

Understanding the 'Rope-Snake' through the Madhva System - A rejoinder.

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The preamble : The article, "Understanding the 'Rope-Snake' through the Madhva System," authored by Mr. Vaidyanathan Subramanian, an internet blogger, aims to reconcile the ontologies of Madhva and Śaṅkara. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that there is a deliberate effort to misrepresent Madhva's ontology, portraying it as borrowed. The article demonstrates a significant misunderstanding of Madhva's philosophy and even lacks comprehension of the blogger's own school of thought. This review will highlight these shortcomings and also reject the claim of borrowing ideas by Madhva, as well as the flawed effort made in 'comparing' and even 'pairing' the broader ontological classification of Madhva and Śaṅkara, such as 'pāramāthika-satya & svatantra-tattva', and 'vyāvahārika-satya & asvatantra-tattva or paratantra-tattva', as one and the same.

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Introduction : Can we have knowledge about the fundamental nature of being? To what extent does language and conceptual understanding limit our ability to know the true nature of things? Are there aspects of reality that are inherently knowable and/or unknowable? Madhva responds to such questions as follows,

स्वतन्त्रमस्वतन्त्रं च द्विविधं **तत्त्व**मिष्यते । स्वतन्त्रो भगवान् विष्णुः भावाभावौ द्विधैतरत् ॥ (तत्त्वसङ्ख्यानम्)  
and

स्वतन्त्रं परतन्त्रं च **प्रमेयं** द्विविधं मतम् । स्वतन्त्रो भगवान् विष्णुः निर्दोषाखलिसद्गुणः ॥ (तत्त्वविवेकः)

In one swift move, Madhva has comprehensively addressed all that is 'knowable' in the universe, perceived (through valid means of knowledge) exactly as they are. There is no contrast between a thing 'as it is' and 'as it appears' (to valid knowledge). This is termed 'tattvam' (=prameyam) because, by definition, it is not superimposed: 'tattvam anārôpitam pramiti-viṣayah'. The 'tattvam remains the object of valid knowledge (pramiti-viṣayah) always (meaning, **it is pramā-viṣaya even in transcendental state**).

Śaṅkara's 'tattvam' is also 'anāropita,' but in its transcendental state, it is not an object of valid knowledge for two reasons. Firstly, in that state, the subject-object matrix has vanished (relative aspect has vanished). Secondly, in that state, there is absence of methods of knowing, not only of the empirical type but also of the scriptural kind, (refer Śaṅkara's BSB : 4.1.3 : śruter'pyabhāvaḥ prabôdhê) as they have phenomenal relevance only (refer : adhyāsa bhāṣhya : avidyāvadvaiṣayāṅyeva pratyakṣādini pramāṇāni, śāstrāni ca). Thus, while Śaṅkara's 'tattvam' is 'anāropita,' it is not pramā-viśaya in the transcendental state. This must be noted.

The concept of 'tattvam' as conceived by Madhva and Śaṅkara: Given the divergence in the conception of 'tattvam' as detailed above, let us examine whether the ontological understanding of 'tattvam' in the thoughts of Madhva and Śaṅkara aligns or not.

Accepting the ontological conceptions viz., pāramārthika-satya and svatantra-tattva as 'comparable' will render the pāramārthika-satya (tattvam) of Śaṅkara into both nirviśeṣa-tattva and sa-viśeṣa-tattva, which is not his view at all. Śaṅkara's view is that his conception of 'tattvam' is 'sajātiya-vijātiya-svagata-nānātva-śūnyam'. The term nānā means differences (bhêda). The differences are three-fold viz., 'sajātiya-pratīyogika-bhêda', 'vijātiya-pratīyogika-bhêda', and 'svagata-pratīyogika-bhêda' and they are negated in Brahman by êkamêvadvitīyam śruti-text, and thus Brahman is nirviśeṣa-tattva. If pāramārthika-satya and svatantra-tattva are accepted as a 'pair,' in their ontological import, then Śaṅkara's Brahman will become ubhayaliṅga (nirviśeṣa and sa-viśeṣa), which he outrightly rejected in his Brahma-Sutra-Bhāṣya (refer: ubhayaliṅgādhikaraṇam). It should be noted that the svatantra-tattva of Madhva is always sa-viśeṣa.

Was the aforementioned fact taken into consideration by the blogger before attempting to 'pair' pāramārthika-satya and svatantra-tattva, which contradicts Śaṅkara's philosophy? In view of the above, it becomes clear that Madhva's conception of 'tattvam' cannot align with that of Śaṅkara's.

On the Question of Borrowal of Ideas by Madhva : If Madhva, arriving later than Śaṅkara, indeed gleaned insights from Śaṅkara to formulate his ontological classification into svatantra-tattva and paratantra-tattva, mirroring Śaṅkara's delineation of pāramārthika-satya and vyāvahārika-satya, then, can we say that Śaṅkara, emerging subsequent to Nāgārjuna, might have been similarly influenced by the profound ideas of Nāgārjuna? Śaṅkara, appearing on the intellectual horizon after Nāgārjuna, whom Vācaspati Miśra warmly acclaimed as possessing an unparalleled-intellect (prakṛṣṭha-mati), could very well have assimilated Nāgārjuna's doctrines encapsulated in the following declaration,

द्वे सत्ये समुपाश्रित्य बुद्धानां धर्मदेशना।  
लोक संवृतिसत्यं च सत्यं च परमार्थितः॥

The two forms of truth, as delineated in Nāgārjuna's philosophy, are samvṛti-satya (conventional-truth) and paramārtha-satya (ultimate-truth). Nāgārjuna posits that the teachings of Bhagavān Buddha should be comprehended through the lens of these two truths, as they form the framework for understanding the depths of Buddha's teachings.

Can it also be said that the māyāvāda school of Śaṅkara, which came later to the mādhyamika-vāda of Nagarjuna *in time*, is no exception to the rule in drawing upon ideas of earlier thinkers for their own? This is evident in the case of Śaṅkara, who introduced the concept of vyāvahārika-satya and pāramārthika-satya, mirroring Nāgārjuna's idea of samvṛti-satya (conventional-truth) and paramārtha-satya (ultimate-truth), albeit under different terminology (viz., : vyāvahārika-satya and pāramārthika-satya). Will the charge made against Madhva not rebound? Yes it does.

Let us explore the alignment between samvṛti-satya & vyāvahārika-satya and paramārtha-satya & pāramārthika-satya based on Nāgārjuna's metaphysical ideas viz., द्वे सत्ये समुपाश्रित्य बुद्धानां धर्मदेशना। लोक संवृतिसत्यं च सत्यं च परमार्थितः॥

Inquiring about samvṛti-satya, as elucidated by Śāntideva in Bodhisattvacharyāvātara, where he interprets the term samvṛti-satya as avidyā hi samvṛtiḥ upapadyate (Ignorance is conventional truth, indeed.), we gain valuable insights into the philosophical nuances surrounding conventional truth.

Further, what does 'avidyā' / 'ignorance' signify? Śāntideva clarifies his usage of the term 'avidyā' as 'the non-apprehension of reality, mistaking the false for the true is ignorance'. (tatve'pratipattiḥ mithyā pratipattir ajñānam avidyā) Or Ignorance or avidyā obstructs our perception of ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya) by superimposing non-existent attributes onto reality.

Expanding on samvṛti-satya, Śāntideva provides a second definition of it viz., pratītya-samutpannam vastu-rūpam samvṛtiḥ. Alternatively, the term samvṛtiḥ also refers to an object dependent on a substratum for its existence. In essence, Śāntideva conveys that the term samvṛtiḥ signifies phenomenal-reality. The phenomenal, upon examination, reveals itself as illusory. This deduction forms the third understanding of the concept of samvṛti.

In contrast to samvṛti-satya,' the 'paramārtha-satya' is described by Śāntideva as 'the ultimate truth surpassing all conventions,' where 'all conventions' signify the distinction between subject and object, (i.e., 'samvṛti-satya')

How is this 'paramārtha-satya' experienced? Śāntideva asserts, 'It is apprehended by the noble ones within themselves.' (āryāṇāmēva pratyātmavêdyam)

The purpose of this division of truth/reality, according to Nāgārjuna, is revealed as follows:

व्यवहारम् अनाश्रित्य परमार्थो नादेश्यते।

परमार्थम् अनागम्य निर्वाणं नाधिगम्यते।।

'By not abandoning the conventional, the ultimate truth is not taught. Without reaching the ultimate, nirvana is not attained, which means achieving 'paramārtha' necessitates engagement with 'vyavahāra' and attaining nirvana hinges on realizing the highest truth within oneself.

The philosophical inclination of [mādhyaṃika-vāda](#) ('sūnyavāda') expressed herein bears some semblance to [māyāvāda](#) and it resonates with it in some aspects. The agreement or disagreement between them lies entirely within their discourse.

Now, let us proceed to examine whether Madhva's concepts of svatantra-tattva and paratantra-tattva align with Śaṅkara's notions of the pāramārthika-satya and vyāvahārika-satya.

A note on the distinction between 'orders of reality' and 'levels of reality' is essential here. The former typically pertains to different categories of existence, while the latter refers to stages within a single reality.

In terms of ontology, the concept of 'levels of reality' contradicts Madhva's tattva-vāda, just as 'orders of reality' opposes Śaṅkara's māyāvāda. It's crucial not to conflate these perspectives. We should never confuse one for the other. This is precisely why the doctors of Madhva's tattva-vāda place special emphasis on comprehending the term 'dvi-vidham' (द्विविधं [तत्त्वमिष्यते](#) or [प्रमेयं](#) द्विविधं मतम्) as '[prakāra-bheda](#)'.

It seems evident from the blogger's article that he missed the distinction the concept of 'prakāra-bheda' has, as he referred to Madhva's ontological classification as 'levels of reality.' This represents a clear-cut instance of misunderstanding. How fascinating! The internet article on Madhva's philosophy, which the blogger took up for closer examination, talks about 'orders of reality' at the outset itself, but the blogger boldly decided to spice things up and called it 'levels of reality' of Madhva!

The ontological background of Madhva and Śaṅkara : It's crucial to grasp the ontological background of Madhva and Śaṅkara before we proceed further.

Madhva derives his ontology from the Vedas, which have been transmitted through exegetical and interpretative texts. The Vedas and its exegetical texts, collectively referred to, by Madhva, as '[sadāgamāh](#)', forms the foundation of his ontology. The Vedic source that Madhva has drawn is found redacted in Śrīmad-Bhagavatam, which serves as the bedrock of his ontology. This source is briefly elucidated below.

द्रव्यं कर्म च कालश्च स्वभावो जीव एव च।  
यदनुग्रहतस्सन्ति न सन्ति यदुपेक्षया ॥

The real-entities which are eternal, such as द्रव्य, कर्म, काल, स्वभाव, and जीव, (and others...) exist due to the grace of Śrī Hari, not in spite of Him. This represents the pinnacle of transcendence in its purest essence, where the will & grace (divine sport) of Śrī Hari hold the utmost significance (refer: the aphorism [लोकवत्तु लीलाकैवल्यम्](#)). This is precisely why Madhva disagrees with both the ontology based on the 'idea of 'appearance'' of द्रव्य, कर्म, काल, स्वभाव, जीव, (and others) on Brahman, and the other ontology which is based on the 'idea of inseparable existence'' of द्रव्य, कर्म, काल, स्वभाव, जीव, (and others) from brahman, like the dependence of the body on the soul for its sustenance.

Madhva's concept that the entire universe, encompassing both sentient and insentient entities, exists by the will and grace of Śrī Hari - the vedantic Brahman - sharply contradicts the notion that the universe is a mere appearance on the substratum, Brahman. Madhva's perspective also challenges the idea of an inseparable existence akin to the relationship between the body and soul, where the body relies on the soul for its existence and development. Hence, the notion of borrowing ideas and expressing them in different language-forms is nothing but a product of the imagination of skeptics or doubting Thomases. Once again, it is apparent that the blogger did not have this information at hand when asserting the claim of borrowing ideas. This lack of awareness is glaringly evident in the claim.

In Madhva's ontology, the ontological categories (padārthāḥ), both eternal & non-eternal, and the sentients & insentients maintain an absolute metaphysical dependence on Brahman. These categories, by definition, possess the characteristic of being cognized exclusively through valid knowledge (pramêyatvam padārthasya lakṣaṇam).

The ontological categories (padārthāḥ) of Madhva's tattva-vāda are ten-fold (ten distinct categories) : dravya, guṇa, karma, sāmānya, viśeṣa, viśiṣṭa, amśi, śakti, sādṛśya, and abhāva. Despite the infinite number of entities in the universe, only these ten are explicitly listed, Why? The explanation lies in the fact that the infinite multitude of things are subsumed under one of these categories, such as dravyatva or guṇatva, and the like, illustrating the comprehensive nature of the padārtha-prakāra (viz., dravyatva-prakāra or guṇatva-prakāra...so on)

The entire universe, consisting of eternal and non-eternal entities, as well as the sentient and the insentient, falls under the category of dravyatva-prakāra, known as substances. These substances are twenty-fold, viz., paramātmā, lakṣmī, jīva, avyakṛtākāśa, prakṛti, guṇa-traya, mahat-tattva, ahaṅkāra-tattva, buddhi, manaḥ, indriya, mātrā, bhūta, brahmāṇḍa, avidyā, varṇa, andhakāra, vāsanā, kāla, and prati-bimba.

Dravya or substance is defined as : dravaṇa-prapyatvam dravya-sāmānyalakṣaṇam, dravaṇam cha gamanam or to put it simply it means dravaṇena dhāvanena prāpyaṁ prātuṁ योग्यम् (The pursuit and attainment of a worthy goal, characterized by the process of becoming which is dynamically full of vim and vigor {dravaṇena or dhāvanena}, and transformative leading to the fulfillment of purpose). The inherent potentials that define nature and function of each ontological entity, these (potentials) are intricately tied to the entity's ontological category and contribute to its role in the cosmic order. dravanena dhāvanena prāpyaṁ prātuṁ योग्यम् is a feature that belongs to each member of the dravya-domain or substance-domain enumerated above.

Upādāna-kāraṇatvam (material-causality) is another definition for dravya, which is two-fold (prakāra): pariṇāma and abhivyākti. Five out of the twenty substances (dravyaṇi), viz.,

paramātma, lakṣmī, jīva, avyakṛtākāśa, and varṇa, have [abhivyākti-karana](#); the other fifteen, viz., prakṛti, guṇatraya, mahat-tattva, ahaṅkāra-tattva, buddhi, manaḥ, indriya, mātra, bhūta, brahmāṇḍa, avidyā, andhakāra, vāsanā, kāla, and pratibimba, have [parināma-karana](#).

Modification is pariṇāma, whereas manifestation is abhivyākti.

- The mūla-rūpa of Brahman is abhivyañjaka (revealing or manifesting cause) for the avatāra-rūpa, viz., Rama, Krishna, and the like. This is called abhivyākti-karaṇa.
- The śānti-mantra - ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥ - is understood in the sense of [abhivyañjaka concept of causality here](#). However, there is no distinction whatsoever between the mūla rūpa and avatāra rūpa.
- The mūla-rūpa of Lakshmi becomes abhivyañjaka (revealing or manifesting cause) for the avatāra-rūpa, viz., Sita and Rukmini, and the like.
- The souls (jīva) have amśābhivyañjaka and parādhīna-abhivyañjaka causes depending on whether they are saṁśā or niraṁśā souls.
- The avyakṛtākāśa has parādhīna-abhivyañjaka cause by way of contact of the matter with the space.
- The varṇa is abhivyañjaka to varṇāntara, like the aṣṭākṣara in the omkāra is abhivyañjaka to the aṣṭākṣara found in the nārāyaṇāṣṭākṣara. The tantra-sāra-saṅgraha of Madhva captures minute details of abhivyañjaka cause of varṇas.

First and foremost, among the substances, is the [parāmatma-dravya](#) or [pradhāna-dravya](#) (understood in the sense of [dravaṇa-prapyatvam](#)). Keeping this in mind, the pre-eminent commentator in the Madhva tradition, Jayatīrtha, defines it as [dravyam bhagavān iti](#).



Madhva's vision of the Vedantic Brahman, the highest ontological reality or svatantra-tattva, and its description is as follows:

prāramātmā ananta-guṇa-paripūrṇaḥ, sṛṣṭyādyāṣṭa-kartā, sarvajñaḥ,  
parama-mukhyavṛtyā sakala-śabda-vācyaḥ, jada-jīva-prakṛtibhyô-atyanta-vilakṣaṇaḥ,  
jñānānandyātmaka-kalyāṇa-vigrahvān, sarva-svatantraḥ, eka eva, nānā-rūpaḥ,  
sarvāṅyapi-rūpāṅi-pūrṇāni, svarūpa-guṇa-avayva-kriyādibhiḥ atyantābhinnaḥ.

In the ontology of māyāvāda, the categories (padārthāḥ) are mainly two: dṛk and dṛśya, although further sub-divisions are accepted within the latter dṛśya category. The dṛk is pāramārthika-satya, and the dṛśya is vyāvahārika-satya.

Śaṅkara's vision of the Vedantic Brahman, the highest ontological reality or pāramārthika-satya, and its description is as follows:

dṛk-padārtha ātmā, pāramartha ekaḥ, sarvadā-ekarūpōpi aupādhika-bhedena trividhaḥ, (1) Īśvaraḥ, (2) jīvaḥ, (3) sākṣī ceti, tatra kāraṇībhūta-ajñānōpadhiḥ Īśvaraḥ, antaḥkaraṇa tat-saṃskārāvachinna ajñānōpahito jīvaḥ, avidyā-pratibimbeśvara(pakṣe, according to one school of thought) bimba-caitanyaṃ-sākṣī, bimbeśvara(pakṣe tu, according to another school of thought) bimba-pratibimba-sukhanugata-sukha-svarūpavat jīveśvarānugataṃ sarvānusandhātṛ caitanya sākṣī (ityucyate).

The "dṛk" that is pāramārthika-satya is not a dravya in Śaṅkara's thought; therefore, the dravaṇa-prapyatva, as a mark of the highest divinity conceived by Madhva, doesn't align with Śaṅkara's conception of the highest divinity.

When the basis of the respective ontological positions of Madhva and Śaṅkara concerning Brahman are so different, the attempt to compare them fails both logic and reason.

Unsurprisingly, the blogger lacked any inkling of this; had he possessed such knowledge, he wouldn't have asserted the claim of borrowing ideas and conflating them as identical.

Madhva's vision of the Vedantic Brahman, the highest ontological reality or svatantra-tattva, as a 'cause' is that He is: *śṛṣṭyādyaṣṭa-kartā*, but at the sametime he is *jada-jīva-prakṛtibhyô-atyanta-vilakṣaṇaḥ*, this makes it clear that He is *nimitta-kāraṇa*.

Śaṅkara's vision of the Vedantic Brahman, the highest ontological reality or pāramārthika-satya, as a 'cause' is defined as : *brahmaṅschôpādānatvam advitīya-kūṣṭha-caitanyarūpasya na parāmāṇāunāmiva ārambhakatva-rūpam, na vā prakṛter,iva pariṇāmitva-rūpam kiṃtu avidyayā viyadādi-prapañca-rūpena vivartamanatva lakṣaṇam*, (refer : *siddhāntaleśasamgraha*), this makes it clear that Brahman is *abhinna-nimittaôpadāna-kāraṇa* (the 'cause' understood in the sense of efficient and material cause), though the underlying edifice, which is nirguṇa-Brahman, is not undergoing any vikāra or modification (*brahmaṇi prapañca-bhānasya pariṇāmābhāvô nāṅgikriyate*), yet there is an illusory reflection of viyadādi-prapañca on Brahman.

A note on causality (upādānatā): By the term upādānatā, both efficient and material causality is understood in the school of Śaṅkara. Brahman is the efficient cause with respect to śṛṣṭi and sthiti, but Brahman is the material cause with respect to laya, because, in laya or dissolution, there is materiality; (only matter can dissolve), and hence Brahman is the material cause with respect to laya or dissolution. This is how upādānatā (*abhinna-nimittaôpadāna-kāraṇatā*) is understood.

The scholars of māyāvāda concur on the efficient and material causality of Brahman, but there is no consensus when it comes to elucidating the components of efficient causality and material causality (of Brahman, as a cause). Some assert that śṛṣṭi, sthiti, laya individually define Brahman as a cause, while others contend that they (śṛṣṭi, sthiti, laya) are inseparable because Brahman is both the efficient and material cause of the universe.

The scholars of māyāvāda agree on the efficient and material causality of Brahman, but there is no consensus when it comes to elucidating the location or, more precisely, the locus of upādānatā. There is widespread disagreement on this matter, contingent upon whether māyā and avidyā are perceived as a unified entity or distinct entities. (All divergent views are encapsulated in the work Siddhāntaleśasamgraha).

Some assert that upādānatā resides in shuddha-Brahman, while others argue that it resides in upahita Brahman (Ishvara, delimited by māyā). There are even divergent views, with some positing that upādānatā resides in Ishvara, who is the cause for space and the like. Additionally, there is a perspective suggesting that Ishvara and jīva (delimited by avidyā) collectively serve as the upādānakārana for the internal organ (antahkarana), while others disagree with this, asserting that jīva alone is the upādānakārana for the internal organ. There is another view that posits the upādānatā residing in shuddha-Brahma concerning the appearance or manifestation (vivarta) of vyāvahārika-satya, while for the pratibhāsika-satya, the upādānatā resides in jīva, and so forth (refer: Siddhāntaleśasamgraha)

When the conception of 'cause' is so vastly different between Madhva and Śāṅkara', (and differences within the thought of Śāṅkara' are so numerous), how is it ever possible to 'pair' pāramārthika-satya and svatantra-tattva, claiming them to be one and the same? Again, the claim that svatantra-tattva is a borrowing from Śāṅkara's pāramārthika-satya under a different guise contradicts logic and reason.

A preliminary examination of Madhva's paratantra-tattva and Śāṅkara's vyāvahārika-satya : Let us now examine whether Madhva's paratantra-tattva has any relation whatsoever to Śāṅkara's vyāvahārika-satya.

Madhva's paratantra-domain is: lakṣmī, jīva, avyakṛtākāśa, prakṛti, guṇa-traya, mahat-tattva, ahaṅkāra-tattva, buddhi, manaḥ, indriya, mātrā, bhūta, brahmāṇḍa, avidyā, varṇa, andhakāra, vāsanā, kāla, and prati-bimba and they are all substances.

Śaṅkara's vyāvahārika-domain is: *Dṛśya*. It is described as *avidyā tadvyāpya tatkāryātmakaḥ prapañcô dṛśya padārthaḥ*, so'pi trividhaḥ avyakṛta-mūrtāmūrta-bhedāt. In Śaṅkara's thought, *dṛśya* is not considered a *dravya*. Consequently, neither *avidyā* nor its effect, the *avyakṛta-mūrtāmūrta-bhedāt*, is regarded as a *dravya*. *Avidyā* cannot be described (as *dravya*) as *avidyā* is *anirvacanīya*.

Hence, Madhva's paratantra-tattva and Śaṅkara's vyāvahārika-satya cannot be compared at all. While Madhva considers it as *dravya*, Śaṅkara views it as non-*dravya*. The details under each classification of Madhva's paratantra-tattva differ from Śaṅkara's vyāvahārika-satya to such varying degrees that a comparison is simply not possible.

The rope-snake analogy: Utilizing the rope-snake illusion as a means to gain a lucid comprehension of Madhva's svatantra and paratantra ontological classification is, fundamentally, an illogical proposition. This argument represents a total misunderstanding of the distinct realms that should pertain to metaphysics and epistemology. Through this analogy an attempt is made to forge a connection between a perceptual fallacy, embodied in the rope-snake illusion, and the nuanced ontological classifications (svatantra-tattva and paratantra-tattva) in Madhva's philosophy. This juxtaposition of the theory of error and the theory of ontology is inherently flawed, as the rope-snake illusion primarily addresses perceptual errors, not the intricacies of metaphysics. Consequently, the analogy not only fails to elucidate the subject matter but introduces confusion by erroneously mixing up the domains of epistemology and metaphysics. In essence, the attempt to employ the rope-snake illusion as a metaphor for understanding Madhva's ontological classifications is an unsound endeavor.

Error, or *viparyaya* is, apramā proper. Errors can be numerous and varied. However, from an epistemological standpoint, errors are classified as:

1. Perceptual error,
2. Inferential error, and
3. Testimonial error.

The perceptual error is known as bhrama or bhrānti, defined as the mistaken apprehension (viparīta niścaya) of one thing for another, such as mistaking a rope for a snake. Viparyaya represents a 'definite form of knowledge'. Unlike doubt, where the mind 'oscillates' (due to uncertainty), but in the case of error or viparyaya, the mind decisively veers in the wrong direction and aligns with an incorrect judgment (in this case, a snake) and stays with it for a moment (dhī-kāla). The rope, appearing in bhrānti as an object of knowledge, does not manifest as rope, but it manifests as snake: 'astaḥ satvapratītiḥ; sato astvapratītiḥ' iti anyathā pratīterēva bhrāntivāt (refer : Viṣṇu-tattva-nirṇaya of Madhva and the commentary thereon)

Upon investigation, it is revealed that a rope is on the floor, giving rise to an 'experience' in which an unreal snake seemed to exist in the place where the rope is now observed. This assessment provides a realistic understanding of the illusion based on a solid foundation of 'experience'. Shouldn't the focus have been on the 'knowledge aspect' more precisely 'truth and error' rather than delving into metaphysical assumptions here? It seems that the concept of anirvācanīya-khyāti is being incorporated into Madhva's ontological framework. Well, this is just a truly remarkable feat! Nothing more needs to be said here.

Relation between Brahman and the world in Madhva's system: 'Brahma satyam jagan mithyā, jīvo Brahmaiva na aparah' (Brahman alone is Real, and the world is unreal. The jīva, soul, is none other than Brahman) is deliberately read into the statement viz., "Though Brahman can do very well without prakriti or purusa (Dependent Realities), it prefers, in its infinite glory and inexorable will, 'to do with them'. Such dependence (apeksa) of Brahman on things which are in themselves dependent on It, is no mark of inferiority or limitation". The deliberately intended meaning is not conveyed by that phrase at all.

The phrase 'infinite glory and inexorable will' is crucial here, as the authority quoted earlier on, attests to its profound significance in the context under consideration: द्रव्यं कर्म च कालश्च स्वभावो जीव एव च। यदनुग्रहतस्सन्ति न सन्ति यदुपेक्षया ॥

A potter requires implements such as a wheel, a stick, a lump of clay, and a heating system to produce pots. He needs to set up the wheel first, then place the lump of clay at the center of the wheel, rotate the wheel using a stick, give the lump of clay a shape, and then remove it to a heating system before a pot is produced. The potter can neither do away with any of the 18 implements and/or shortcut the process; the potter is utterly dependent on the implements and the process. Śrī Hari is not dependent like this; He can do it without any of the implements and by totally altering the process (*kartum, akartum, anyathā cāpi kartum shaktah*), but He has chosen not to do so out of his 'infinite glory and inexorable will.' It must be noted that something coming out of nothing is not Vedantic thought at all. This must be borne in mind while understanding such statements.

//The following words, of the Article on the Madhva system, in particular bring out, in unambiguous terms, the illusory nature of the dependent reality constituting the created world and the bound jiva-s.//

///The dependence of the world of matter and the souls on Brahman is in the sense that both are functioning at His will, which is the essential condition and sustaining principle that invests them with their reality and without which they would be but void names and bare possibilities.///

//Thus, the fate of paratantra/vyavaharika 'reality' is now settled once and for all.//

None of it, Madhva's assertion is unequivocal:

...विश्वमीश्वरः, सदा पश्यति, तेनेदं न मायेत्यवधार्यताम् (refer: Tattvodyota).

In cosmic corridors, the Lord's gaze gracefully glides,  
Perceive, profound perception in truth abides.  
No illusion lingers, as His vision vividly guides,  
In divine design, reality's rhythm resides.

This resounding declaration illuminates the profound insight that through the act of seeing, the undeniable reality of the material (sentient) and spiritual (insentient) realms existing outside the vast expanse of the divine intellect is comprehended—the realms firmly under His absolute metaphysical control. Consequently, Madhva's paratantra-tattva stands unwavering, impervious to any classification as mithyā. Can there be a more deliberate misrepresentation than equating Madhva's paratantra-tattva with mithyā?"

In the following, I will review some of the observations made by the blogger and provide pointed criticisms.

//Thus, the fate of paratantra/vyavaharika 'reality' is now settled once and for all.//

Wrong! It's far from settled and will remain so until the contradiction is resolved between these two positions within the school of Śaṅkara:

- यथा च कारणं ब्रह्म त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचरति, एवं कार्यमपि जगत त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचरति (refer : Śaṅkara's BSB, 2.1.16)

(of course, understood with this background : कथं प्रागुत्पत्तेरिदमासीदित्युच्यते ? ननु न श्रुतं त्वया, सदेवेत्यवधारणम् 'इदं', शब्दवाच्यस्य कार्यस्य । (refer: Chandôgya Bhāshya 6.2.2), {in 'undifferentiated state' (ananya), the world is sat, in 'differentiated state, (anya), the world is asat},

When asked, the shruti-text says that it is (kārya-jagat) 'asat' even in 'undifferentiated state', Śaṅkara says : ननु क्वचिदसत्त्वमपि प्रागुत्पत्तेः कार्यस्य व्यपदिशति श्रुतिः — 'असदेवेदमग्र आसीत्' (छा. उ. ३ । १९ । १) इति, 'असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत्' (तै. उ. २ । ७ । १) इति च । तस्मादसद्व्यपदेशान्न प्रागुत्पत्तेः कार्यस्य सत्त्वमिति चेत् — नेति ब्रूमः । न ह्ययमत्यन्तासत्त्वाभिप्रायेण प्रागुत्पत्तेः कार्यस्यासद्व्यपदेशः; किं तर्हि ? — व्याकृतनामरूपत्वाद्धर्मादव्याकृतनामरूपत्वं धर्मान्तरम्; तेन धर्मान्तरेणायमसद्व्यपदेशः प्रागुत्पत्तेः सत एव कार्यस्य कारणरूपेणानन्यस्य । कथमेतदवगम्यते ? वाक्यशेषात् । यदुपक्रमे सन्दिग्धार्थं वाक्यं तच्छेषान्निश्चीयते । इह च तावत् 'असदेवेदमग्र आसीत्' इत्यसच्छब्देनोपक्रमे निर्दिष्टं यत् , तदेव पुनस्तच्छब्देन परामृश्य, सदिति विशिनष्टि — 'तत्सदासीत्' इति — असतश्च पूर्वापरकालासम्बन्धात् आसीच्छब्दानुपपत्तेश्च । 'असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत्' (तै. उ. २ । ७ । १) इत्यत्रापि 'तदात्मानं स्वयमकुरुत' (तै. उ. २ । ७ । १) इति वाक्यशेषे विशेषणान्नात्यन्तासत्त्वम् ।

तस्माद्धर्मान्तरेणैवायमसद्व्यपदेशः प्रागुत्पत्तेः कार्यस्य । नामरूपव्याकृतं हि वस्तु सच्छब्दार्हं लोके प्रसिद्धम् । अतः प्राङ्नामरूपव्याकरणादसद्विवासीदित्युपचर्यते ॥ (refer : Śaṅkara's BSB, 2.1.17) ॥

- ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या, जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः,

In Madhva's philosophy, Śrī Hari, the Vedantic Brahman, is always distinct from the realms of matter and souls: jada-jīva-prakṛtibhyō-atyanta-vilakṣaṇaḥ. Therefore, the concept of 'ananyatva' in Śaṅkara cannot be equated with the 'atyanta-vilakṣaṇaḥ' concept in Madhva."

Not sure, on what basis a conclusion was drawn, stating that the fate of paratantra/vyavaharika 'reality' is now settled once and for all.

//Thus, even though the language used to give expression to the 'Brahman/jagat/jiva triad' is different in the two schools, essentially they mean the same. Recognizing and accepting this would lead to harmony; the opposite is only acrimony. (This is one area where scholars could focus upon so as to work out a harmony.)//

No, the language is never the same, just see ... विश्वमीश्वरः, सदा पश्यति, तेनेदं न मायेत्यवधार्यताम

... but why is the language so different within the same system of thought, viz., यथा च कारणं ब्रह्म त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचरति, एवं कार्यमपि जगत् त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचरति and ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या, जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः

On the question of the 'Will' of Brahman behind the creation and placing souls in bondage: Bhagāvan Bādarāyaṇa-vyāsa has answered this question thus: vaiṣamyanairghṛṇye na sāpekṣatvāttathāhi darśayati ॥

Note that the same question applies to māyavāda: Why was the 'paradise lost' to become 'many' via 'vivarta'? The ekajīvavāda theory is even more excruciating, asserting that there is one animated soul (Hiraṇyagarbha), while others are mere reflected images of it. Wouldn't it be



better to be real and active, even if it comes with concomitant pain and pleasure, than to be a mere reflected image?

//Would it not be logical, therefore, to 'separate' Brahman from Maya? This would ensure that there is no longer samsara. We have seen earlier that samsara (world and jiva) is 'dependent' on the 'will' of Brahman. So, when Brahman's Maya/Will is 'separated' from Brahman, samsara, having no support, will collapse/vanish/cease to be. That this is a clear possibility is what has been assured in the quoted lines above//

This is truly perplexing! No scholar from the Śāṅkara's school of thought would dare suggest something as audacious as trying to 'separate' Brahman from māyā. Why? Because māyā, by definition, is svābhinna-kārya-janakatva-shakti (bīja-śakti)! Furthermore, the māyā has no reality of its own apart from Brahman; how can anyone even talk of separation?

To conclude: The 'peculiar samanvaya' proposed by the blogger lacks a foundation in the architectonic metaphysical structure of Madhva's thought. It's more like a wild guess that has gone completely awry. Addressing this is an act of reasoned critique; intentionally distorting the tenets of a specific school of thought amounts to acrimony. Hence, it becomes imperative for us to return to the original ideas put forth by system builders, rather than engaging in speculative conjectures without basis. While diverse perspectives enrich discussions, a nuanced understanding rooted in the foundational principles ensures a more fruitful engagement with philosophical discourse/s.

Appendix: A note on "dravya" or substance,

Quality (guṇa) is found in dravya or substance, but guṇa doesn't belong to the dravya category. This means that dravya and guṇa are different categories.

Now, when we wonder how a guṇa can be in a dravya since they're in different categories, Indian logicians say there's a special connection called "samavāya" that links a guṇa to a dravya.

However, opponents argue this is unnecessary or confusing. If we need samavāya because it connects the two otherwise unrelated things, what connects samavāya to a dravya? If we suggest another relationship, it leads to an endless loop. That's why the idea of a samavāya relationship stands rejected. Bhagavān Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa has clearly rejected the idea of the samavāya relationship and his words are: "samavayabhūpagamācca sāmīyād anavasthiteḥ" (BS: 2.2.13)

In later times, followers of Śaṅkara, such as Śrīharṣa in his Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādyā and his commentator Chitsukha, employed a destructive, negative dialectic, reminiscent of Nāgārjuna, to critique humanity's fundamental concepts about the world by attempting to render the world inexplicable.

Then came Madhva, the bold realistic philosopher, who solved the riddle around substances and qualities of the real world in a realistic manner. He posited sva-nirvahāka viśeṣa, which are infinite : *bhedāhave'pi bheda-vyavahāra-nirvāhakāḥ anantāḥ eva viśeṣāḥ, sarva-padārtha niṣṭāḥ, sva-nirvāhakaśca, te dvidhāḥ, nityā anityāśca, nityā īśvarādi-nitya-dravya-gatāḥ, ghātādi anitya-dravya-gatāḥ anityāḥ, samavāyastu svarūpataḥ eva nāsti.*

Viśeṣa links a guṇa to a dravya, interrelates viśeṣa and viśeṣin, and connects viśeṣa to another viśeṣa as it is svanirvāhaka.

Best regards / Raghavendra Bheemasena Rao