

THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

- It refers to the philosophy of the Upanishads (concluding part of Vedas). The concept *Vedanta* was given by *Sankaracharya*.
- *The Absolute and Individual Self*: He starts with the view that the essence of reality must be its absoluteness: it must remain ever the same, unconditioned by time, space and causality.

The world abounds in evil, and suffering seems to be the lot of every individual. Everybody desires to attain happiness and avoid misery. In fact, all our endeavors are directed towards the end.

- *Law of Karma*: One of the major aspects of Sankara's thought was the law of *karma*. The law of *karma* in the moral world is the counterpart of the law of conservation of energy in the physical world. Life has continued from eternity, the store of our *karma* must necessarily be inexhaustible, for while part of it is being spent through experience (*bhoga*), fresh *karma* is being added.
- *Higher Knowledge and Lower Knowledge*: Sankara distinguishes between the Ontological reality and empirical reality. The former is known by higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*), while the latter is known by lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*). Higher knowledge is true knowledge (*vidyā*) and lower knowledge is false knowledge (*avidyā*). Brahman is known by higher knowledge.

- *Perception*: Sankara recognizes perception, inference, scriptural testimony, comparison, presumption and non-apprehension as the sources of valid knowledge.
- There is one eternal consciousness or Brahman. When it is determined by internal organ, it is called *subject consciousness*. When the eternal consciousness is determined by mental modes, it is called *knowledge consciousness*. When it is determined by an empirical object, it is called *object consciousness*. The mental mode assuming the form of the object called *vrtti*.

- *Inference*: It is described as reaching a new conclusion and truth from one or more observations and previous truths by applying reason.
- *Comparison*: It is the means of knowledge by similarity.
- *Presumption*: It is the assumption of a fact to account for inexplicable fact.
- *Non-Apprehension*: Non-existence is known as non-apprehension. It cannot be known by the means of valid knowledge.
- *Testimony*: A sentence refers to an objective relation. That sentence is a valid source of knowledge, which refers to an objective relation, which is not contradicted by other means of valid knowledge.

- *Maya*: Sankara also explains the concept of *Maya* (illusion) or *adhyasa* (superimposition), the principle of unifying contradictions-contradiction between self and non-self, the ego and non-ego, the subject and the object, the cause and the effect, Brahman and the world. Suppose you take a rope to be a snake; this is *adhyasa*. You take Brahman to be the world; this too is *adhyasa*. In reality there is no snake, no world, and there should not be any superimposition; Yet it is inherent nature to identify the truth with falsehood.

- *Levels of Truth:* Although he does not really admit kinds of truth, yet for the sake of convenience he speaks of (i) *paramarthika* truth attributable only to Brahman, (ii) *vyavaharika* truth attributable to the objective world, and (iii) *pratibhasika* truth attributable to the illusions of an individual so long as they last.