



॥ विवेकचूडामणि ॥

... Vivekacūḍāmaṇi ...

AI Summary – Class 126

For Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
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Summary

The 24 Tattvās: Sāṅkhya Framework

Acharya Tadany presented the Sāṅkhya philosophical framework of the 24 tattvās (principles or categories), which Vedānta adopts with significant modifications. The structure is hierarchical:

- **Māyā** (also called Mūla-Prakṛti, Avyakta, Avidyā, or Śakti): The root cause, the fundamental matter-energy principle
- **Mahat-tattva**: The first product of Māyā, the cosmic intelligence
- **Ahaṅkāra**: The ego principle, which evolves from Mahat
- **16 Tattvās from Ahaṅkāra**:
 - Daśa Indriyāṇi (10 sense organs):
 - Pañca Jñānendriyāṇi (5 organs of knowledge/perception)
 - Pañca Karmendriyāṇi (5 organs of action)
 - Pañca Sūkṣma Bhūtāni (5 subtle elements/tanmātras)
 - Manas (mind)
- **Pañca Sthūla Bhūtāni** (5 gross elements): Evolved from the 5 subtle elements

This totals 24 principles (Caturviṃśati Tattvāni): 1 (Māyā) + 1 (Mahat) + 1 (Ahaṅkāra) + 16 (from Ahaṅkāra) + 5 (gross elements) = 24. These 24 tattvās were studied previously in Tattvabodha, where Śaṅkarācārya states "atha caturviṃśati prakāram vakṣyāmaḥ" (now we shall explain the 24 categories).

Māyā and Māyā Kāryam: The Nature of Anātmā

Śaṅkarācārya defines the entire material universe as "Māyā māyā kāryam sarvam" (Māyā and all products of Māyā). In this framework:

- **Māyā** is the kāraṇam (cause/source)—it exists but is never an effect
- **The other 23 tattvās** are kāryam (effects/products)—they are all produced from Māyā
- **Mahad-ādi-deha-paryantam**: "Beginning from Mahat and extending up to the physical body"—this phrase indicates that when discussing the products alone (not including the source), we start from Mahat-tattva



All 24 tattvās together constitute anātmā—everything that is not the Self. The key characteristic of anātmā is that it is jaḍa (inert, insentient), lacking consciousness.

Asat vs Sat: The Vedānta Perspective

Acharya Tadany emphasized a crucial word in the verse: **asat** (unreal), which distinguishes Vedānta from Sāṅkhya philosophy. While both systems accept the 24-tattva framework and agree that all of them are triguṇātmaka (composed of the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas), they differ fundamentally on the ontological status of matter:

- **Sāṅkhya philosophy:** Both Prakṛti (matter) and Puruṣa (consciousness) are equally real and eternal. This makes Sāṅkhya a dualistic (dvaita) system.
- **Vedānta:** Only consciousness (Ātmā/Brahman) is ultimately real (sat). Matter (anātmā/Māyā and all its products) is asat, meaning mithyā—having only practical/transactional reality but no independent existence.

Asat/mithyā means something has utility and can be experienced, but lacks svābhāvika sattā (intrinsic, independent existence). Like a wooden desk—we experience it and use it, but the substance is only wood; "desk" has merely nāma-rūpa (name and form) existence, not substantial reality.

The Mirage Analogy (Maru-Marīcikā-Kalpam)

Śaṅkarācārya uses the powerful analogy of a desert mirage (maru-marīcikā) to illustrate the nature of anātmā:

- **Technical definition:** A mirage is something experienced and perceived, but it has no substance of its own and no independent existence.
- **Practical application:** Just as a traveler in the desert sees water but can never reach it or quench their thirst with it, worldly accomplishments appear attractive and fulfilling from a distance, but cannot provide lasting peace, happiness, or fulfillment.

Acharya Tadany explained that no matter what one achieves in the mirage-like world—wealth, position, relationships, accomplishments—one will never attain permanent trpti (satisfaction), śānti (peace), or sukha (happiness). The pattern is universal: we strive for goals that seem tremendously attractive, but once achieved, satisfaction is fleeting, and the mind immediately asks "what's next?" This applies to marriage, career advancement, wealth accumulation, social status, and even spiritual positions.

Consciousness vs Energy: A Critical Distinction



Acharya Tadany addressed a common misconception: treating consciousness as a form of energy. This is a fundamental error because:

- **Energy is matter:** Energy is simply a subtle form of matter. All forms of energy can be transformed into other forms (mechanical to electrical, etc.), making energy savikāra (subject to modification). Therefore, energy is jaḍa (inert).
- **Consciousness is not energy:** Consciousness is nirvikāra (not subject to modification or change) and cetana (sentient, self-aware). These two characteristics fundamentally distinguish consciousness from all forms of energy.

This distinction is crucial for spiritual seekers because understanding that consciousness is not energy prevents the mistake of pursuing "energy alignment" practices as paths to self-realization.

Śakti: Two Aspects in Vedānta

Acharya Tadany clarified that Vedānta recognizes two aspects of Śakti, addressing misconceptions that Vedānta represents "male domination" by calling Śiva sat and Ambā mithyā:

- **Cit-Śakti (Caitanya-rūpā):** Śakti as the consciousness principle, as Ātmā—this is sat (real), the ultimate reality. This is invoked in prayers like Lalitā Sahasranāma as "Cit-Śakti-Caitanya-rūpā."
- **Jaḍa-Śakti (Jaḍātmikā):** Śakti as Prakṛti, as the matter principle—this is asat (mithyā). This too is referenced in Lalitā Sahasranāma.

A Vedānta student never simply answers "Is Śakti real or unreal?" without first asking "Which Śakti are you referring to?" When worshiping, Vedānta practitioners invoke both Prakṛti and Puruṣa, both Jaḍa-Śakti and Cit-Śakti. However, for the ultimate goal of mokṣa, one must recognize that only Cit-Śakti is sat, while Jaḍa-Śakti is asat.

Viveka: The Paradigm Shift

The entire teaching points toward viveka (discriminative knowledge)—recognizing that anātmā cannot provide psychological security, emotional happiness, or peace of mind. This is described as a "paradigm shift" or "cognitive change" (buddhi transformation):

- **The old direction:** Seeking fulfillment, happiness, and security from the anātmā world (the 24 tattvās)
- **The new direction:** Turning 180 degrees (not 360!) toward Ātmā as the only source of lasting peace and fulfillment

This is captured in the prayer "Asato mā sad gamaya" (Lead me from the unreal to the real). When we invoke any deity, if we seek sat (reality), we must invoke that deity as sat (as Brahman/Ātmā), not merely as Prakṛti.



Practical Application: Vairāgya and Purposeful Living

Acharya Tadany emphasized that Vedānta does not advocate renouncing worldly pursuits or achievements. Artha (wealth) and kāma (desires/pleasures) are legitimate puruṣārthas (goals of human life). The teaching is more nuanced:

- **Continue pursuing goals:** Buy houses, earn money, seek promotions, accomplish dreams
- **But with correct understanding:** Don't pursue these as sources of happiness, security, or fulfillment—they have utility and practical value, but cannot provide psychological peace
- **Result: True vairāgya:** With this understanding, one becomes naturally more detached (vairāgya), not through forced renunciation but through wisdom. You can actually enjoy what you have accomplished because you're not constantly comparing or craving the next thing.

Paradoxically, understanding that anātmā won't give you ultimate happiness allows you to be more objective and effective in worldly pursuits, often leading to greater achievements than those driven by desperate seeking.

Comparison: Sāṅkhya, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Vedānta

Acharya Tadany briefly compared different philosophical schools regarding the reality of Ātmā and Prakṛti:

- **Sāṅkhya:** Both Ātmā and Prakṛti are absolutely real (dvaita/dualism)
- **Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika:** Both are absolutely real, with an atomistic view of matter (dvaita)
- **Viśiṣṭādvaita:** Calls itself "qualified non-dualism" but is essentially dvaita—both are real
- **Advaita Vedānta:** Only Ātmā is real; Prakṛti is mithyā. Ātmā is not just real but the *only* reality.

These differences and defenses are elaborated in detail in the Brahma-Sūtra commentaries. The fundamental question is always how one perceives Prakṛti and Puruṣa—the matter principle and the consciousness principle.