

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
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**Lecture 34: Sankara's philosophy**

Welcome in lecture 34. In this week, I will be discussing the Sankara philosophy, and last class we have discussed the Upanishad, Vedas, and the basic features of Indian philosophy. Now, today we are going to discuss the pre-Sankara philosophy, which is a very important part. It is going to help you to understand the Sankara philosophy. Sankara philosophy in Indian system is again very important as well for this course, because its argument as I have been saying is a very fine argument. Therefore, it is also very important to know the philosophy before Shankaracharya. So, today we are going to talk about person name is Gaudapāda. It was in 600 A.D, and this Gaudapāda was a grand guru of Shankaracharya. So, Govinda was the guru of Shankaracharya and Gaudapāda was guru of the Govinda. This is how I said he was grand guru of Shankaracharya. So, today I will be discussing this Gaudapāda philosophy. So, his philosophy is important in the sense that he is the person who lays the foundation of Shankaracharya philosophy, Advait Vedanta. So, Advaita you need to understand, if you want to understand Advaitvāda philosophy, Gaudapāda philosophy will help you to understand and again it is also important to know that what was and what kind of philosophy was popular at that time of Shankaracharya or before Shankaracharya. Now, Gaudapāda developed his philosophy of pure monism or absolute idealism in his Mandukya Karika. So, Mandukya Upanishad, and then he wrote a commentary. Now, the question is what is this absolute idealism? And this is going to help the Sankaran idea of this world and or in broad sense, Sankara philosophy. In this course while discussing this western philosophy, we have talked about the world and then idea. So, for example, platonic idea of idea, Aristotelian idea of object and so on. Later on, we also have talked about Berkeley, we also have discussed in this class John Locke as an empiricist and so on. Now, let me just remind you that there is a question what we have discussed in this course so far is about the idea or the object. So, is that an idea is not real or it is not a product of experience or is it a product of experience. So, this is what we have been like discussing.

Now, let us bring this discussion in Indian system, especially in this Gaudapāda. Gaudapāda believed that the idea is what is in a real. Now, it is not in that real sense. I will explain you how Gaudapāda idealism is, but before that you need to understand this idealism and realism or empiricism. So, empiricism says that whatever we have an idea is real. Empiricism says that whatever an idea is a product of our experiences. So, there is an object called X, we experience that object, now we have an idea of that object. Idealism on the other side will say that no the object is not there. Since you have an idea, therefore there

is an object. For example, example of a dream. So, dream what you have an idea of object like football or your friends, now what you are doing, you are dreaming about a football and your friend or both of you, you and your friend are playing the same football. But in reality, that dream or object and dream is not real, it is unreal. Now, it is appearing as a real because you have idea. Let us take another example, in dark night you are walking or in a room there is a rope and that rope is appearing as a snake. Dark night in the sense that there is dim light or not enough light, but at least you can see things. Now, because of the not enough light the rope is appearing as a snake. But the question arises, why this snake and why this rope is appearing as snake? So, the idea of snake is where in you. So, you have idea of snake, therefore this object is appearing as a snake. So, a rope snake is a classic example in the Indian system. Now, if you suppose that you do not have any idea, you have not read, heard, and experienced snake. Now, it will be possible for a rope to appear as snake. So, answer is no. So, the idea is you have this idea, therefore there is an object. So, the existence of this object outside of your mind is not exist or let us say that it is not real. So, we are not in idealism, it says that idea is real, not the object. Now, we will try to understand how the Gaudapāda had talked about and has developed this idea, his philosophy as a pure monism.

Before that, let us understand the four stages of Atman according to Gaudapāda. He talked about there are four stages. First is a waking condition, when we are awake, we are discussing, we are walking. So, for us there is an object. Second is a dream state, when we are dreaming. So, dreaming whatever we have seen in real world, same thing we are that those objects are appearing in a dream. The third stage is a dreamless sleep. So, dreamless sleep is even there is no object or deep sleep, there is no object, only Atman. And the fourth stage is non-dual intuitive self, when you realize this real nature of soul, realizing this real nature of soul means there is no object. So, there is only one soul. So, there is no subject and object duality, that is why they are non-dual. Non-dual means the subject and object dualism. So, for example, I am saying this is me and this is an object. So, I am different from this object. So, I am talking about an object because I can perceive an object. So, when I am perceiving an object, it means I am different from an object, even from my body, like for body is my object. So, I am looking at my hand, now I am different from my hand. So, there is no subject and there is no object. But in this stage, there is no dual, there is no dualism, there is no subject-object dualism. So, in four stages, in first stage, there is a we see there is an object in the world. And in dream state, whatever we have seen, we have perceived, the same thing that is appearing in dream, so called dream state. Now, in deep sleep, neither external object nor dreamy object is appearing. Completely no object. So, there is no object in the deep sleep, only object. And fourth one is the subject-object dualism is valid. Now, Gaudapāda argued that Jiva is not an ontological reality, it has empirical reality. Now, the question is, what is this ontological reality and empirical reality? That is an important and we have discussed when we were discussing about the philosophy. However, let us again discuss this Gaudapāda idea of three degree of truth and

more or less, kind of reality we have, we will be able to see in many different Indian philosophy. Now, the first reality is called ontological reality, if you are going for the top. Or let us say the first one is the illusory knowledge. So, there are three kind of knowledge or three kinds of reality. So, first one is the illusion, let us say, rope appearing as a snake, and then any object, small object is appearing as a ghost, illusion. So, there is an X and X is appearing as a Y. So, there is a small tree and that plant and the next appearing as a ghost, illusory image. Now, you may argue if there is an illusion then why it is called truth. The reason is this, that suppose even an X is appearing as a Y, a rope is appearing as snake for a few seconds, even in that situation, you will be, you have to perform some set of action. You are not going to check that it is real or not real. So, it appeared as a real, then you are going to perform, bring a more light or going to call someone or going to call for help. Now, so that is what called illusory knowledge. Now, this kalpita Samvriti, this illusory knowledge is momentary and for a maybe few minutes and so on. The second type of reality is called empirical truth, Samvriti Satya. So, this empirical truth is what in day-to-day life, what we are discussing, we are talking about Gaudapāda philosophy, Shankaracharya philosophy, Vedic literature and so on. And in the class, we have target A plus in this course and we have done this, we will be doing this and so on. So, whatever we are doing in day-to-day life, that is an empirical truth, for us is an real. So, and accordingly, what we are doing, we are performing set of action. So, I supposed to discuss this class, so I have to prepare the material, I have to discuss in this class, right? So, again, I have again next class, I have to go through all the material before going to the class. So, the idea is, for me is everything is real. So, what I am doing, I am performing set of action accordingly. And third one is the ontological reality, ontological reality, ultimately is one truth or truth, something which is an ultimately real. Ultimately, you will find the Samvriti and this kalpita is both is not real. I mean, if one may argue it, but there are three kinds of reality, so far you just understanding this way. So, there is something is ultimately real. So, there is one reality in illusion, like when we are illusory, there is an object and it is appearing as an ideal. Second is empirical and third is final. Final is ultimately real, something which is beyond the change. Now, Gaudapāda arguing that, that jiva is not an ontological reality. It means ultimately, jiva is not real, but in empirically it is real. So, in day due to life, what we are talking about this world and this jiva, they are real. But if you ask me the ultimate level or ultimately, is that it is unreal. Now, it may like confuse, so let me again explain you. We are in even the Western philosophy, we have been like discussing about the genuine knowledge. Remember, we are discussing about how the Plato to Hume, thinking of or looking for or investigating for genuine knowledge. In Indian system, we also think of the ultimate reality, what is ultimately real. Everything is for example, is changing this world. Is there something which is beyond this change, let us say, for the platonic idea of this world, let us say. The same thing which we have argued when we were discussing about the Plato. In Indian philosophy, they argued that look, ultimately, something else is real, something is real, and everything, or let us say many

things, is not real. Now, what does it mean is real and unreal? For example, in illusory state. The state of illusion where we are an object appearing as a real object. So, we are performing set of action. One object, for example, I am very afraid of ghosts. So, I am like so afraid or that notion is called fear, that the moment I saw in Dark night in a small thing, always I am thinking of there is a ghost, there is a ghost. So, I am like, we can tell you the moment now. Suppose you do not believe in that, you are not going to, for you there is a small thing or other maybe some other object. Now, illusion. So, this is an illusory object when one object is appearing as something else. For me, even for the minute or for a second. It is an, for example, for a minute there is an object is appearing or for me is an appearing rope as a snake. I will be behaving accordingly. Later on, I realize that oh, this is not a snake it is rope. So, this kind of knowledge is not real. When I using this word real, real means ontological or Parmarth satya, because it is not changing, let us say. The empirical truth again, what we are doing day to day live thinking of our job, thinking of like, let us I will be discussing the center of philosophy or Vedic system to our students. So, we have the truth and that is what we are performing set of action. Now, the question arises that this world is ultimately real. Now, what does it mean here in ultimate real? It real means something which is beyond the change. So, suppose if you have an idea of ultimate reality, then it will be very easy to perform set of action or target the goal, isn't it? And that is the reason that all the philosophers, they are very much interested in explaining the ultimate reality, no? So, I will give you one example. For example, I have given an example of dream. So, one person is dreaming and like crying and then he was saying, oh, wake up, wake up, that is not truth, truth is something else. Now, why you are saying this person is not truth? So, basically your argument is, boss, what you are doing, you are in pain, you are crying because something which is not real, see the reality, wake up. Even suppose this person is now dream is over, but still this person has another strong impression or let us say the impact of that, their dream is still there, still he is like shivering. Now, you are convincing, that is something called not real. So, I will tell you, when my daughter first time saw a dream, bad dream, she started crying in early morning. So, what we did, he said wake up, wake up, it is not real, but again, she is very small or maybe it was the first time she was experiencing this. So, we took another hour to convince her that that was not real, that was dream, really something else. Question is, our all intention is to tell you that it is not real, what you are afraid of, reality is something else. Similarly, if you realize this or if you got an idea of this ontological reality, Parmarth-satya, then it will be easy to talk about or right set of actions, even take in terms of the ethics. Because you know, what is the goal is now. And that is the reason that in Indian philosophy, there are discussion about the type of reality. They also have the importance to talk about the ultimate reality, what is the ultimate reality. So, coming back, so this is how the Gaudapāda has argued for the three degrees of truth and argued that Jiva is not an ontological reality. So, Jiva is only empirically real. So, ontologically is not real. Now, Gaudapāda argued that Jiva slips under the influence of beginningless Maya and belief itself to be real. So, because of Maya, there

is a concept called Maya. And because of this Maya, Jiva believe that it is real, he is real. The Jiva is unreal and world is also false appearance. So, Gaudapāda argued that as we talking about the world, he said, look, the world is, the appearance of this world is not real. So, whatever is appearing, including Jiva, so it is unreal. Unreal means this is an appearance is false, it is mithya. He argued that Brahman or Atman, which is one and eternal, non-dual, Advaita, pure consciousness. So, Gaudapāda argued that Brahman is pure consciousness and this is the only reality. This is how, as I said that Gaudapāda lays the foundation of Advaita Vedanta. So, I will be discussing the similar kind of concept in Shankaracharya philosophy. And that is the reason I said discussing Gaudapāda is an important. Now, what the Gaudapāda is saying is about the world and the Jiva, both are unreal. And this appearance, this world is unreal. So, we are like discussing about the world, discussing about the object and an idea. Now, this person is, this philosopher is arguing that there is no object in the world. But at the same time, the appearance of Jiva also is not real. So, the object we see, perceive like in, as I said, in terms of like empirical reality, this object, what we are saying this kind of fan, this is a computer, projector and so on, is everything is unreal. Or their appearance is unreal. Gaudapāda mentioned that Brahman is ultimately real and has an ontological reality. So, the Brahman is only ontologically real and it cannot be grasped by intellectual and descriptive knowledge. There is a question that why we cannot understand this object through our intellectual and discriminant knowledge. Gaudapāda has an argument that the ultimate reality is what is the Brahman. And because of Maya, we started believing that I am real and there is object real. But in reality, there is no dualism. There is no subject object dualism. So, there is no subject, and there is no object. So, when we are going to talk about the knowledge of an object through intellectual or descriptive knowledge, then we are talking about the dualism, subject and object. But in a state where there is no subject or the object dualism. And therefore, this philosopher argued that we cannot understand, we cannot know, grasp this by intellectual and descriptive knowledge. So, Gaudapāda argues that empirical objects are the subjective creation of the mind and it does not apprehend an external object. So, for mind, it is not possible, not only the external object, even the illusory object. So, what the Gaudapāda argued that this object what we are for us is an appearance, even though let us say there is an appearance of this world. So, this appearance even is a subjective creation of our mind. So, what we have is this idea, and then there is no world for us. Take an example of dream. Here he is rejecting the idea of external world and this world, reality, existence of external object. What external object means, object which exists outside of your mind. So, Gaudapāda is arguing that that is not possible and the appearance of this object is marked. So, this is an empirical and this object is just a subjective creation of our mind. Again, he talked about the cognitions are objectless. So, we cannot establish a relation between the cognition and object. So, uncaused and illusory. So, now again he argued that there is a no cause-and-effect relation between this cognition and object. For example, mind and then the object. So, neither cognition is produced nor are objects

produced. Again, the Gaudapāda developed his philosophy saying that there is no difference between the object of waking perception and the dream cognition. So, what we have talked about the three, four stages where the waking perception or dream cognition, he is saying there is no difference between these two. And he argued that maya is a cause of this appearance. So, because of maya, this world is the appearing, the subject is appearing where we are talking about this is me, this is an object, the subject object's duality in waking condition is appearing. So, the appearance of this subject object is effect of maya. Maya is cause. So, because of the ignorance, because of the not right knowledge, we started believing that look this is what me and this is what my object, this is what external object. So, this when we are talking about this in this world, Gaudapāda argues this is cause of this world, this is maya. Because of maya, this is the appearance of this world. He argued the mind and the object of cognition are dependent on each other and it shows their essencelessness. So, without mind there is no object and without object there is no object of cognition. So, this mind and object of cognitions are dependent on each other and both are under. Again, he argued that they cannot be related to its effect and cause relation. So, as I said that mind and object cannot like argue that this mind is in a cause of this object, object is a cause of this mind. So, there is no related to this cause and effect relation. The Gaudapāda argues that all dharma mysteriously appears in atman and it is an inexplicable appearance. As we have discussed the Brahman is an absolute devoid of distinction and he argued that the knowledge of difference is in it is the samsara. So, when we are talking about the idea of samsara it is in the knowledge of difference. In reality there is no difference. So, when we are in the situation, situation in the sense that because of maya we are in this samsara. Now, Gaudapāda is now started talking about the creation, understand about the creation of sat and asat, an existent and non-existent. He argues that if something is existent, I mean something is like for example, for example, is, is sat then we cannot say that this is there is a cause of this X, S. Again, if this is not sat, asat, a non-existent then again, we cannot talk about the any cause of this that something has produced this non-origination. And then Gaudapāda talks about the Ajātivāda, the theory of no-origination. So, negatively it means that the world being only an appearance and is in fact never created. Positively it means that the absolute being self-existence is never created. Now, what does it mean? It means that we are going to talk about the creation, whether this world is created or not created. Can we talk about the creation of this world? Now, so far what we have discussed that world is not real. And then if this world is not real, the jiva is not real, then how it is possible that we can argue that God has created this world, though the Brahman, the God is real. So, the God who is existent, sat, who has ontological reality, how this thing can produce something which is not real, nonexistent. So, if you remember we have talked about the cause and effect, and argued that can we talk about the pre-existence of effect and cause? If you say, no, this effect is different from cause, effect is different, cause is different, then what does it mean? This cause cannot create this effect. And if you are going to accept this, then what does it mean? Even sand can produce oil,

anything can produce anything. And if you are saying this effect is similar or same or identical, then again there is not creation. If you bring this idea which we discussed here, what you are saying, effect is different from its cause. If you are going to accept this that cause is different or effect is different from cause, then this is not the right theory. Then we have to accept that anything can produce anything. Gaudapāda is talking about this creation where the God has created this world and the world is what is not real. Therefore, we cannot talk about that God has created this world. So, what he did, he has examined the various theory of creation and reject them all. So, in that look, this is the theory of creation is not possible. And that is what we call Ajātivāda, the doctrine of no origination. Gaudapāda argued that the pure consciousness is only reality. So, there is an own consciousness and because of Maya, there is an appearance of this subject and object duality, there is an appearance of this world. It does not mean that this pure consciousness is creating this world. He argued that those who see the creation of an individual self or of the external object see the footprints of bird in the sky. He says that just a moving fire band appears as a state or curved. Similarly, consciousness, when it moves, appears as a subject object duality. So God is eternal and fulfilled so he cannot have any desire. For example, there is an argument that God created this world because he wants something. Now want something is maybe a pleasure. So he created this world for his own pleasure. Gaudapāda is arguing that it is not possible because the God is completely fulfilled, is perfect being and therefore he cannot have any desire. Having some desire means that it is lacking. And if you are going to accept this, then God as a perfect being, we cannot argue for that. We cannot be able to argue for that, okay, God is a perfect being. So logically, if you are going to accept that if the God created this world for his own pleasure, then this argument is going to reject the argument that God is a perfect being. Gaudapāda saying that creation is not possible, the Ajātivāda and says that God is eternally fulfilled so he cannot have any desire. Now the cosmic consciousness produces all jiva or individual soul. Now he argues that Brahman is unconditioned para and unconditioned apara. So, God imagines the variety of cognitions and variety of the objects and therefore there is a world. And these objects are product of avidya of an individual soul. So, when an individual soul is in an avidya, step into avidya, maya, so therefore there is a world, the subject of the object duality. So, this is how Gaudapāda has argued about the world and the soul. So, in conclusion, Gaudapāda has talked about only Brahman as in a pure reality and he rejects the idea of jiva or reality of jiva as well the reality of external world. So, this was the Gaudapāda philosophy and this philosophy is going to help you to understand the Shankaracharya philosophy.

So thank you so much and this talk was based on this Jadunath Sinha books, Indian philosophy, and the Introduction of the Indian philosophy. Thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.