



The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Teacher Resource Sheet 7.2.2c

“Analogies to Explain the Real Self”



Within Hindu-Vaishnava thought, a number of analogies are used to explain the real self. However, each tend to have a specific focus, answering one particular philosophical question. Keep in mind that an effective analogy has a large number of similarities between the analogy and the abstract ideas it’s trying to convey.

The Analogy	What it Describes or Explains
The Diamond Covered in Mud	The soul entangled in matter retains its original, unchanging nature
The diamond	The luminescent nature of the real self; the self is both beautiful and valuable.
The mud	The dirty, unpleasant, and earthy nature of this world; dark and heavy. (Mud is also linked to the symbol of the lotus, representing purity and which is called ‘pankaja’, ‘born from mud’,)
The diamond lying covered by mud	The main message here is that the self never changes even though it is sometimes conditioned (covered by matter) and, more often, in the liberated state. Although the self never changes, when covered by matter its beautiful nature is not fully manifest. Furthermore, beauty comes from within.
The Sun and the Sunlight in the Sky	Consciousness in the body indicates the presence of the soul
The Sun	The Sun is the source of life in the universe; similarly, the real self is the source of life in the body.
The Sunlight	On a cloudy day, one knows the sun has risen by seeing light in the sky. Similarly, one may not directly see the soul and the body. One can detect its presence through consciousness.
The Driver in the Car	The atman mistakenly identifies with the body (though it’s not the real self)
The car	The material body.
The Driver	The soul, which powers and steers the body.
Identifying with the car	A person may identify with the car, and even feel pain in accident, explaining, “You hit me!”
Extending our car identity	Through identification with the car, the driver may feel kinship with those who drive cars of the same make, model and colour. Similarly, we feel kinship with those with whom we have a bodily connection.
Identifying other	We may identify someone else with their car. We may not see them directly, but say, There goes the president’ (because we recognise the car.)
Leaving the car	The driver can leave the car and get into another. Similarly, the soul can leave one body and enter another
Performance	The driver acts and experiences according to the nature of his/her car (e.g. fast or slow), Similarly, the soul acts and experiences according to the nature of the body.



The Bird in the Cage	The need to nourish the real self
The Bird	The soul
The Cage	The body, which imprisons the soul.
Freedom	Sometime a bird may be released from the cage, but hops back in because it has learned to feel secure there. The soul often likes his or her cage.
The Hungry Bird	In the story, the owner polished the cage but forgets to feed the bird, which dies. Similarly, we may be busy polishing the cage but feel starved of real fulfilment.