

> Subject: dvaita vs advaita
> I have a very basic question to this very learned group. could someone please
> tell us what exactly does dvaita and advaita mean. kanaka

One of the central questions concerning Vedanta philosophers is the relationship of the individual self to the Absolute or Supreme Self. The sole purpose for this question is to determine the nature of contemplative meditation and to determine whether moksha, the state of release, is something worth seeking.

The Dvaita school, inaugurated by Madhvacharya (Ananda Tirtha), argues that there is an inherent and absolute five-fold difference in Reality -- between one soul and another, between the soul and God, between God and matter, between the soul and matter, and between matter and matter. These differences are not only individuations, but also inherent qualitative differences, i.e., in its essentially pure state, one individual self is not equal to another in status, but only in genus. Therefore, there are inherently female jIvas, inherently male jIvas, brahmin jIvas, non-brahmin jIvas, and this differentiation exists even in liberation.

Consequently, any sort of unity, whether it be mystical or ontological, between the individual self and God is impossible in Dvaita. Hence the term ``Dvaita'' or ``dualism''. Liberation consists of experiencing one's essential nature in parama padam as a reflection of God's glory. Such liberation is achieved through bhakti or loving devotion.

The Advaita school, represented in its classical and most powerful form by Sankaracharya, argues that only the Absolute Self exists, and all else is false. The universe and our existence as individuals is not unreal, mind you, but a false imposition on a real substrate, the non-dual, undifferentiated principle of consciousness. This is a very important distinction.

Liberation in Advaita Vedanta consists of the realization that individuality is false, and that one's very essence is the Absolute Self, pure undifferentiated consciousness, one without a second. Such a realization, which according to Advaita can happen long before death, is achieved after a long period of introspection on Vedic teachings. At some point, the unity of the non-dual Self reveals itself, upon which all doubts are shattered and liberation is achieved.

In this system, since there is only one, and ultimately nothing else, the system is called Advaita, or ``non-dualism''. To distinguish it from other forms of Advaita, it is also called nirvisesha Advaita, or ``non-duality of the Absolute without qualities.''

Visishtadvaita is also an Advaita, since only God the Absolute, omnipresent Self exists. However, our concept of God refers to that Supreme Entity which contains all within itself; the entire universe, including all living beings, are fundamentally real and internally distinguishable from one another.

However, there is only one total reality, as God includes all existence within Its very being. The individual selves and the universe exist as God's attributes, since God pervades absolutely everything and gifts these substances with their reality. In other words, God is the indwelling Self of all, and this ``all'' is real as they are included in His body. Therefore, Visishtadvaita literally means non-duality of the qualified, since God is qualified by innumerable glorious attributes, including individual selves and matter.

Liberation is eternal communion and service of God, the supreme, infinite, blissful Absolute. Ramanuja writes that such liberation is achieved by constant meditation on God's supreme perfections -- His omnipresence, His splendorous forms, His actions in His various manifestations, His existence in the hearts of all creatures, His nature as the First Cause of All. Such meditation, when practiced with a pure heart and mind and filled with extreme love, will yield a better and better conception of God in the mind of devotee over time, eventually leading to recollection of God so vivid it is like sight itself. Such a vision, when practiced to the point of being unbroken, is the liberating knowledge spoken of in the Vedas, a result of God's love of His beloved devotee.

Notice the difference in approach of Advaita and Visishtadvaita. The former's conception of the Absolute has no attributes -- hence the discipline of meditation there does not in the end rely on bhakti. The latter has as its centerpiece a supreme being full of perfections and attributes, so the aspirant has no choice but to revel in these kalyana-gunas. From this basic difference in approach we can derive all the other differences between these schools of Vedanta.

Mani

P.S. All individual selves are fundamentally equal and alike in Visishtadvaita. Ramanuja is emphatic about this.

The philosophy of visishtadvaita, expounded by Ramanuja, creates harmony between the absolute idealism of advaita and the theistic pluralism of dvaita. Advaita is based on the scriptural texts that affirm identity between jiva and abrahman while dvaita quotes the texts that speak of plurality and difference. Ramanuja reconciles the discord between the two by means of the relational texts which he calls ghataka sruti, thus upholding the validity of the scriptural texts as a whole. In his view the texts should be interpreted in such a manner that they do not present a contradiction. His explanation bridges the gap between the abhedha and bheda texts.

Brahman of visishtadvaita is synonymous with Narayana, who is the transcendent and imminent reality. The word Narayana denotes the abode of all beings, naaraanam ayanam, and also that He is in everything, naaraah ayanam yasya Thus He is not

the mere personal God of a particular religion. Vaishnavism is only apart of visishtadvaita, serving as a means of attaining the goal.

The key concept of visishtadvaita is the sarira-sariri bhaava, the body-soul relationship between the universe and Brahman. There are three reals, thathvathraya, namely, Isvara, the Lord, Jiva the individual soul, and Jagath, the world of insentient beings. They are not separate entities but together they form one organic whole. This is explained by the concept of body and soul relationship.

Ramanuja defines sarira as ♦that substance that a spiritual entity can use and support entirely for his own purpose, and that, in its essence is exclusively subordinate to that entity.♦ Being the sarira of the Lord, the universe of sentient and insentient beings stands in an inseparable relation with Him. This relationship, called aprthaksidhdha, is like that of a substance and its attribute, where the latter cannot exist without the former as in the example of fire and heat.

Brahman is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. Ramnuja cites the sruti text ♦yatho va imana bhoothaani jaayanthe yena jaathaani jeevanthi yasmin abhi samvisanthi thadvijijnaasava thadbrahma♦ (Taitreya up.), ♦that from which everything came from, by which everything that is born is sustained and into which everything merges back, know that to be Brahman.♦

The causality of Brahman is also ascertained by the text ♦sadheva soumya idhamagra aaseeth ekameva advitheeyam; thadhaikshatha bahusyaamp rajaayeya, which says that there was sat alone in the beginning, one only without a second and it willed to become many. This according to Ramanuja confirms the body-soul relationship between Brahman and the universe. He claims that this is the real purport of the mahavakya thathvamasi and not the absolute identity as professed by advaita. Everything existed in Narayana in subtle form before creation and became manifest in gross form after creation.

This concept of sarira-sariri bhava exposes visishtadvaita to the criticism that if the world is the sarira of Brahman, that is, Narayana, the imperfections of the world will adhere to Brahman. This argument is refuted by Ramanuja, who says that just as the imperfections of the body of an individual do not affect the soul, Brahman who is the Self of all, is not contaminated by the imperfections of the universe.

An objection that may arise with respect to the authority of this concept of sarira-sariri bhava is met with by means of the ghataka sruti texts like the one which says ♦He who dwells in this earth and within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who rules the earth from within, He is thy self, the ruler within and immortal.♦ There are several texts citing Brahman as the Self of everything naming the elements and the individual soul separately as the sarira of Brahman.

Brahman of visishtadvaita is not nirguna without attributes but possesses innumerable auspicious qualities, ananthakalyanagunavisishta, which are not adventitious but form His svarupa. The scriptural definition of Brahman as Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham is explained by Ramanuja in accordance with the principle of Samanadhikaranya, coordinate predication, according to which several terms are applicable to an entity on different grounds. For instance, in the expression shyamo yuva Devadattah, Devadatta is a dark young man, the adjectives shyama and yuva denote the same entity, Devadatta. Similarly the epithets Sathyam, jnanam, anantham denote the same Brahman, sathyam implying absolutely unconditional existence, jnanam, non-contracted knowledge and anantham implies that Brahman is not limited by space,time and form.

Jiva in visishtadvaita is real and so is Jagath. The jnana of jiva is contracted due to karma, born of ajnana. When the ajnana is removed by jnana as a result of bhakthi, jiva regains its original state of liberation when its jnana becomes infinite.

Bhakthi is the sole means of liberation in visishtadvaita. Bhakthi and Prapaththi are the two wings with which the jiva ascends to the realm of the Lord to become one with Him. Karmayoga and jnanayoga are the natural outcome of bhakthi and prapaththi, total surrender, as the devotee acquires the knowledge that the Lord is the inner self of whom he himself is the sarira. The devotee realizes his own state as sesha, dependent on, adheya, being supported by, and niyaamya, being led by the Lord, who is the Seshi, Master, Adhaara, Support and niyantha, the one who leads him. As a result the jiva leads his life as an instrument of the Lord, acquiring viveka and vairagya, offering all his thought, word, and deed to the feet of the Lord. He sees the Lord in everything and everything in Him. This is the unity in diversity achieved through devotion.

The principles of the philosophy of visishtadvaita are expounded in the interpretation of the Brahmasuthra by Ramanuja. His commentary on Brahmasuthra, otherwise known as Vedanta suthra, is his monumental work, the Sribhaashya. Ramanuja establishes the tenets of visishtadvaita firmly in Sribhaashya while refuting the views of other schools of philosophy effectively.

I have given a detailed explanation of visishtadvaita which should clear the doubts regarding the relation between Isvara and jeeva and the purport of the text Tattvamasi. I would be glad to answer any other questions on this topic.

R. Dinakaran: One of my good friends who is a member of the Cyber Madhava Sangha >> says he has a simple definition which proves that Dvaita is more >> 'down to earth'. >> He says that there has to be two entities: Bhagawan and the Bhakta or

>> the Seeker and the Sought. If God is within us, how can we seek him,
>> he asks (in the Dvaita mailing list).
>> I was unable to post a proper reply. Can anyone help me out?

>Dear Sri Dinakaran and all bhAgawatas,

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>PraNAmam. Adiyen is by no stretch of imagination a shAstrajna. But here is
>adiyen's attempt at your question.

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>Nowhere does visishtAdwaita claim that there is only one entity in the sense
>the question has been posed (bhagawAn vs. bhakta). Infact, RAmanuja accepts
>not two but six dravyas or perceivable objects: Iswara, jeeva, kAla,
>prakrti, nithyavibhuti, and dharmabhuta jnana. All of these dravyas are
>REAL, DISTINCT, and ETERNAL, and there is no doubt that there always is a
>seeker and the sought (BhagawAn).

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>Let us take the following two dravyas: Iswara and jeeva. Iswara is by
>nature Satyam, Jnanam, and Anantam. Satyam means nirupAdhika satta yogi --
>i.e., He exists without an upAdhi. He is Jnanaswaroopam. He is also
>Anantam or vibhu -- He is undivided by time, space, and matter. The jeeva
>on the other hand derives its existence (satyatvam) from the Brahman. In
>other words, it exists because of that Brahman. It is monadic (aNu), which
>is the opposite of vibhu. Also it is impenetrable and undestroyable.

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>Only when it comes to the ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP between the various dravyas
>does RAmanuja say it is visishtasya advaitam. What does this mean? Again,
>for purposes of our discussion, we will just take Iswara and jeeva into
>consideration and ignore the other four dravyas. The relationship is that
>of a sareeri/sareera -- the soul/the ensouled; it is that of an
>AdhAra/Adheya -- supporter/supported, etc, etc. In other words, the jeeva
>derives its existence from that primal existence -- Brahman. It is
>supported by Him and exists for His sole pleasure and purpose. The Brahman
>alone is the parama Bhokta.

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>Now, with regard to the first question, here is the reply :- Why should the
>sareeri/sareera relationship conflict with the swAmi/bhrtiya relationship or
>the sought/seeker relationship, or any other relationship? All of these
>relationships have distinct meanings. Secondly, the statements "God is
>within us" and "God is controlling us from within" do not mean that God
>literally exists within the precincts of the jeeva itself. All it means is
>that the jeeva's very existence is due to that Brahman, and He controls
>every aspect of its existence as a master, as a supporter, as a soul, etc.
>So, the words "within" and "inside" should not be taken to mean what they
>mean in our daily life scenarios.

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>To summarize, the organic relationship of unity (advaita) between Iswara and
>all the other dravyas does not in any way conflict the sought/seeker
>relationship. Infact, it strengthens it many fold. Because, if you the
>seeker come to know that you are linked inseparably with the seeker and
>exist solely because of Him and for Him, your sought/seeker relationship
>attains a different level of perception. You now realize that the person
>you seek is not just some great, knowledgeable, strong person far away in
>heaven, but rather somebody whose organic relationship with you is
>inseparable, intimate, and existential, and you have NO OTHER choice but to
>seek Him.

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>Hope this clarifies. Adiyen hopes that a more knowledgeable person provide
>a better explanation to the question.

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>|| SarvAparAdhAn kshamasva ||
>|| Sarvam Sri KrishNArpaNamastu ||
>
>Daasan Murali Kadambi

Greetings Greg:

Thanks for your questions and thoughts. Ramanuja framework assumes the supremesoul (Mahavishnu) who controls the souls that were created by the supreme. Obviously, bureaucratic rules and regulations are necessary for the ultimate salvation of those souls. Mahavishnu is the ultimate authority who creates, controls and dissolves (salvation) those souls. The entire drama of the world and all happenings are mystic (game) and the reasons are beyond human perception! Bhakti is primary and Karma is always diverted toward the Lord and Jnana and ultimately salvation becomes the reward!

Madhava's framework is an organized bureaucratic structure where souls occupy positions according to their qualifications! The real and indestructible Is'wara is the CEO. Souls get promotions and demotions according to their deeds. In summary, faith becomes much more prominent than logic!

I have briefly outlined Advaita, Dvaita and Vishistadvaita philosophies for the benefit to more than a dozen new comers to the list. I have also provided WEB sites which discuss these philosophies in greater details.

Advaita: According to Sankara, God is infinitely higher than ourselves and he is also infinitely near to us. He is nearer to us than our hands and feet. He is the Soul of our souls. He is neither the body, nor the senses, nor the mind nor the ego nor the intellect. He is the "I" that is none of these and is ever-present witness to all our experiences. He is our Atman and "He" is Brahman. He is the one Reality beyond which there is none. Sankara's contribution to philosophy is his blending of the doctrines of Karma and Maya, which culminated in a logical exposition of the idea of non-dualism. The entire universe consisting of Namarupa, names and forms, is but an appearance; Brahman, infinite consciousness, is the sole reality. Sankara's philosophy, the essential identity between Atman and Brahman is called "Advaita." It is a known fact that Sankara was strongly influenced by Gaudapada, who had great regard for the Buddhist philosophy. It is obvious that Sankara was opposed to Buddhist thought in general, but unconsciously influenced by some of its tenets. There is an updated version of the advaita vedAnta FAQ at.

Dvaita: Madhvachar's philosophy is "Dvaita". Brahman is Hari or Visnu definable to an extent by the Vedas. He has a transcendental form, Vyuhastha, Incarnations are His parts and Lakshmi is distinct. The qualities of Brahman are it is fully independent, the cause of all causes, supreme bliss, devoid of false attributes but possesses all qualities. The soul is atomic, it pervades the body by intelligence, infinite in number, Karta and Bhokta. Creation is the actuation of what is in the womb of matter and soul by the action of Brahman. The cause of bondage is the divine will of the Supreme and ignorance of the soul (svarupa). The

process of release is through whole hearted devotion, study of the Vedas and detached karma. The goal is to gain release from samsara and restoration of one's own individual and gain all powers except creation and there is no return. The released souls rise to the nature of God and never to identify with Him. They never lose their individuality, they are only released from the bondage of samsara. In summary, Visnu is the only supreme being; and Bhakti is the primary essential for liberation. Madhvacarya believed that Sankara's philosophy was a disguised variety of Buddhism and was vehemently objected to Advaita: it seemed to him presumptuous for the individual soul to claim identity with Brahman. (See the Dwaita home page using the link under vedanta)
<http://www.geocities.com/RodeoDrive/1415/index1.html>

Visishtadvaita: Ramanuja's philosophy is "Visishtadvaita" and has the following features: Brahman is not nirguna but saguna, that is, it is not impersonal but a personality endowed with all the superior qualities that we know of, like knowledge, power and love. The Upanishads, when they declare the nirguna nature of Brahman, only deny certain lower qualities and do not deny its every quality. The universe and individual souls are also eternal, but they exist as the body of God, as it were. In other words, God, souls and matter together form an inseparable unity which is one and has no second. In this sense ultimate reality is indeed one. But the distinction between God, souls and matter must ever remain. See the web page:
<http://www.best.com/~mani/sv.html>

Just a short visit - Soul in Ramanuja is what Ram wrote - it is a suukshma - taken to mean very sub atomic - while Sankara interprets it the same word as subtle. It is a chaitanya vastu - meaning a principle that has the capacity to know. In a physical body which is matter, soul is there and inside the soul is the paramaatma soul too - supreme soul like- sutre maNi ganaa iva - like a thread supporting the necklace. In Ramanuja and even in Madwa's philosophy there are three truths - Jeeva satyam, Jagat satyam and Paramaatma satyam. Permanence of Jeeva or individual souls, permanence of the world, and the Lord, paramaatma, or supreme atma. Paramaatma is Naaraayana or Vishnu, pervades everything but different any thing else. The universe is like supreme body of the Lord, which is made up of individual souls and matter, He is the essential Soul of the universal body. He is the total purusha. Creation is his leela or play. The souls suffer because of their ignorance of the paramaatma and in the process get entangled with Maya or prakriti. Without his grace, one cannot overcome the maaya. Surrenderence is the only means. JNaana and Karma are vehicles that help to develop the Bhakti needed one to surrender.
Hari Om!

<http://home.sprynet.com/~dsivakumar/music/intromus.htm>