

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 39: Ramanuja's Philosophy

Namaskar to all. Today, I am going to discuss Ramanuja's philosophy. In last class, we have discussed Shankaracharya philosophy, where we have talked about the idea of Brahman and Atman and, how the Atman is not different from the Brahman. We also have talked about that how this appearance of this world is not right or unreal and Shankaracharya argued that the Brahman is only reality. So, ontologically only Brahman is real and that is why it is called Advaita Vedanta, Advaita, non-dualism. So, dvaita is dualism, it is two, Advaita is non-dualism. So, it is called Shankaracharya philosophy Advaita Vedanta. Vedanta philosophy because this is in all of them, he is talking about the following the Upanishads, talking about the Brahman and so this is called Vedanta, and in Vedanta the Shankaracharya philosophy is called Advaita Vedanta because he rejects the idea of dualism. He said that Brahman is only real and everything is mere appearance. Now, this appearance is ultimately unreal. So, this is how we have talked about Shankaracharya philosophy in the last week. Today, I am going to talk about next philosopher is Ramanuja. Again, he is Vedantian philosopher and he rejected the Sankaran argument about Advaita, and he talked about the Visistadvaita. Now, what is Visistadvaita we will be discussing in next class. Today we are going to discuss a theory of knowledge of Ramanuja. As I have been saying this is a basic course and so we will be discussing all the philosophers in a very basic level. So, I today will be discussing the theory of knowledge and why because starting with the theory of knowledge it will give you an idea that how Ramanuja rejecting the Sankarian idea of Brahman and Brahman is only reality and establish Visistadvaita. Now, in theory of knowledge is this, the theory of knowledge is because all the philosophers they are more concerned about *yatharth* knowledge, a real knowledge. So, if we can talk about the means of the real knowledge then it will be very clear that what kind of knowledge is valid and what kind of knowledge is not valid. In this course we have been discussing from the beginning that even in western philosophy philosophers were more interested in knowing the genuine knowledge. They wanted to know that what kind of knowledge is genuine and what kind of knowledge is not genuine. In Indian philosophy when we started, we also discussing that how these philosophers are talking about the valid knowledge, what kind of knowledge is valid and what kind of knowledge is not valid. Now if you are going to talk about the valid and invalid knowledge it always good to talk about the means of valid knowledge. So, means is valid, the knowledge is valid and the means is not valid, knowledge is not valid. However, Vedanta philosophers believe that the knowledge of the ultimate reality, ontological reality it is only

known by the scriptures. Only scriptures can reveal the ontological reality. We cannot understand, we cannot know this ontological reality through other means of knowledge. It depends, for example, Shankaracharya has talked about many different sources of valid knowledge. Ramanuja is going to talk about different sources of valid knowledge. Now, their numbers are not same. Ramanuja is a rejected some of the source of Shankaracharya arguing that they cannot be considered as a separate source of knowledge. We will be discussing today all these sources. However, my idea is to tell you that all these philosophers is one to talk about the true reality that the empirical reality which we have discussed in all the last class that first is an illusory reality, empirical reality and an ontological reality. So, the empirical reality, the knowledge we can talk about the source of knowledge. Ontological reality means is only scripture. So only through scripture we can understand, we can know about the ultimate reality. The reason is this scripture is not by a human. As even Ramanuja argued that this Ved and Upanishads is not by human. Therefore, there is no question of error. So, therefore, this knowledge is real and true and eternal. So, whole idea is the philosophy what the philosopher established, they also talk about the means of knowledge. Understanding their means of knowledge is very important. What sort of means of knowledge is they have talked about. Today class, I also will be discussing a very interesting concept theory of error. And I will try my best to discuss this theory in very basic level. So, it will be easy to understand. Now let us start.

Now the Ramanujacharya, discussed about mainly three kinds of knowledge. So, as we have been discussing this pramanas. Pramana is the means of valid knowledge. Knowledge is prama, and means of valid knowledge is pramana. So, what we do in Indian philosophy is how many pramana, like for example we are asking that how many means of the valid knowledge Ramanuja accepted. So, you may ask that how many pramanas is accepted by the Ramanujacharya. So, there are three from Ramanujacharya, the perception as we have been discussing that even I have discussed in the last class that perception is accepted as a valid source by all the Indian philosophers including the heterodox and orthodox. The perception is what again Ramanuja accepted as a valid source of knowledge. This is an immediate knowledge, and second one is inference and third one is testimony. So, there are three valid sources of knowledge for Ramanujacharya. So, today we will be discussing these three sources of knowledge and we will try to understand how Ramanuja has established his philosophy about three of knowledge and how he has given an argument against the Shankaracharya and argument of other means of knowledge, and this Ramanujacharya has presented a very critical argument, very fine argument. And this is what a reason is that I have been arguing that Indian philosophy system is very critical and presents a very fine argument. So, first one is the perception. Perception is a two kind according to Ramanujacharya. First, is indeterminate and second one is determinate. So, indeterminate is nirvikalp and determinate perception is called Savikalp. Now indeterminate perception is perception of the first individual of a class endowed with qualities and particular arrangements of parts. Determinate perception is the perception of

second individual and the like qualified by attributes and particular configuration which involves three collections. Now, let us understand what is an indeterminate and determinate perception. So, first example, the first time you saw an object, the apriori. Now, once you are going to perceive an object, what you will get certain arrangements of its parts and its qualities, and determinate perception when you are going to when you have information, you have idea of an object, now you are perceiving an object. So, you are also what you are doing, you are recollecting your previous perception. Now you are naming it, this is called table, this is mobile. For example, first time you saw object called table. Now, if this is the first time, so what you will see some parts has arranged in particular way and then quality of this object and the quality of this object. So, this is the indeterminate perception. Now determinate perception we have an idea of an object, we have seen this many times of the idea of an object, experience with this object. Now, once I am perceiving this object, this is an attribute, qualified attributes and this configuration. Again, it involves the recollection. We have since have seen this is called tables, we are saying this is a table. In first experience or indeterminate experience, you may not be able to say this is table or this is not table or this is X or this is P, naming it will be difficult. So, now determinate perception we have idea and then we are going to talk about oh this is table. Now there is an argument, some of the philosopher believes that Ramanuja is not talking about the apriori. Indeterminate does not mean the apriori. It means that the first few stances of the perception. However, in both cases, indeterminate perception when we are going to talk about it is the qualities and then arrangements of its parts. You may ask this question that what does it mean this arrangement of parts and all and that is a very important question in the Indian philosophy, and this is very interesting as well. I will be discussing these things when I will start in next week Buddhism, how they have talked about. So, just for you an idea, for example, there is a bicycle. Now if you see there is a bicycle, in a whole bicycle, there is a real bicycle. Now but the question arises, there are two questions. If this whole is real, all only parts are real. For example, if you dismantle this bicycle, so there are so many parts and if you arrange parts in particular way, you will get the bicycle. So, one group is arguing that this bicycle is just a mental conception and another group is saying this bicycle is not just mental conception because this is just an arrangement of parts and parts are real and other group is saying no the parts are unreal. This bicycle is real. There are so many, I mean this kind I can give an example. For example, any objects just as we were discussing the Western philosophy, some philosopher argued that in this world all the object is just an aggregation of the atoms because they believed, they argued that the atoms are only real and everything is just an aggregation of an atom. So, whole is just on a mental conception in Indian system and parts is real. So, when you are arranging in a parts in a particular way, you are getting this an object. Now so this is the idea. We will be discussing this idea in detail in next week when we start the Buddhism. However, for the Ramaraja when he talked about the indeterminate perception, so when you are perceiving this object, what are these objects? If you do not have any explanation of apriori, it is just a quality and

some parts or arrangement of some parts let us say. Now, we have no idea about this object or even you believe that Ramanujacharya argued that only first few stances are then indeterminate. In that case also, these parts are just an arrangement, particularly arranged and some qualities. But, when we are perceiving this an object with idea, this is called with recollection, it is called determinate perception. Now, then again there is one question that whether object reaches the sense organ or not. For example, when we are perceiving an object, so what happens? The objects coming to the sense organ or sense organ going to the object. I mean this is the Indian philosophy as in our discussion. I mean Ramanujacharya and Shankaracharya in very long back and then I talked about in well in detail about this perception or method of perception. Not only in another philosophy, even in Buddhism they have given a detailed explanation of this process. So, for example, when we are perceiving or looking at an object or perceiving an object, what happens? The sense organ is going to this object, or the object is coming to the sense organ. Ramanujacharya argued that in terms of like smell, in terms of like taste, in terms of like hearing, audio, this all these things this object is reaching to where, to the sense organ. So, suppose there is a sound there and then it reaches to your ear, so you can listen things, you can hear something. The smell again, fragrance is coming to your nose, you can like say oh something is there. But when you are using eyes, when you are looking at some object, they basically the sense organ, I mean not sense organ in the sense that this mind goes to the through sense organ, take its shape of an object and this is how now we have a consciousness of this object. Now, we have an idea of this object. This is how Ramanujacharya argued. Now, what about the memory and recognition? Suppose for example, there is a very old friend I met last year and after one year again I saw that person. I have realized oh this is the same person. He is my friend or for example you meet a person named Devdutta. It is very popular example in the Indian system where we, so Devdutta you saw a Devdutta in last year. Again, what you did in this year and today you saw again this person. You said oh this is the same Devdutta or he is Devdutta, recognition. Ramanuja is arguing that memory and recognition is the part of perception. It is not different from perception. So, this is what an example. The recognizing an old friend involves nothing but perception and memory. So, you have a memory because you have experience, you have met this person last year. Now, again you saw this person, you are recognizing this person or he is my friend or he is the same Devdutta I met last year. So, this recognition is perception and memory and therefore this is not different from perception. This is a part of perception.

Now there is a very interesting theory I would like to discuss here. As I said that how I will be discussing a very interesting concept or theory is called theory of error. I gave you an example at how recognizing. So, when you saw Devdutta, from memory you are saying this he is Devdatta, because you met the last year. Now there is a very different concept. For example, there is a dim light or in evening where there is no enough light, there is a rope. Now this rope because of dim light or because of another factor is appearing as snake.

So, this R is appearing as S. Now the question in Indian philosophy is what is this? I mean what is this in the sense that is this an error because this is not knowledge because when we are perceiving a rope, rope is appearing as a snake. So, a snake, this appearance of a snake is not right. It is not real. That is why we are saying it is an illusion even for a minute, even for a second or two seconds or five seconds or a minute, it is just an illusion. So, when we are like brought in a flight, we realize that oh this is a rope. So now the question arises, this is called theory of error. Now the question arises that the appearance of S, is there a real or is it an unreal? There is a rope and what we did, we saw a snake. What is this snake is? Because snake appeared there for me even for some time but it is real for me, I can perceive a snake. Later, I realize that it was illusion. The question is this snake is a real or is it not real? How you are going to explain that? It depends on the school to school. This is what we call theory of error. When we are perceiving R as an S. So, the knowledge of S is error. This is what we call in Indian system Khyativada. Now, all the Indian school of thought has explained this theory of error differently. Now, today we will give you some idea about the other school of thought, not all. While discussing at the philosopher, we will be discussing again this Khyativada. But it is important to tell you about the Khyativada because we have talked about the perception and we are discussing the perception. So, there are many errors and then we have their philosophers defining this error. This is an important for Ramanujacharya because Ramanuja believed that this world is real. Now, once you are saying this world is real or all the idea which you have, there is a corresponds to an object. So, in that case if there is any error for example dream, for example illusion, what is that? And why do we perceive at all this rope as a snake? And if we are perceiving that, then how this appearance of a snake is, I mean how appearance snake is, says that whether it is real or it is not real. So, the knowledge of snake is real, real knowledge or it is not real knowledge because we are perceiving and you believe that perception with the source of knowledge. Now we are perceiving a snake and this, after some time we realize this is an unreal but time of illusion for us, this is real. So, the different philosopher has explained this idea and has given a different name. Let us take an overview. So, for example the Sankhya philosophy, another philosopher, another philosophy and this is a part of this course and we will be discussing the Sankhya philosophy. The Sankhya philosophy advocates the theory of Sadasat-Khayati, Sat-Asat. So, in this illusory the perception that there is an R and there is a snake, R is appearing as S, R rope is appearing as snake. So, this is what we call illusion. Now, in this illusory perception, this is snake. When rope is mistaken for a snake, the cognition of this is real because there is an object. So, when I am saying this is X, this is real, this is snake. So, this means this object, this rope is real, is sat. The cognition of the snake is unreal because there is no snake. Therefore, what Sankhya philosophy says, this is called the union of sat and asat, Sadasat-Khayati. So, we will be discussing why the Sankhya philosophy is saying this is union of sat and sat when you start discussing the philosophy. I would like to mention here for you that if you understand their philosophy in the sense of error, you also will have a lot of idea about their other

philosophy, other concepts. So, when they are talking about the snake is real or snake is unreal, they are also based on their other concept, whether this world is real and this world is not real. So, the Khyativada is in that sense is very significant. It says that it will give you an idea about their philosophy or if you have their, if you know there, if you are aware of their basic philosophy, you will have an idea of their Khyativada, how they have or they can explain this phenomenon. So, let us take one more philosopher. Madhyamika is another school of Buddhism which is a part of this course. I will be discussing this Madhyamika and other school of Buddhism basic level next week as I said he argued, I mean the philosopher argued that it, this is called Asat-Khyativada, because an illusion apprehends a non-existent object. So, this S is the snake is non-existent object and the illusionary perception this is snake apprehends non-existent snake as identical with rope and this is wrong because this knowledge is not leads to any knowledge or an action. So, this is what called Asat-Khyati for Madhyamika. The Prabhakar, which we have discussed while discussing the school of Indian philosophy, he holds that an illusion consists of two cognitions, perception and recollection. So, illusionary perception, this is silver like for nacre, we are perceiving as nacre as silver and other example. This is silver consists of the perception of this which is real and the recollection of silver. So, you have an idea of for example if you take about nacre as in a silver or rope as a snake. Now you are perceiving this object first one is what this rope I mean for us there is a rope time of illusion so this but this object is appearing as S snake. So, there is a snake because you are recollecting you have an idea of S and then a recollection this is based on recollection. So, this consists of perception and recollection. So, we are first perceiving and then recollecting therefore there is a snake. So, this is since we are not able to discriminate of these two elements to each other therefore it is called Akhyati or Vivek-khyati, and this non-discrimination of these two elements leads to action and this theory is called Akhyati or Vivek-Khyati. Now, last class or last week which we have discussed this idea of Brahman and this world according to Shankaracharya as I said is called Advait Vedanta. So, Advait Vedanta holds that an illusion apprehends an undefinable object which is neither real nor unreal nor both and this theory is called Anirvacaniya-khyathi. So, this appearance is real if we cannot say this is real because you know after some time it is an eliminating, its illusion, and again it is we cannot say that is unreal because it is unreal then we cannot have like not perceiving the object, but again we cannot be both because the self-contradictory and therefore it is called Anirvacaniyakhyati, indefinable we cannot define this. Now, Shankaracharya as we have discussed like for example Brahman and this there is in a world this universe. So, this is appearance of this world is Anirvacaniya, because this is caused as we discussed caused by this avidya and we cannot put it in this real and unreal category. So, we are saying the Maya is Anirvacaniya. So, the philosophy also we can talk about based on this theory. Now, coming back to the Ramanujacharya hold that theory of Sat-khyati. He argues that some attributes of a snake are existent in the rope but we cannot call it a snake based on the few attributes. Therefore, the knowledge of a rope as snake is error, erroneous. Suppose

there is a rope, and we are perceiving as a snake or is appearing as a snake. It is called illusion. This is not right knowledge, this is an error. Now we are for us there is a snake and the rope is appearing a snake because Ramanuja believes that rope also holds some features some attributes of a snake and therefore what we do we perceive as a snake but since just because of this some attributes we cannot claim it we cannot say this is snake therefore the knowledge of a snake is not knowledge. Now, what he talked about the idea of theory of Pañchikaran, which also we have discussed in last class and it argues that how one element contains a portion of another element. So, for example there is an earth element. Earth element also contains an element of fire, air, water, ether and so on. So, this is the idea of Pañchikarana. So now every object every element has some portion of the other element. So, this is how there is a similarity, but a some of few attributes where it is there in the rope and therefore this object is appearing as snake and this is called Sat-kyaati. Ramanuja holds that all knowledge corresponds to a real object, because as I said Ramanuja believes and argued that this world is real. Shankaracharya will say that this world is not real the appearance is world is not real and ultimately what is an R. So, Brahman is real and this universe or this world is unreal or let us say it another way this only Brahman is real and everything is unreal. Ramanuja saying though, in the saying that no the world is real or all knowledge which corresponds to a real object. So, this is how a theory of error he even talked about that how this illusory the snake is even is in a real in the sense that it is somewhere, it is there. So Ramanuja holds that the world is not a mere appearance is in a real world. Now, again Ramanuja argued that perception is in a two-type sensuous and non-sensuous perception. Sensuous we see a like perceiving that was sense organ this is table, this is chair like we can hear or smell. So, these are the sensuous with using the sense organ. Non-sensuous perception is in a yogic intuition or supramundane intuition due to the grace of God. So, that is only possible with the grace of God.

Now, next the source of a valid source of knowledge is inference and Ramanujacharya argued that the inference is depends on the perceptual knowledge and observation of many instances of their coexistence. So, Vyapti, there is a smoke and then fire. So, we have seen this smoke fire relation many times. We have observed this smoke fire. Now the moment we saw smoke we are always saying oh this is fire I mean there is fire. This knowledge of fire is based on inference. Inference is based on the multiple observation of this same stance. So, we saw from here there is a smoke so we are saying there is a fire. So, saying that there is a fire or, a knowledge of the fire is what based on inference. The inferring based on this smoke and because we have observed this smoke fire multiple times. Again, as we have discussed in the last class according to Shankaracharya that come to Shankaracharya argue that comparison is the separate source of knowledge. He also counted it as a source of knowledge. Now, I gave an example that you saw a cow so you have an idea of cow and the first time you saw a wild cow. Now, you saw a wild cow and you are comparing this with the idea of cow so you are saying this is like cow. So, this is what how you compare is and because it is not possible through inference and the

perception. Ramanuja holds that comparison is not separate source of knowledge. It is included in perception inference and verbal testimony. Now why it is included in perception because we are perceiving an object wild cow so and based on the memory recollection, we are saying this is like wild cow or this is like cow. So, we saw a cow and then based on memory we are saying this is like cow. So, perceiving a wild cow comparing with the previous experience of cow that is based on the perception. Inference because we have seen this, we inferring the idea verbal because someone has said that is why he argued that it may be included in either perception inference and verbal testimony. Again, presumption is not again separate source of knowledge as it is the inference which is based on memory. As Shankaracharya holds that this presumption is the separate source of knowledge. For example, Devdatta is like fat and he is known for not eating in a day time. Therefore, arthapatti or presumption, we can know that he eats in night time. So, knowledge that knowledge of this eating is night time is it cannot be possible through perception and inference and comparison. So, Shankaracharya argued that only through presumption through Athapati we can know that he eats in night time. Ramanujacharya argued that this is not a separate knowledge. This is not separate source of knowledge. So, he said that it is based on inference. So, you have seen a person like who is eating and has this body. So, the moment he saw that the person with this kind of body is fat and he is saying that I do not eat in day time. So, you are inferring that he eats in night time and therefore the presumption is not a separate source of knowledge. Now third one is Sabda, that verbal testimony is a valid source of knowledge for Ramanujacharya. Again, he argued that it is two types. A testimony is in the secular and scripture. Secular testimony is knowledge produced by sentence uttered by a reliable person which you believe that this person is right. It is free from error. So, he is making a statement but this statement is free from error. So that is the reason that he used this word reliable person. You know that this person is right. So, whatever he is saying the sentence is that is a source of knowledge because that is an error free. There is no problem, there is no error in his statement and therefore this statement is the source of knowledge. Next one is the scriptural knowledge which is true and eternal for Ramanujacharya. Because this scriptural knowledge is not by a human being and therefore Ramanujacharya believed that all the scriptural knowledge is knowledge. It is true and it is eternal, and this is how he argued about the existence of God. So, whatever it is mentioned in a scripture is the right knowledge. As I have been discussing in this class that Indian philosopher believed that the ontological reality and ultimate reality it is not knowable through other means of knowledge and therefore it is only revealed by the scriptural knowledge. So, through scriptures only we can know the ultimate reality. So, Ramanuja has talked about all the Ved and upnishads, purans are true. I mean the knowledge is true. And this is how the Ramanujacharya has talked about sabda as a source of knowledge. In the last I would like to just now mention one concept of Ramanujacharya and it is an important, I will be discussing again in next class. The identity is a relation. So, Ramanujacharya argued that identity cannot be established without difference. So, for

example, there is a saying that the self is Brahman. So, Ramanujacharya is saying that identity that self is Brahman, it is only possible when there is a difference between S and B. If there is no difference, then identity will not be established. For example, the lotus is blue. So, the lotus and this blue is two different things. There is a difference between lotus and blue. This is inseparable but when we are establishing this identity it means that there is no difference between lotus and blue. He argues that every judgment is a formation of reality which is identity in and through differences. So, there is difference between L and B, S and B and then we will establish the relation. We establish the identity, what is it all about? We will be discussing and this is how the Ramanujacharya has given a very important concept in Indian system which we will be discussing in next class.

So, in conclusion Ramanujacharya has talked about the three sources of knowledge, the perception, the inference and verbal testimony. They are the important part. So, thank you so much for your kind attention. This talk was based on this Indian philosophy by Jadunath Sinha. Thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.