

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
**Prof. Gyan Prakash**  
**Department of Humanities & Social Sciences**  
**IIT (ISM), Dhanbad**  
**Week-09**  
**Lecture 40: Ramanuja's Philosophy**

Namaskar to all. This week I am discussing Ramanuja philosophy and last class we have discussed Ramanuja theory of knowledge where we have discussed that how Ramanuja has talked about the valid source of knowledge. Now, while discussing this valid source of knowledge, he also argued that about the ontological reality. So, knowledge of ontological reality is only possible by scripture because only scripture can tell us what is reality, what is ultimately real. There is no other means is capable of telling or we will be able to know the ontological reality through other means of knowledge. So, Ramanuja basically gives importance to scripture and argued that scripture is the only way to know the ultimate reality. So, what Ramanuja did that he has written many commentaries on many different texts. Now, what he did he talked about his concept. Now, today I will be discussing the concept of Brahman in the basic level. Ramanuja has presented very strong argument for the concept of Brahman. However, his idea of Brahman is different from Shankaracharya idea of Brahman. So, Ramanuja presented in a very strong argument for his idea of Brahman. Today before starting the concept of Brahman from Ramanuja perspective, I would like to talk about one small concept which we have been discussing but I would like to remind you the same concept. In the western philosophy when we were discussing about the world, the object and so on. So, there is an idea of essence. For example, there is an object called T, table or cow, it takes any object. Now how do we know this object? So, there is one argument that we have an idea and this table, this object is in a projection of that idea. For example, a dream. So, you have seen, you have experienced any object in this world and then now dreaming. In dream your mind is projecting that object. So, for you they are in a world, you are discussing with your friend. You projected one ball, you and your friend and both of you playing with the same ball, or you projected or dreaming about you and your friend and both have a philosophical argument. So, arguing for one concept. Now, this dream is because you have an idea of an object, it is called T. So, you have an object in the idea of this T and therefore there is a T in dream. So, this is simple to understand. Similarly, this one group argued that even this world is just like a dream. So, we have an idea and this is coming with this birth and this world is just a projection of this idea. So, this world is not more than your consciousness let us say. Now, there is another way of arguing that it is not the case, the idea versus the object. They are arguing that the table T and even we are talking about the idea T because we have experienced many objects or we have experienced tables many times. Since we have experienced this object many times, so what we did, we abstracted over this one and this idea is the abstraction of our experience. So, for example you experienced T table one time, two times, three times, four

times and then you realize that okay table is in all about this or now you have an idea of table or you experienced an object called tiger, you saw tiger or heard about tiger, its attributes and all and then you have the idea of tiger. So, whenever you are going to see a tiger, you can immediately say oh look this is tiger. Reason is, you have an idea of tiger. Reason is you have an idea of table. Now, this idea is a product of your experience. So, for example there is a fire and even like I am going to say like look I know there is some magic and because of this I am going to chant some mantra and then mantra will produce the fire. Let us say this is a fire. You are not going to accept this is my argument. Reason is for you this is not fire. Then, if I ask why this is not fire then you may say because, the idea which you have is not there. The essence of this object is missing. So, the essence is not there then object is not there. Fireness is not there therefore for you this object is not there. For example, water I said look this is water. I showed in physical that look this some given example look this is water or I asked you to check whether this is real water or not real water. What are you going to check? So you have an idea of water. What are the things water can do? What are things the water cannot do? Now similarly with the fire. So, you have an idea of fire, idea of fire is fireness. The essence of the fire. So, this is how what we do we see recognize object. So, we have an idea of table even you can show me any type of table or different shape, different color, different size I will be end up saying that oh look this is wonderful table or this is table. Now, I am saying so because I have an idea of table and this is how we do we perceive we recognize things. Now this is essence is for everything. So, essence is there then for us there is an object and this is how we understand. So, for example even you have an idea of a person. I know like for example I am Gyan Prakash, who is Gyan Prakash. Now, you are saying that I know Gyan Prakash it only means that you are aware of the attributes or essence. You believe that this is how this person is this person is all about and if it is matching with this person is called oh this is the same Devdutta. Like take an Indian example like which I gave in the last class. When I am saying this is same Devdutta, he is the same Devdutta it only means that who I met in last year that this person is same. Why saying, because things is matching. I can recognize this person. So, it is all about the essence. If essence is there for us there is an object. If essence is not there then there is this object is not real, we can say that this object is unreal. For example, there is a fire I saw oh look this is a fire. What you did that you checked. Put some piece of dry grass and then found that this fire so called fire is not able to burn. Then immediately you say no this is not even fire. Even the moment you came close to this object you realize that even there is no heat. You may say that oh this is not fire or this looks like fire but this is not fire. This looks like water but it is not water. Why? Because the essence of this water is not there. We have an idea of water. So, if the essence is there then we are saying that the object is there. This is what we are looking at. Even we talk about in terms of human, what human wants, what we want? So, some of the philosopher talks about no we need a pleasure or happiness. Happiness is the essence, dharma. Now happiness what kind of happiness that are ultimate happiness, and, this ultimate happiness will get from

the ultimate being that is God. So, all of us all towards the God. So, that is what achieving the liberation is the highest goal. This is one way to argue. Now, this essence is what my point is here. Essence is a very important thing. So, if essence is there for us there is an object. If the essence is not there, then object is not there. So, what we do we check even you ask me about to any object for example the fire, we are going to talk about the for example, essence. Whether this essence is there or essence is not there. If fireness is there then it is fire and if the fireness is absent then it is not fire. Even if it is appearing like fire it is appearing like water or table. If essence is even it cannot hold up a couple of books, then it is not table. So, this is a very general idea in the sense when we when we perceive an object, we understand how an object. Now, there is one very important question is, is this essence is a different from its object or can we say that oh look this is essence or this is a fire. Or you believe that essence itself is a fire. The fireness itself is a fire. My point is here to tell you the object and then essence. Whether the real object, I am not in the sense talking about if we may argue that the object is not more than its essence. There is one way of arguing the saying that this object is not more than consciousness. I mean in terms of the quality inside which we have discussed it. So, then we say that only even there is an object outside the mind it is just a quality and that is your consciousness. So, everything in this world is just appearance of your consciousness. So, only consciousness is reality. I am not going in that way or let us put at least this philosophy, this argument side. Let us talk about let us take it an object as in a real. So, there is an object which is real and now what we are doing we are experiencing and we are getting an idea of this object. I am not discussing here whether we are coming in this world with Tabula Rasa or those things we are not discussing here. We are coming this world in blank slate or not. What my point is is just like that the object and then essence. So, for us essence is important. So, if the question is, is essence is a different form of object or essence itself is an object. So, this is what difference, this is what a question about the difference about the identity. I hope you remember the last class in the last slide we were discussing about the identity in difference when we are talking that lotus is red or rose is blue or rose is red. Anything table is white any object for example you are saying this L is P. Now L is what is different two different thing. How about the same? These are inseparable but they are same but at least there is no difference between L and P. So, even if we are talking about essence there is difference between the essence and an object. However, it is inseparable but at least what there is a difference. There is identical but identity but this identity is difference. I hope it is not that difficult to understand. If you take it in this way any kind of an object, and it object has an essence. Now what they are saying that this essence is what is a different but is a same. So, for example I am saying that P is L. So, that is two different thing P and L. However, since the L is an attribute of P such as and again is inseparable but it does not mean that L is P. So, there is no difference between P and L. This is what we discussed in the last class and last lecture. There is another way of saying that oh no that P and L is same as I said that P is L is same. There is no difference. So, when I am saying that essence when you talk about

the essence and then this essence is itself is an object. So, both way we can understand. So, keep this theory in his mind and this theory basic question let us say basic question will help you to understand the Ramanuja philosophy. Ramanuja argued that Brahman is the supreme person in order with innumerable supreme and auspicious qualities, and devoid of all impure qualities. So, this is how Ramanuja argued different and his argument is different from the Shankaracharya argument. Shankaracharya argued about a Brahman which is real as an ontological reality that is a Nirgun. Nirgun means there is no attributes. There is no form. So, attributes less entity or attribute less being is a Nirgun Brahman. Ramanuja's the concept of God has a very different way he is explaining. He is saying that the Brahman is supreme person. He is God and that is Brahman is a perfect being. He does not have any impure qualities. So, he is the infinite reality by nature and then qualities he is determinate whole Savises. So, he is not indeterminate God. What Shankaracharya has argued that only indeterminate is a reality. Ultimately only indeterminate is Brahman is real and everything has an appearance and this appearance is unreal. This is what Shankaracharya argued. Ramanujacharya argued that Brahman is determinate and is ultimately real. If you put this in Shankaracharya which we have discussed in the last week where he said that there is a concept of determinate God and but he argued that the idea of soul and determinate God is God is ultimately unreal because for Shankaracharya only Nirgun Brahman is real. Ramanujacharya, he rejects the idea of the indeterminate God. He says that only God is the determinate God and this God is ultimately real. So, ontologically even the Brahman, savises Brahman is real. The background of this Ramanuja philosophy is the sutras Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads which when we were discussing about the Bhagavad Gita, we have discussed that how Bhagavad Gita has argued for the determinate God and argued that God is everything and God is ontologically real. So, ultimately God is real. Now, when we are saying that God is real, it also means that he is real means something which is beyond the change. It is not subject to change. So, when we are arguing that it is ultimately real, so real is not for a time being because he is real, he is beyond this time person and place and that is why we are saying it is ultimately real. It is an ontological reality. This is what we mean when we are saying that ultimately it is real. So, Ramanujacharya giving a reference to the sutra because he believed that and he argued that sutras is what main source of knowledge of the ontological reality. So, if we want to know about the ontological reality, sutra is the only means. So, what he did, he defined, he referred to the many different texts, Purana, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishad, and argued that all of the sutra is only talking about the Brahman with attributes. It is called Sagun Brahman or determinate God. He argued that Brahman is called attribute-less. It does not mean that there is an indeterminate God. So, when it is written that Brahman is an attribute-less, it only means that he is devoid of impure and bad qualities. So, whenever the text mention talks about what a Nirgun, Nirgun is only referred to the bad quality that he does not have any bad qualities. So, the idea of Brahman is a perfect being and this perfect being does not have any bad qualities and that is the meaning of Nirgun. So, when the text mention

about this word is Nirgun, it should only interpret in this way that the Brahman does not have any bad qualities, he has only good qualities. This is how Ramanuja has argued that many concepts of the Sankaran's philosophy and he believes that how the sutras and the text, the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishad has a given explanation and he interpret those explanation and argued for this concept. Now, Ramanuja is arguing about the Brahman which is a determinate God. Now, this determinate God is with attribute and ultimately real. Now, when Nirguna is there, I mean he is not saying that there is no word called Nirguna, but he also, he is just remains saying that if there is a word called Nirguna, it only means that there is a God whose attribute and it does not have and he does not have any impure and bad qualities. Again, Ramanuja argued that Brahman is a material and efficient cause of the world. So, this world is made of this Brahman and again, he is again the efficient cause of this world. So, he is doing, he is creating this world. Now, again Ramanuja argued that he is goal of life, as I have been like discussing that if you want to achieve the liberation or if you want to achieve the happiness, ultimate happiness, you have to go for the liberation. Liberation is the only solution of all the problems and again not the problem if you take it that way, even the realizing yourself to achieve in that state. Even you see the reality that world as I have been giving in a time of discussion of Shankaracharya. Anyway, Ramanujacharya argued that he is the goal of life. Now, he also is Lord of law of karma. What does it mean the Lord of law of karma? Now, we have the law of karma which we have discussed the karma theory where we have talked about how in an action, we have to face the impression of the all the past impression of the action. So, whatever we are performing or have performed we are going to face the impression of the action. Now, here there is one question. Do we need any agent or any person as a Lord of law of karma or not? Now let me explain you what this question is all about. Why we are asking about the requirement of Lord? So, there is one argument says that karma itself can produce an effect in your life. So, you are performing an axon and then you are facing or you are going to face the impression of the past action. The action itself will decide then when and the time and the place. So, we do not need anyone who is as in a Lord of law of karma. But then again there is an argument other argument that we need a Lord of law of karma, because karma itself is not an intelligent. Suppose, I perform one action good or bad but when I am going to get the impression of this action, we need someone who is intelligent who can decide, and there is a very interesting story in the Buddhism. Buddhism also talks about the law of karma. I will be discussing about Buddhism how Buddhist interpret this law of karma. So, Ramanuja argued that the Brahman is the Lord of the karma. So, he is doing everything. He is going to decide everything. Now then here is an important question, an argument from Ramanuja's Indian philosophy that Brahman is soul of all Jiva and unconsciousness object. Here in this line, there is three things. First is Brahman, Jiva and unconsciousness object. What Ramanuja is arguing that Brahman is soul of all Jiva and unconsciousness object. Soul and matter.

Now, let me explain you this idea and that is why it is Vishistadvaitvada. For example, this is just to explain this idea. Suppose this is the body, this is the soul. Brahman is soul of jiva and this matter. So, this body is what matter and soul, but soul is what is Brahman. So, soul and matter are the body of God. I hope it is clear. He is different from his attributes or modes. There is inseparable relation, *aprthaksiddhi* between them. So, Ramanuja is arguing that the soul and body, like for example, like me, as in a, so this is what if you say there is a soul. So, for example, I am claiming or saying that, oh look, this is Gyan Prakash. So, this is Gyan Prakash, saying that if you take the Sankarian idea, it says that, oh, this is you is a soul not your body. So, even he takes that theory, so I have the soul and then body. As Descartes also has argued the same thing, body and mind. So, body and then mind. Body, matter, mind, soul. Here in the Indian system, soul and then matter. The soul and matter are a body of God, not God. So, the soul and the body is an attributes of moods of God. So, there is God. God is what? Soul of this body, and what is body? Bodies are soul and the body. I hope it is a clear. For example, there is a soul and then body. Now what Ramanuja is saying that what is this attribute? The soul in this empirical world, what we see that soul and body is the body of God, which is the attributes and moods of God. But this God is a different form, is attributes and modes. However, this does not mean that is separable, inseparable, but he is a different form of attributes. This is the reason that his philosophy called Vishistadvaitvada. Again, as I have been discussing, the nature of Brahman is inconceivable. He is devoid of plurality in the sense that plurality of soul and material object are his body and modes, but he is a different from them. The knowledge of Brahman is not possible through perception and inference. So, as we have discussed in the last class that there are other means of knowledge according to Ramanujacharya and what he did, he rejects that we cannot understand, we cannot know Brahman through perception and inference. And, he argued that the knowledge of the Brahman even is not possible through the cosmological argument. So, even you are presenting on a cosmological argument, cosmological argument can only prove the necessary existence of an intelligence which is superior to all of us or anyone. So, there is an arch of cosmological argument, it can prove at least that there is something which is intelligent or is more than us, all of us, the human or superior to this world. But again, it is difficult to know the nature of Brahman or Brahman. So, this means it is not going to help you to understand the knowledge of Brahman. He argued that scripture which is eternal are the source of knowledge of God. So, only through scriptures we can understand, only through scripture we can know the idea of Brahman. Ramanujacharya argues that the word Brahman denotes the highest person who is essentially free from all imperfection and possesses numberless classes or of auspicious qualities of unsurpassable excellence. He argues that the text when you mention that in the last class, we are talking about that you are that Tattvamasi means that individual soul is identical in essence with the Brahman. Remember we were discussing about the object and the essence. But soul is presiding over a body is a mode of Brahman, it is an attribute of Brahman. So, when Ramanujacharya saying the Tattvamasi, you are

that. So, that you even is real. He is not saying that as Sankaracharya that this is an appearance, he is just an unreal. So, Ramanujacharya arguing that this everything is real. So, even you are saying this is that, this is the Tattvamasi. So, here even you are real and it is just not mere an appearance. So this is not just mere an appearance, it is real and it is eternal. So, we cannot reject the idea of the soul and matter. Soul and matter is an body of God, the essence of God. But again, this essence is not God. So, God is different from its essence. So, Ramanuja argued that soul and Brahman both are real and distinct. So, as we have been discussing that identity in difference. So, these are the attributes of God, the essence of God but again it is different from God. Ramanuja argues that the matter and souls are dependent on him as his inseparable attributes. So, the soul and the body is the body of God which is an inseparable. But again, it is not like a Sankaran argument. Sankaran philosophy argues that our appearance is unreal. So, if you remove the avidya you will see the reality. Reality is only Brahman is real. Ramanujacharya has a different argument based on the text. He argues that matter and soul is a body of God, modes of God, attributes of God. But again this attributes is a different form God. So, God is soul of this body and soul and this body is become a soul of in terms of matter in the empirical world. Then ultimately in ultimate sense an ontological reality the matter and the soul. This matter and the soul is body of God. But again, it is not God. When I am saying this is an attribute again it only means that it is an inseparable attribute but he is soul of this body and matter. And, then world is the body of Brahman and Brahman, the self of the world. So, this is what he is an argument about Vishistadvait. He argues that how the body and soul is a body of God, attributes of God. But, this attributes is inseparable but again it is not God. Brahman is soul of this body. The world is the body of Brahman and Brahman the self of the world. So, this is how Ramanujacharya has argued about the Brahman. He talked about there is a God with attributes. He also talked about how the Nirguna word can be interpreted, can be explained and he said that Nirguna means only he devoid of all the impure qualities. The discussion will be continuing. I will be discussing in the next class as well how Ramanujacharya has talked about the Jiva and the God. So, thank you and this course was based on this Indian philosophy, by Jadunath Sinha. So, thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.