

# Self and reality: vedanta and mimamsa



The nature, phenomena and people are units of absolute, and beholding it, its main principles and ideas are main issue in Vedic learning. Mimamsa and Vedanta are two of six main Hindu philosophic schools that try to explain objective laws of the universe.

Knowledge is a world's foremost authority, the true information about the patterns, objects and matter in the reality. Nevertheless, understanding of the world could be distorted by clouded consciousness of the individual, and misleading appearances provoke an error of perception. For example, objects distorted in the broken mirror, are not broken, but miscomprehended. Overcoming of this misleading is the way for understanding reality at Mimamsa.

Vedanta as well as Mimamsa defines Vedas as the ultimate truth. Three schools of Vedanta explain the interaction of reality, the supreme principle and Self according to three conceptions: Advaita (nondualism), Vishistadvaita (qualified nondualism) and Dvaita (dualism) (Fowler, 2002).

Considering Brahman as the absolute, veridical reality, dualism is realized in the combination of Brahman and the world itself apart from Atman - the highest spiritual form of the Self. According to Upanishads, sacred texts of the Vedanta, Brahman and Atman are inseparable, as the awareness and detection of the own spiritual Self.

Nondualistic school claims that practical perception of the world is based on the ultimate reality, as it is accepted in Shankara. Nevertheless, Brahman beyond the perception, physical and mental comprehension of the world is deformed by the bias factor of appearances.

Shankara deflate dualistic approach to the nature of reality, presented by Samkhya. According to Samkhya, the world appeared after systematization of the elements existed in chaos. Consequently, the evolving Universe can not be formed by plain units interfered in occurrence. If the connection of atoms was inevitably inherent in their nature, the disunity of these atoms before the beginning of the world and after its destroying is impossible. However, as Vaisheshika insists on appearance and disappearance of the world Shankara can not accept this approach (Fowler, 2002).

As the world couldn't have appeared of nothing, then there were reasons for its creation. Relationship between the cause and effect reveals two main concepts. Analyzing these approaches to cause and effect relationship, Shankara can not accept any of them. Nyaya and Vaisheshika sources regard cause and effect as disengaged phenomena, as an effect supervene after the cause, while Shankhya and some of Mimamsa philosophers consider effect as the revealed essence of the cause. If the effect initially existed in cause, then either it is equal to the cause or proceeds from the internal to the external form.

Shankara denies the former and accept the latter approach, noting that if the effect existed in the nature of cause, than there is no evolution and no difference between these concepts. As a result, Shankhya admits that revealing of the cause should be understood as the appearance of the new form of matter, which existed previously. However, Shankara claims that the change of form can not lead to the change of the matter, unless the matter is changed itself. To cite an example, omelet initially was an egg, if they are equal, then there is no reason whether it is omelets or eggs, the process of

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its cooking is disregarded, but if it is understood as the new form of the egg, then the evolution between cause and effect is observed.

As the change of the matter is not an emergence from the irrelevant matter, change of the form can not lead to the change of the matter without its inner modification, Shankara states that changes can not exist in reality. However, change is evident according to life experience. That is why Shankara explains the nature of change as the perceptual misleading caused by limitation of human perception.

According to this conception, the illusiveness of such phenomenon as change could be compared with the state of dreaming, while ultimate reality Brahman is the awakening of the consciousness, on the analogy of states of dreaming and awakening of the human being. The connection between reality and perception was explained by Shankara as three levels of comprehension through three different viewpoints. The reality in the state of dreaming seems valid during its process and becomes illusory after awakening, therefore, state of awakening also seems real, until the contrast of ultimate reality reveals the real state of awakening by comprehension of Brahman.

Considering Brahman as the ultimate reality, Shankara explains perceptual error as a result of miscomprehension that can not be real. While Upanishads states that the world was constructed from Brahman, Shankara argue against this assumption, as illusion does not come from the ultimate reality, which is Brahman.

Nyaya theory of perceptual error claims that misapprehension of phenomena under certain circumstances was caused by its existence in the experience, therefore existed in reality in the certain place and time. However, Shankara denies, that existed in reality in past influence its validity under certain circumstances, as memory distorted the perception of reality, leading to its miscomprehension.

To clarify the interaction between existence and reality, Shankara presented level classification. Objects that can not logically exist are placed on the first level. The second level is formed by illusions that are understood as nonexistent. Illusions that are perceived as real constitute the third level of this classification, whereas the ultimate reality is regarded by Shankara as the fourth, supreme level of this classification. Therefore, the experience as the certain level of reality is also accepted by Shankara conception.

Nevertheless, Self as the concept is distant from the non-self concept, which is understood as an experienced reality.

The interconnection between ultimate reality and Self is possible if miscomprehension and illusion, as Self is eventually tend to Brahman.

Ramanuja regards Brahman as an organic unity, which cannot be disconnected with identities and differences, because of their complementarities. In the matter of fact, as ultimate reality is an organic body, and objects and selves are its elements, they are differences within the unity.

The main theory of Madhva based on the differences between Brahman, selves and matter, so if selves and matters are not initially Brahman, then

they cannot become Brahman consequently. Moreover, while materialistic nature of selves and matter contrast with supersubstantial nature of Brahman, the former will be dependant from the latter.

In conclusion, knowledge of the laws of nature, not distorted by factors affecting personal perception, considered as an ultimate reality in Mimamsa and Vedanta. Absolute reality can be conceived only through Atman (ultimate Self). The comprehension of Brahman is possible only by inner search for absolute and direct interaction with sources of pure consciousness through the practical experience. Harmony with the universe could be possible only by clarifying clouded consciousness.