

Epistemology and Metaphysics: The Advaita Vedantic Perspective

Program in which it is offered: M.A. Third Semester

Course Category: Elective (PG)

Stream-Philosophy, Psychology and Yoga

Course Credit Structure: 4

Lecture: 4

Tutorial: N.A.

Practical: N.A.

Contact Hours per week: 4

Course coordinator:Dr. Tulasi Kumar Joshi

1. Introduction

In the world of philosophy, the School of Advaita Vedanta is well known to all. The name Advaita itself is enough to introduce the doctrine of this school. It need not be introduced here in a broad way. The etymology of the word Advaita refers to a thing called 'Brahman' modified by the absence of Dvaita. Here the modifier does not have association with Brahman. According to the theory of Advaita Vedanta, except Brahman, everything is unreal. In this condition there comes the expectancy of a means of valid knowledge to establish the theory without any contradiction. This is the nature of all Indian Schools of Philosophy: to not accept anything without any evidence. Following the very nature of Schools of Indian Philosophy Advaita Vedanta accepts six means of knowledge. Using the means of knowledge this school of philosophy establishes its conclusion. This course is designed to make the comprehension of the epistemological and metaphysical aspects of Advaita Vedanta easy.

2. Course Objectives

- This course predominantly seeks to introduce students the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of 'Advaita Vedanta'.
- It also will explore a systematic way to introduce the traditional thoughts and also to introduce the way to present them in a lucid manner.
- This course includes the theories of other schools of philosophy too which will help the students to improve the breadth of their philosophical ideas.
- This course will also lead students to some philosophical problems in Indian Philosophy which could help them to undertake research works in the future.

3. Course outcome:

- Students will have explicit notion of the epistemological and the Metaphysical facets of Advaita-Vedanta.
- Students will be eligible to understand the relative principles found in some other schools of Indian philosophy.

4. Prerequisites

- This course requires the knowledge of epistemological concepts of the schools of Indian Philosophy to some extent.
- Students must have completed the 'Indic Philosophy - Foundational Principles' course.

4. Readings

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Swami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.
- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च), कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जैनकपुरी, नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

5. Module-wise topics

Module -1 – Means of valid cognition.

Sessions: 12

Objectives -

This module is made to introduce:

- the means of valid knowledge in Advaita Vedanta.
- the characteristics of valid cognition and its categories.
- perceptual cognition and its categories.
- the nature and cause of illusion.

Topics -

- Valid Knowledge and its Means.
- Perception as a means of Knowledge.
- Criterion of the perception of Cognition

- Vindicated definition of the perception of object.
- Determinate and Indeterminate perception.
- Perception by the witness of the Self and the witness of Ishvara.
- The Nature of Illusion.
- Dream Perception.
- Twofold destruction of Effects: Their bearing on error.

Readings -

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Swami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.
- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च), कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जनकपुरी, नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

Module -2 – Three means of Non-Perceptual Knowledge:

Sessions - 12

Objectives -

This module is dedicated to introduce:

- the process of Non-Perceptual Knowledge.
- the brevity in the process of Inference in comparison to other schools like Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika.
- Comparison as a distinct means from perception and Inference.
- the necessity of Postulation as a different means of Knowledge.

Topics -

- Inference; Definition and Rectification
- Form of Invariable concomitance.
- How to ascertain the invariable concomitance.
- Difference between Advaita Vedanta and Nyāya syllogism.
- Comparison; Definition and Process.
- Comparison; as a distinct means of Knowledge
- Postulation; Definition and Types.
- Postulation; As a Distinct Means of Knowledge

Readings -

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Swami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.
- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च),

कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जनकपुरी,
नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

Module -3 – Verbal Testimony

Sessions - 12

Objectives -

This module seeks to:

- give a comprehensive structure of Verbal Testimony.
- introduce the process of Verbal Testimony.
- introduce the meaning of a word.
- introduce that how Śabda can even serve as a means of immediate knowledge.
- give a strong argument to prove that Vedas are not written.

Topics -

- Āgama-Pramāṇam; Definition and Rectification
- Verbal-Knowledge; As a unique experience.
- The four conditions of Verbal knowledge
- The relation between a word and its meaning
- Primary and implied meanings of words and sentences.
- Śabda; As means of immediate knowledge
- The twofold capacity of verbal testimony.
- Verbal Knowledge; As a vehicle of supra-sensuous knowledge.
- The Śruti; As the only means to the knowledge of Non-dual Brahman

Readings -

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Śwami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.
- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च), कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जनकपुरी, नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

Module -4 – Non- Apprehension: The way of Apprehending Non-Existence, Prāmāṇyavāda

Sessions - 12

Objectives -

- To introduce the means of the knowledge of non-existence.

- To introduce the different views on the existence of non-existence.
- To introduce the categories of Non-existence with their respective forms.

Topics -

- Anupalabdhi: As the means to the valid knowledge of non-existence.
- Definition of Anupalabdhi and necessity of its acceptance.
- The counter view of Nyāya and its resolution.
- Prāmāṇyavādaḥ: Perspectives from Advaita Vedanta.

Readings -

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Swami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.
- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च), कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जनकपुरी, नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

Module - 5 - Metaphysics of Advaita Vedanta

Sessions - 12

Objectives -

- To introduce the Metaphysical aspects of Advaita Vedanta.

Topics:

- Adhyāsa: Definition, cause and types.
- Brahman: Definition and Proof.
- Iṣavara and Jīva: Definition.
- Creation of the World.
- Purpose of Advaita Vedanta.
- Meaning of Mahāvākya: “Tat tvam asi” .
- Means of Self-Knowledge: Definition.

Readings -

- Satyaprakashananda S (2013), Methods of Knowledge, Published by Advaita Ashram, Kolkata 700014.
- Mādhavānanda S, Vedānta- Paribhaṣā, Swami Vimuktananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur Math, Howrah.

- वेदान्तपरिभाषा (मणिप्रभाख्यटीकासंवलितया शिखामणिटीका विभूषिता च), कुलसचिवः, राष्ट्रियसंस्कृतसंस्थानम्, ५६-५७ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल् एरिया जनकपुरी, नईदिल्ली, पिन- ११००५८.

6. Pedagogy

This course will mostly consist of lectures based on the reading material. Some multimedia components are also included. The student is expected to participate actively in class.

7. Evaluation Pattern:

Given below is the evaluation pattern.

- End-Sem exam: 40%
- Mid-Sem exam: 25%
- Module Assignment: 20%
- Presentation: 15%

Module assignments will be given in class by the teacher at the end of each module.