge. These souls will be very nearer to God. Such condition in which the souls get closeness with God is termed as Samipya mukti. Later, some souls with the closeness with God may get God's form and appearance. In that state their enjoyment become same as that of the God. This state of salvation is known as Sarupya mukti. In the next stage, the soul which have got the form of the Lord actually unite with God. In this, the enjoyment and the bliss of the liberated jiva becomes similar to that of the God. This type of mukti is known as sayujya mukti.

According to Sankara, moksa means realization of the oneness of the supreme Brahman. There cannot be any individuality on the part of jiva. But in Madhva's philosophy, the unity in Sayujya mukti means the retention of individuality on the part of the jiva. Total identity is absent in moksa. "Because in Madhva system the jives are really different amongst themselves as well as from Isvara, it is incumbent on the authors of this school to defend the presence of difference even in the final state of liberation (mukti)".⁶

Madhvaites regard that the liberated souls experience bliss even without anybody. This is possible because the mukta jiva's form part of the body of paramatman. They also possess a body of pure consciousness. There may be the contention that the concept of body necessarily involves the idea of pain. Thus, in Madhva's philosophy a jiva with same kind of body necessarily carries pain with it. Jayatirtha condemns this kind of argument on the basis of the fact that all bodies are not essentially painful. ⁷ All liberated jives, without using any means (sadhana) enjoy all bhogas in the Vaikunta purely on the basis of their own samkalpas.

Madhva admits worship (upasana) in the state of moksa. The liberated souls at their own will do worship. This worship does not involve any desire for results unlike the souls under bondage. The motiveless worship is an unique contribution of Madhva's philosophy to the problem of liberation.

In different schools of Indian Philosophy, Jnana, karma and bhakti are recognized as the ultimate means of liberation. However, in Madhva's philosophy, the uniqueness lies in accepting only condition as means of moksa. This means is the Grace of God (Isvara-prasada). As bondage is real, it cannot be sublated by knowledge. Knowledge can remove ignorance which causes false appearance, but it cannot remove bondage which is a reality. To Madhva, it is the maya of Isvara that causes bondage. So, bondage of jiva must be removed only by Isvara. Knowledge is essential. But Madhva has not assigned such a position to Jnana as Sankara has done. Knowledge of Isvara as the supreme control is essential. Devotion to evoke the divine mercy is also not warranted. But the final redemption of the jiva is dependent upon



only the Grace of God (Isvara-prasada).

Depending upon the three types of devotees, the Grace of God is classified into three kinds. Isvara-prasada, that is acquired through karma gets to its sadhaka-svarga only. To this lowest type of devotees, moksa is not granted. Isvaraprasada that is acquired by hearing the real nature of God brings Janaloka (earth) to the devotees. Finally, Isvaraprasada, that is acquired through the knowledge of the true nature of God makes the jiva free from the bondage of transmigrating. Thus, the ultimate means to attain moksa is the supreme Grace of Isvara.

Though Madhva disagrees on the view that knowledge cannot be the ultimate means of salvation, he assigns to it an important place. This is evident through his writing of many commentaries. Knowledge has definitely an important position in the hierarchy of that means that brings moksa. Madhvaites like Jayatirtha made no secret of recognizing the importance of knowledge. He tests that salvation is only through the Grace of God. However, he also emphasized the Isvaraprasada will be granted only to such people who get correct knowledge about Isvara. All Madhvaites agree the need for the right knowledge about Isvara. All Madhvaites agree need for the right knowledge about God. This can be achieved through Sravana, manana and nidhidhyasana. Hearing of the greatness of Isvara should be by renouncing the desires for empirical objects. Thus, the greatness of Isvara (Mahatmya) and renunciation of the desires for empirical objects (Vairahya) help the aspirant to develop devotion towards the paramatman. This feeling of devotion is called Bhakti. Isvara pleased by the devotion and dedication of the Sadhaka, imparts him the right knowledge about Himself.

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5. Madhva's Commentary on the Sutra, (IV. 4. 19)
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