

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 41: Ramanuja's Philosophy

Namaskar to all. The topic of today's discussion is Ramanuja Philosophy. In last class, we also have talked about Ramanuja philosophy, then idea of Brahman from Ramanuja's perspective. We also have discussed the Ramanuja theory of knowledge. Today, I am going to discuss the concept of self and consciousness from Ramanuja philosophy. In last class, we have discussed the idea of Brahman and what is the self in ontological reality. So today, we are going to talk about what is jiva. Ramanujacharya, Jiva is individual self and different from body sense organ and buddhi. Now, as Shankaracharya have discussed, we have seen in Upanishad, we have seen in Bhagavad Gita talking about the different idea of self. Shankaracharya has a different way to explain the idea of self. Ramanujacharya has a different way to explain the idea of self. But one thing is common. We will see that the self and the body, all of them talking about is dualism, the mind and body dualism. They are saying that this is a self and this is a body. However, in Shankaracharya philosophy and Ramanujacharya philosophy, the idea of mind is different. They believe the mind is a part of body, not the self. So, self and then body, they are two things. There are two things that exist. But I want to just remind you because we have been discussing this idea of body and mind in western philosophy. In Indian philosophy, we use this word mind in different sense as their function. So, we will be discussing today what Ramanuja has used what, chit, manas, ahanakar, and so on. So, but these are the ideas are the part of the body. Ramanujacharya argued that the individual self is what we are talking about the self and the atman which is a different form body. So, if you can recall the Rene Descartes when we were discussing from the western perspective, Rene Descartes also argued for the similar a claim saying that there is a body and there is a mind. Now, in Indian system as we are discussing Ramanuja philosophy, Ramanuja also argued that there is a self and there is a body. And last class we have discussed how this self and this body is a part of Brahman. So, the idea of Brahman and then the body of the Brahman, the essence, the modes, the attributes of the Brahman. So, there is a Brahman, the concept of Brahman and then attributes of the Brahman. So, attributes of the Brahman are, self and then body. So, self and the body are body of God but the self is self for this body, for in Jiva. So, in Jiva this atman is self, which is a different from body. Here the self is an active agent. He is a knower, he is doer, he is experiencer. Again, the self is self-illuminous and inconceivable in the sense that we cannot conceive, I mean in the sense that we cannot know through the means of knowledge, perception, inference and so on. So, this is Ramanujacharya argued that the self is an active agent. Now, why I purposely have mentioned this word active

agent so that you will be able to understand the difference between the Shankaracharya philosophy, and Ramanujacharya philosophy. Shankaracharya argued that self is not active. Reason, self is nirgun Brahman. So, there is no difference. You can recall the example of jar. So, jar limited some space but this space is not different from mahakash, both are same. Similarly, in Shankaracharya self is inactive. Self is not an active agent. Atman is not an active agent. Atman is nirgun Brahman. Therefore, atman cannot perform anything, cannot experience anything. So, Ramanujacharya has a different way to talk about the atman. Shankaracharya has a different way to talk about the self. Ramanujacharya argued that self is not, self is an active agent. So, self is doer, self is experiencer, but it does not mean that it exists apart from the God as we have discussed in the last class that self is his attributes and mode. So, the God and the attributes of the God. Two things as we have discussed in detail in last class but still if you are difficult for you, it is difficult to understand. Let me remind you that there is a God and then attributes of the God. So, this attributes its self and then matter two things. So, it will go like this. So, for example, there are two things. First is God and God's attributes A. But Ramanujacharya is arguing that this God is a different from its attributes. This is inseparable. It cannot separate it but again it is not same. G is not A. So, this is not GG. This is not GG, so this is G and A. So written this A and G is in a different. Even I am saying G is A, A is G but there is no difference. Last class we have discussed how even you are saying Lotus is white or Lotus is black whatever. So, this Lotus and this attribute this is two different identity and difference. There are two things but then the same thing. So that is why it is called Vishistādvait. Now, this attribute is what self and the body that is called matter. So, self and then matter is the attributes of God. So, let us take example of Jiva. So, myself or this body is matter. So self and matter is body of God not God. Now this attributes this self and body, self and matter is in a Jiva. Now this matter is matter for the self in terms of Jiva but this self itself is an body for the in terms of God. I hope it is clear. So, when I am saying that who am I. So, I am like attributes of for example the attributes of a God. Suppose thinking so if you subscribe the Ramanujacharya philosophy then, we are in opinion of like we believe that the soul or which is eternal and then matter is body of God. So, me, me means when I am saying I am Gyan Prakash like, and ontologically I is Atman and this is the middle of the matter two things, or let us say to understand in a different way, me the self and Atman and this world, world is matter. So, self and then matter, soul and then matter. So, this self and matter is attributes of God. It is a body of God. Attributes of God means it is inseparable but at the same time it is not God. I hope it is clear. This concept is going to help you to understand the Ramanuja's different concept and as I have said in this class that we are discussing this philosophy in a very basic level. Ramanujacharya has presented a very fine argument in terms of in support of the concept of consciousness, the concept of self, the concept of Brahman and so on. So, as I was like discussing the jiva is a soul in relation to its body but it is the body in relation to God. So, this is clear that this jiva is soul when I am saying this is me. So, me is what is soul, Atman. If you talk about the personal identity

so I, is soul. But this is soul in relation to his body means my matter, this body. But this soul is a body in relation to a God. Now, Ramanujacharya argues that souls have the essential properties of knowledge and bliss. Now, let us understand this matter. What is this matter all about? How this world is in this place? How the God has created this world? So, there is a process and Ramanuja has talked about this idea and let us understand how this Ramanujacharya has talked about this world. So, he argued for a word called Prakriti, a concept called Prakriti and this Prakriti while discussing philosophy of Bhagavad Gita, we also have talked about this Prakriti. So, today I will be discussing this idea from Ramanuja perspective. How Ramanujacharya has interpreted this idea. So, Ramanujacharya argues that Prakriti is an equilibrium of three gunas Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. And, this Prakriti is the power of God and material cause of the world. So, since these are the power of God, so God for Ramanuja, God is the material cause, God is the efficient cause for this world. Prior to the creation, Prakriti exists in subtle state devoid of name and form as the body of God. He argues that God is transformed the Prakriti into world by his free will. I mean there is an argument just I wanted to mention here, I will be discussing in coming weeks about the idea of Prakriti from Sankhya philosophy. So, Sankhya philosophy is another very important or significant school of thought from Indian philosophy or Orthodox school of thought which talks about this creation of this world. However, Sankhya philosophy has a different way to explain this creation where he talked about the concept of Prakriti. And the concept of Prakriti is a different from Ramanuja's concept of Prakriti. So, Sankhya in philosophy argued that Prakriti is a substance there, and then they also talked about the Purusa. However, they are saying that Purusa is completely inactive in Sankhya philosophy. Therefore, there are problems which we will be discussing while discussing Sankhya philosophy. In Ramanujacharya philosophy, what he argued that there is a Prakriti but the active agent or let us say the God is creating this world or transforming this Prakriti into the world by his free will. So, there is a creation and it is because of his God's will. Now, there is a question one may ask that if the things is changing, if like for example we are arguing that these are things, matter and soul is the body or attributes of God. Now, in next argument, we are also saying that this God is creating this world. What he is doing, he is transforming the Prakriti into the world as a free will. It also means that, there is a change in his attributes. But if we are going to talk about the world or we are going to talk about the world, so this is empirically real. But in Ramanujacharya, he argues that the God is beyond this change but only his attributes is changing, not the God. So, here it is in a difference. So, this is what he argues that this changes, the evolutionary changes takes place only in the mode of God, not in God. So, therefore the God is beyond this change but his attributes is subject to change. So, this evolution which we are discussing now, it only takes place where in the modes of the God, in the attributes of the God. I hope this is easy to understand. For example, there is a question about the empirical reality and then ontological reality. So, while discussing this to reality, I had argued that or that in Shankaracharya, Shankaracharya argued that one

should not identify himself with the body because body is subject to change and other different sheaths. So, he rejected all the ideas and saying that only Atman is Self, is real and everything, all the appearance is unreal. So, Atman is Brahman. So, Brahman is the only reality. Why? Because it is beyond the change. Now if you just, even you bring this idea in Ramanujacharya philosophy where Ramanuja is arguing that this matter and soul is the body of God. Again, the God is what is transforming the prakriti into the world. So, there is a change. Attributes of God means what? It is a God because Ramanujacharya again argues that it is inseparable. So, if the attributes are changing, so one may say, oh look there is an even a God is changing in this philosophy. Ramanujacharya says no. He put this objection side by this argument saying that this change is taking place where only in the mode of God. There is no change in God. Now I would like to explain briefly this process about the creation. So, there is a matter which is in a body of God and matter, for matter there is some first creation is called Mahat or Buddhi. From Buddhi is an Ahankara. Now, these are mixed with three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. So sattvic aspect of Ahankara produces five cognitive senses, five motor senses and Manas. So, five, five, ten and then Manas is the eleventh element. The Tamasic aspect of Ahankara, ego, produce the five subtle essence and then five gross elements. So, this is how Ramanuja has discussed about the Prakriti, how this world is, there is a creation, how it takes place. Now the rajasic aspect or rajasic Ahankara, it is Sattvic Ahankara and Tamas Ahankara to produce their effect. So, this is how their role in this world. Now creation is evolution of Prakriti from homogeneous to heterogeneous condition. Now, it is known as a different name of Prakriti because it produces modification. We are calling it Avidya because it counteracts right knowledge and Maya because it creates many folds universe.

Now, I also would like to mention from Ramanujacharya perspective, the Gunas and its effect. So, Sattva, Sattvik guna or Sattva is in pure form produces knowledge and pleasure. So, this is an idea of bliss. when you are purifying your mind. This is what I have been arguing that Indian philosophy talks about the purification of mind. So, it depends on the Gunas who is going to decide a set of an action. So, Rajas is going to produce attachment, desire and action. Tamas is going to produce a false knowledge, inattention, laziness and sleep. Mind, as I discussed in the last slide is the eleventh organ and known as a different name as its function. So, we have seen in the last slide that there is a buddhi and then there is an ahankara, a buddhi. So, buddhi is called because it decides. So, whenever we are taking any decision suppose for the X and Y and then we are saying let us go for X, so we are deciding. So, this is called buddhi. So, buddhi is who is taking a decision, critically thinking and then finally going for the decision. Ahankara when it misconceives that is what ego is. Citta, they have used this word when it thinks. So, it depends I mean how is the is functioning and accordingly they have used this word. Again, Ramanuja argued that soul knows the object with the help of mind. Now, this is an again important concept where Ramanujacharya argued that Jiva birth we are saying this is a Jiva is due to avidya. Avidya is a false identification of the self with the body. Here, the concept of avidya is very

different from Shankaracharya concept of avidya. In Shankaracharya philosophy because of avidya or maya there is a false appearance, and we are performing set of actions and because of this actions, we are in this chakra of the cycle of birth and rebirth because law of karma says that if you are a form and actions and set of actions and you have to face the impression of the set of actions irrespective of the bad and good. Ramanuja is saying that avidya is what is a false identification self with the body. So, when you are thinking that you means not a self in the body and that causes what by avidya and that is avidya, and because of that you are performing set of actions which is taking you to cycle of birth and birth. So, when through knowledge when you realize that this is different, you have a discrimination this knowledge descriminative knowledge, we are going to talk about what is self and what is not self then become free soul. Avidya obscures the essential nature of the self and its affinity with God. This is the work done by avidya. The Jiva acquires avidya action, disposition, vasana, desire, ruchi in connection with unconscious matter. So, this matter is not conscious. It is not intelligent does not have any consciousness and that is the reason that even in terms of creation, Ramanuj argued that God is important I mean without God's will creation cannot take place. He argued because the two things, first is matter is unconscious in Ramanuja philosophy. In Sankhya philosophy that is God is inactive so therefore, it causes there are a lot of problem there in the philosophy we will be discussing that. Ramanuja says that God's will is important because without that creation cannot take place, reason the matter is unconscious. Now, we are talking about the action or vasana or this desire ruchi because of this in the connection with this unconscious matter. First, when we are identifying our self with this body thinking that this is me and accordingly performing set of actions getting vasana, disposition, and desire which leads to another set of actions and this action is leads to the cycle of birth and rebirth. So, this is how we are in this situation. I would like to mention here that disposition and desire plays a very important role in the Indian philosophy. Even in Buddhism we will be discussing in the next week or in the Vedanta philosophy, the vasana is plays a very important role. So, Vasana is so important because this inclination is going to work is to lead you somewhere in a different in the wrong direction for them. So they believe that these are the cause. So, if you take any action or set of action which we are performing there is a cause of this set of action. What they are saying in your vasana, your ruchi is a very important. We are earning, we are getting things and then we are performing the set of acts. So, I have given in a well in detail the idea how sometime we like earn this set of inclination. So, for that this Ramanujacharya philosophy, this Vasana and desire are action is it always in connection with this matter. There is a notion of pain and pleasure we are feeling sometime pain or pleasure because of this karma. So, we have perform set of action right set of action, wrong set of action, right-wrong in the sense of good and bad. So, if there is a right set of or good set of actions, we are getting pleasure bad set of or wrong set of actions getting pain. So, karma theory says that you have perform an action and you have to face the impression of the action. Ramanujacharya argues the knowledge is a substance because it

is the substrate of quality and activity and because it manifest objects however it does not extend to object in deep sleep because at that it is overcome by tamas. Now, there was in Shankaracharya philosophy, there is an argument that he talked about different sheath. So, there is in a body and there is in a mind and then self. So, if the body and the mind are inactive so there is an object in the world you are saying oh look there is an object but this is called waking state. But when you are dreaming when this body is inactive your sense organ is inactive your mind whatever have perceived is projecting. It is called dream state. Now, in the deep sleep where even mind is has no causal state there is no object and therefore this is how we Shankaracharya proved that there is no object in the world. Ramanujacharya giving an argument that object does not appear in deep sleep, because of its overcome by tamas. Tamas plays an important role in this Sattvik-ahankara and then Rajasik-ahankara. So, this is how he argued that this world is real. It is not like this is not real or this appearance it is just not unreal. Ramanujacharya believed that this world is real, this matter is real, this soul is real and then God is real. Now, we are not able to see any object in deep sleep because of this inactive tamas. Again, Ramanujacharya argues that self does not apprehend object. Self-experience the whole body through its knowledge. The self is witness of all sub objects. Consciousness is its essence which constitute its self-illumination nature. So, this is how Ramanuja has talked about the body and mind and his philosophy and he also talks about the avidya, but avidya he has talked in the sense that when avidya is when we identify our self with not self. So, body is not self. So, what we are identify our self with this body. So, this is called avidya and this is this wrong identification leads us to a set of action that leads to the cycle of birth and birth. So, Ramanujacharya gave a very different explanation of notion of avidya and he rejects the idea of Sankaran maya. So, what Shankaracharya has talked has argued that how what is maya and the effect of maya, this concept was rejected by the Ramanujacharya because Ramanujacharya believed that the God is first is Sagun brahman is determinate God. Second, there is a self and there is matter and the self and matter is real. So, in that argument this world is real. How this Ramanujacharya has rejected the concept of maya we will be discussing in next class and that is in a very interesting to discuss. So, for today class this is what we have discussed the self and the consciousness and then what is avidya for Ramanujacharya. So, thank you this talk was based on this Indian philosophy by Jadunath Sinha. Thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.