

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
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**Week- 08**  
**Lecture 35: Sankara's philosophy**

Welcome in lecture 35. In this week, we are discussing Sankara philosophy, last class we have talked about the pre-Sankara philosophy where we have seen the grand guru of Shankaracharya, a Gaudapāda philosophy because it was an important to know philosophy of Gaudapāda who was laid the foundation of the Advaita Vedant. Today, I will be discussing the idea of self in Shankaracharya's philosophy. Before that, I also would like to talk about little bit about the text in very basic level. So, it will not be difficult for you to understand. This word is very important. It is Prasthan Trayee. So Prasthan Trayee is three. Now there are three texts. The texts are Upanishads which already we have discussed, the number of Upanishads. So, putting here is Upanishads. One, second one is Bhagavad Gita. We also have discussed about the Bhagavad Gita and its philosophy in very basic level, and third text is Brahmasutra. Brahmasutra is an important text and all the texts are important. So Brahmasutra is important in the sense that I have not discussed about the Brahmasutra. Brahmsutra is a different text and it is by Badarayan. The Upanishads are as we have already discussed about the srūti prasthanana. Srūti is which is heard and it talks about the ultimate reality. So, there is an argument that about the ultimate reality, it is difficult to talk about ultimate reality through our means of our knowledge. It only means that we cannot know the ultimate reality through means of our knowledge. So, it only means that it is difficult to talk about the ultimate reality, and therefore, the argument is that scripture, the text, is going to talk about the ultimate reality or reveal the ultimate reality. Already, we have a discussion in detail about Upanishads and an ultimate reality. The next one is Bhagavad Gita is a Smriti Prasthanana. It is already we have discussed in the last week what is the difference between Srūti and Smriti. Brahmasutra is nyaya prasthanana is a logic, he has used a lot of logic in this text. Now, it is an important point is here is that no study of Vedanta is considered complete without close examination of this Prasthan-trayee. So, all the Vedanta school of philosophy, Vedantian school of philosophy is they are always considering these three texts and for them they are the source material of their philosophy. We will be discussing that. Before that let us understand what exactly is sutra. The moment, I said Brahmasutra then what does it mean this sutra. So and definition of sutra is going to give you many things. So just now we will discuss about the sutra in very basic level. So, it is written that the systematic it is written in short aphorisms called Sutra. The maximum of thought is compressed into this sutra in as few words as possible. So, they are putting what they are putting lot of thoughts and ideas and also, they are using as few words as possible. So, it is not a kind of like detailed explanation. It is a compressed and then using some few words they are expressing many things called sutras. Now these

are the rules I mean or let us say that these are the things which you can understand that what is sutra is. Sutra should be concise and it does not mean that should be ambiguous, give the essence of the argument on a topic but the same time deal with all aspects of the questions, be free from repetition and faultless. So, these are the things when you read this Sutra and then realize these are the things that are very essential for that to call a sutra. Now Sutra gives a rise of various kind of literary writing. Now, if you find that about the concise, it is in a very concise right. It is in a what compressed and they are also using as few words as possible and that is the reason that there is a rise of various kind of literary writing like Vyākya, Vritti, Karikas and Bhasyas and each of them being more and more elaborate than the previous one. So, the idea is there is a text is written and it is again you need to understand then there are another text and then another text and another text and so on. So there are a lot of different interpretations or explanation or more explanation is required and in order to do that the philosophers or thinkers they are giving their own interpretation of the same sutra and therefore we have a different school of thought even in the philosophy and this is what I have been saying that how this Indian system is in a very critical and this is the example where based on this one three text based on the prasthanatrayee, there are many thinker what they did they give a different interpretation and they found a different school of thought. So, it is all about an argument and this all the school of thought all the philosophers all the thinkers are very critical to each other and the same time even they are claiming the anything they are claiming with lot of argument or let us say the fine argument. Now this is, there is an argument that the Upanishad not contain any readymade consistent system of thought so Badarayan what he did that he systematizes the philosophy of Upanishads. So, he talked about the ultimate reality about the self, about the soul and the proper way I mean proper way means he is given a proper argument for that. Now the Brahmasutra it is a they are many thinkers and philosopher what they did they explained this text, and they as I said that they founded their own school of thought. So, there are the examples Shankaracharya is talked about Advaita or monism. Ramanuja's Vishistadvait of qualified monism. Nimbarkacharya's Vedaved or theory of difference and non-difference, Madhava's dualism, Vallabha's Suddhadvaita. So these are the just an example to show you it does not mean this is in a complete list but my intention here is to tell you that how we are Indian systems are very critical and very argumentative. So, they are presenting a very fine argument in their philosophy. So, these are the name Shankar if you add acharya will become Shankaracharya right. So, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Madhavacharya and Vallabhacharya. So, they are the examples the Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya and their philosophy is the part of this course. So, we will be discussing this monism and the qualified monism two things in this class right. Now there are many other thinker and philosophers who also have talked about this text and has founded their own philosophy which you will not be discussing however you are interested you can read that book where we get this Nimbarkacharya philosophy, Madhavacharya philosophy, Vallabhacharya philosophy and all of them are very important

and full of argument. Since this philosophy this course is on a very basic level so we may not be able to cover all but all of them all of the philosophers are very very important and their argument also will it is a very fine argument. Their argument also is very important and if you read any of the text you will realize or while reading their text you feel that they are the only this philosopher is only correct. For example, when you are reading the Shankara philosophy you will find the Shankara philosophy has given the right interpretation as and his philosophy is correct. When Ramanuja philosophy if you read it will have a similar feeling. So, the idea is my intention to tell you that their argument is so sharp that it is capable of convincing you and they have a proper argument of everything. So even they are arguing or rejecting or accepting other's philosophy they are presenting a very fine argument and that is the reason that I have been like arguing that Indian philosophy is full of argument and they consider only argument for them argument is everything. So let us start this Shankara philosophy, Shankaracharya philosophy where we will be discussing this Advaita or Monism.

The timing of Shankaracharya was 788 to 820 AD. He wrote commentaries on the principal Upanishads and Brahmasutra and Bhagavad Gita. As I have discussed in the last slide that how they are part of the three text I mean prasthanatrayee. So Shankaracharya also has done commentary on this text and I talked about the Advaita philosophy. His philosophy I would like to summarize the sense that, his philosophy I would like to tell you in brief or there is a shloka and it says that Brahman alone is real. The universe is unreal and individual soul is no other than the universal soul. So, what basically is he is arguing Shankaracharya that only Brahman is real and everything is unreal. So, then ultimately an ontological reality which we were discussing in the last class or even in the Gaudapāda philosophy. The ontologically and real is for an ontological level this only Brahman is real and every other thing is unreal. This universe is unreal. So, Jagat, this world is what is unreal. Now if you ask me what is the soul in Shankaracharya. So soul is universal soul. So, this individual soul is a universal soul, the individual soul is a universal soul right. Universal soul or individual soul is identical it is the same right and therefore only Brahman is real nothing else. They say that and if you ask the nature of Brahman Shankaracharya talks about Brahman is Nirguna Brahman. Brahman which does not have any attributes. So for Sankaracharya only Nirguna Brahman is a reality. So ultimately if you ask an ultimate reality, he will argue for that Nirguna Brahman is only real and everything is unreal. Now I will be discussing today lecture, the idea of self in Shankaracharya philosophy and as I said that the individual soul and universal soul Shankaracharya argues that the Atman is supreme and universal self the same thing which we just I said and the Jiva which we are going to talk about self. Jiva is the Atman limited or individuated by the aggregate of the body, the sense organ, manas, Buddhi and ahaṁkara and this is what it makes Indian philosophy different from the Western philosophy. So we have a different way to see things. We have a different way to explain. I mean in the Indian philosophy they have in a philosopher have used a very different word for example manas, buddhi and ahaṁkara.

There are three different words and it is not depends on its use, used in the sense that how the philosopher has used this word in what we will be discussing this manas, buddhi and ahaṁkara. So, when we are saying this Jiva, Jiva is an Atman. Atman is again if you see this is a new universal soul as I said and then it is a limited by this body and this manas, buddhi and ahaṁkara. Now, Shankar argued about the two kinds of a body. One is a gross and one is subtle body. Now, the gross body, which is, in a sense organ everything, which is sometimes you are showing, oh look, this is Gyan, right? The gross body is produced by one past action out of the gross element formed by the union of the subtle element with each other and is the medium of experience for soul that is a its waking state in which it perceives gross objects. It only means that and let us understand the Jiva. So, Jiva is as a gross body and then subtle body and then soul. So, when I am saying like this is me so I have like gross body you can see my body and then I have a subtle body, Sukshma-sharira and soul. Let us say let us understand in this way. Now what Shankaracharya argued that this gross body is produced by the past action. It only means that depend on the action and impression of your action, you will get the body, the type of body and so on. So, remember we were discussing about the karma theory. Karma theory says that if there is an agent in action A or agent A, he has performed set of actions. Now the impression of this set of actions will produce a next life or produce a body next life let us say. So, you have this one set of action and according to this action, according to the impression of this action you will get a body in the next life. In Shankaracharya philosophy I would like to tell you that the inclination plays a very important role. As I while discussing the basic feature of the Indian philosophy we have discussed about the Vāsanā or the inclination, how this plays a very important role. So, when you have a set of inclination so to in accordingly you will get the next body. So, this is what Shankaracharya argued that the gross body is produced by one past action. So, your body what you have got it is a result of your past action. So past action is going to determine the next life body. I mean the past the kind of example the set of action which you are performing in this life and whatever we have done the life past life this set of actions if you have not exhausted you have not faced so this set of everything action is going to decide the body a type of body you are going to get in the next life right. So, the idea is depends on the impression of your action, you will get the body so, this is a gross body. Now again if you ask what exactly is the gross body then he has argued that the gross body is formed by the union of subtle elements. So, then he talked about the five elements which is and then the five elements and this when it is coming together is forming it in a gross body. So, the five element and mixture of let us say this the five element is this gross body. So, this is what Shankaracharya argued in his text. Now this gross body is in a medium of experience for the soul. This is the medium where we are experiencing things and again this gross body is perceiver through the gross body, we are also perceiving the gross objects the objects in world. So, in waking state when we are saying oh I can perceive X Y Z so on this is table this is chair and so on it is because of this gross body. So, I hope this I am clear and the sense that if you say that a jiva, jiva is let us

talk about the what is the gross body. So first you got this gross body because of your past action. Now if you ask that what is the cause of this gross body so one is past action and second this gross body is made of the five elements. Now why this gross body is important and what is gross body so this is an a medium of experience. So, whenever we are like in the state waking state, we are able to perceive a gross object.

Now let us understand what exactly how these five elements coming together and making this gross body. So, we are going to understand one by one. So now it is called in Shankaracharya philosophy, the Pañchīkaraṇa. Now each of the five elements is divided into two parts. One of the two halves is further divided into four parts then each gross element is formed by the union of one half of itself with one eight of each of the other four. So, this is how the Pañchīkaraṇa it is made and then these five elements is coming together or a union of the five elements is what is the gross body. Now five elements are ether, air, fire, water and earth. These five elements is in a accepted all almost all the Indian philosophy I mean they have some of them has talked about accepting or rejecting the ether one, in heterodox school of thought and even in while discussing the Pre-Socratic philosophy we also have talked about these elements. Now, Shankaracharya argued that this body is regarded as the abode of delusion 'I' and plays role in waking state. So when we are saying sometime that I am we are like identifying our self with the body right. So whenever I am saying that this is me this is and this is Gyan then it means that I am talking about my body and I say that look this is I. So sometime this is how Sankaracharya has talked about and however we will be discussing that how Shankaracharya has argued that identifying yourself with this body is not right knowledge. So, when I am saying this is Gyan and I am referring my body Shankaracharya will say that you are ignorant person. He is going to talk about the identity. So when I am saying Gyan this is me then he is going to answer this question who am I. So slowly we will understand how Shankaracharya has talked about different parts different level of things. Now the second one so first one is the gross body and second one is inner organ that is called antahakara is called as we were discussing in previous slide the manas, buddhi, ego or ahankara or citta. So according to their respective functions, manas from it considering the pros and cons of things, buddhi from its property of determining the truth of objects, ahankara from its identification with the bodies as one's own self, citta from its function of remembering things it is interested in. So, this is what Shankaracharya has talked about the according to their function they have named it manas, buddhi, ego or ahankara or like citta. So, this point is important where it gives you an idea of that what does it mean when we are using this word manas when using this buddhi ahankara or chit.

Now let us understand in a little bit about the Shankara philosophy of Jiva. So, you will have an idea about how Shankaracharya philosophy has talked about Jiva. This is, I have made prepared for you will give you an idea in very basic level. There is in the last class or when we are discussing about the Upanishads, the philosophy of Upanishads we also

have discussed the five sheaths of the mind, the five layers. So, this is in center this is Atman and in Shankaracharya, Atman is a universal self or let us say Brahman. So this is a nirgun brahman. The first layer is called Annamaya kośa. Annamaya Kosa is which is, annamaya kośa is an outer gross body. Second layer is called Prānmaya kośa. Prānmaya kośa is plays a very important role in the system. There is an argument that a pranamayakos is bind to get your subtle body and then a gross body. Third one is Manomaya kośa this is the mind. Mind is basically experiencer who is experiencing thing, and Vijñānmaya kośa this is an intellect buddhi where we are taking a decision. Finally, this is an Ānandmaya kośa, this is an blissful and what Sankaracharya argued that whenever we are satisfied with our desire sometime we are getting a little bit sense of this Ānandmaya kośa, but if and this and this is the final one is or let us say in center is there is an Atman. So, this is complete jiva. Now if you ask me about the gross body and subtle body. So, this is an gross and this is in a subtle body. We will be discussing this very in detail in the next class but just for any idea that how this body is working and sense that how we are perceiving in an object we are naming it how we are taking a decision Shankaracharya has explained well in detail. Then gross body for example when we are in waking state we are perceiving an object, so there is an object outside the mind saying this is X this is Y this is Z and so on but when your gross body is inactive then your mind Manomaya kośa, mind is whatever is perceived is that is there so dreaming so in dream whatever you have perceived now that is that is for you there in dream, when your gross body is inactive and even the subtle body is inactive, then there is a no object and Shankaracharya says look there is a no object in the world. Shankaracharya argues that the appearance of this world is unreal. He rejects the reality of the external world. So, understand this layer and we will be discussing this all this course as well in detail so you will have an idea that how it works and how it functions.

So, in conclusion Shankaracharya has talked about that how this gross body and the subtle body and if you identify yourself with the gross body and subtle body it is not right knowledge. However first we will understand that what is the gross body and subtle body how do we perceive an object how do we like how we are going to name an object those things we will understand first, then we will see that how Shankaracharya has argued that the appearance of this objects is unreal. So, thank you so much this talk was based on this text and again Indian philosophy and the Vivekachudamani of Shankaracharya and we will be discussing the small concept the kośa and about the jiva and will tell in the next class. So thank you so much for your kind attention thank you.