Māyā and Avidyā in the Pañcadaśī

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I. The *Pañcadaśī* (=PD, A.D. 1350), a compendium of Advaita-Vedānta doctrine, explains the multiplicity of our empirical world other than *brahman* by means of the theory of *māyā* (=M) and *avidyā* (=Av). According to this theory, the one and pure *brahman* associated with either M or Av turns into diverse forms which, it is argued, falsely appear while *brahman* truly exists. In the PD, *brahman* associated with M and *brahman* associated with Av respectively cause two dualistic worlds to arise, and I would like to examine these in this paper, focusing in particular on their relation to M, Av and *brahman*.

II. To begin with, the PD assumes M and Av to be two aspects of *prakṛti*, which is made up of the three qualities (*guṇa*) called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (I. 15cd-16ab). Among these qualities, when *sattva* is predominant *prakṛti* is considered to be *māyā*. On the other hand, when the same *sattva* is mingled with *rajas* and *tamas*, it is Av. *Brahman* reflected in M appears as the lord (*īśvara*), and when reflected in Av appears as an individual soul (*jīva*). As to what the lord and the individual soul are, the PD explains this as follows: That which is reflected in M, controlling M, becomes the omniscient lord, while other reflections under the control of Av turn into various forms according to its [Av's] diversity. Av develops into the causal body with which an individual soul, called *prāñña*, identifies himself. (I. 16cd-17)

The PD regards the lord as an image reflected in M and individual souls as images reflected in Av. These images act as the lord or as the individual soul according to their reflecting media, i. e., M and Av. In addition, it is assumed that the former reflecting medium controlled by the lord has two powers and that the latter controlling individual souls has two forms. In the case of M, which appertains to the lord, it has deluding power (*mohaśakti*) as well as producing power (*nirmāṇaśakti*), and it deludes the individual soul (IV.12). Av, on the other hand, is of two kinds on

account of its projecting aspect (*vikṣepa*) and concealing aspect (*āvṛti*) (VI. 26ab). Through the producing power of **M**, the lord, a conditioning adjunct to brahman, creates the world compounded of the five primary elements of ether and so on. The world, veiling true brahman, prevents the individual soul from discerning the truth through the deluding power of **M**. Meanwhile, the individual soul under the control of **Av** comes to have the attribute of an enjoyer of the world. The concealing aspect of **Av** causes the individual soul to make statements like 'The truth does not shine' and 'The truth does not exist' (VI. 26cd-27). Its projecting aspect is defined as being the same as superimposition (*adhyāsa*) (VI. 33).

Thus **M** and **Av** are defined differently with respect to their powers and aspects. This fact clearly shows that there are some differences between **M** and **Av**. A further inquiry into the spheres of their functions will make this fact more explicit.

III. Let us now examine the functions of **M** and **Av** and the spheres of their activity. The lord and the individual soul create two dualistic worlds. One is called duality caused by the lord (*īśvaradvaita*) and the other duality caused by the individual soul (*jīvadvaita*) (VI. 69). This world is a product of the lord and is an object of enjoyment for the individual soul as well. It is related to both **M** and **Av** just like a woman is related to both her father and her husband. She is begotten by her father and is loved by her husband. (IV. 18) With regard to the gem, three aspects agreeable, unagreeable and indifferent are created by the individual soul. The form of the gem created by the lord remains the same in all three aspects. (IV. 22) According to these passages, the world, whether brought into existence by the lord or by the individual soul, is dualistic. The dualism brought about by the lord consists of *brahman* and everything else and that brought about by the individual soul consists of the uniform world created by the lord and everything else. The PD illustrates this dualistic nature of the world by means of the following example of a material pot and a mental pot. (IV. 30-31)

The PD explains that there are a material component and a mental component in one and the same pot. While the cognition of the material pot presupposes the process of cognition, the mental pot does not require the means and the object. It is reasonable to assume that these two components of the pot may account for the duality of the world caused by the individual soul. The individual soul falsely creates

the mental pot, and this very pot brings bondage to himself. In a dreaming state and so on, although there are no outer objects, a man is bound by the mental object. By contrast, in *samādhi*, in a deep sleep, or in a faint, a man is not bound even if there are outer objects. Deluded by the words of a liar a father grieves, thinking his living son to be dead. Not hearing that his son is dead, he does not grieve even if his son has really died. Hence what brings bondage to all individual souls is the world of *manas* (*mānasam jagat*). (IV.33-35)

Using methods of *anvaya* and *vyatireka*, the PD shows that the mental world is the bond which causes us pleasure and pain (I.32). This fact is clearly shown by the example of the words of a liar. The grief of a father solely depends on his mental projection not on the objective knowledge. This subjective knowledge, which consists of the mental world only is called the world of *manas*.

IV. As is illustrated in the above diagram, the lord creates a pot although there is only one *brahman*. Similarly the individual soul creates a mental pot despite there being only one pot. Taking the two powers of **M** and the two aspects of **Av** into consideration, ① the lord creates the objective and material world by means of the projecting power of **M** and ② deludes the individual soul by means of the deluding power of **M**. ③ The individual soul cognizes the concealing aspect of **Av** in the form of the material world and ④ the projecting aspect of **Av** in the form of the subjective and mental world. The duality caused by the lord shares only a part of the material pot with the duality caused by the individual soul. According to the PD, while **Av** disappears through right knowledge, the duality by the lord with **M** cannot be eliminated (IV.42). Therefore the PD emphasizes that it is important to extinguish the duality by the individual soul, i. e. the mental world.

PD : *Pañcadaśī*, with a commentary of Rāmakṛṣṇa, 7th ed., Nirnayasaagar Press, Bombay, 1949.

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