



# The Avanti PRE Curriculum

## Teacher Resource Sheet 7.2.4a (2)

### Analogies: “Why Do We Discriminate?”



Within Hindu-Vaishnava thought, a number of analogies are used to explain the real self. This documents also explores some root causes of discrimination against others.

The Analogy	What it Describes or Explains
<b>The Diamond Covered in Mud</b>	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.
<b>The Sun and the Sunlight in the Sky</b>	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.
Empathy	These who negatively discriminate are often unable perceive the self, consciousness and suffering in others
<b>The Driver in the Car</b>	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.



<b>The Bird in the Cage</b>	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.
<b>Putting on New Clothes</b>	The process of transmigration
Old clothes	The old and useless material body
New clothes	The new material body
Buying new clothes	As our purchase of clothes is based on (a) personal taste and wishes (b) our buying power, so similarly the soul gets its new body based on (a) its desires, and state of mind at death (b) its karma, 'karmic credits' or 'accumulated merit'.  Note: the same applies to 'the driver in the car' analogy
Discrimination	Sometimes a person discriminates against another on the basis of the clothes he/she wears. This is most evident at a football match. The spectators may all be, say, Mancunians, but will treat others as friend or enemy based on their wearing either red (Manchester United.) or sky blue (Manchester City). Similarly, most humans treat others differently based not on the real self (atman) but on the body.



## Teacher Guidelines:

These analogies have already been used:

- (a) In Lesson 7.2.2b, to explain the eternal self (atman).
- (b) In Lessons 7.2.3b to consider reincarnation (what determines the atman's next body).

Some of the analogies are not directly relevant to this lesson (7.2.4c), though useful in promoting a review of previous learning and thus ensuring continuity.

When discussing discrimination (and other moral issues), Hindu teachings – similar to the ancient Greek philosophers - made strong connections between cognition and moral judgment. “How we see the word partly determines our response”. Hinduism talks of ‘knowledge and ignorance’ rather than ‘good and evil’. Of course, there are also significant emotional components to discrimination, such as hatred (though emotions themselves may have cognitive foundations; please see the ‘snake analogy’ below).

The ‘driver in the car’ and ‘new clothes’ analogies can be used to explore and explain both ‘identity’ and ‘negative discrimination’ (as mentioned in the tables). Discrimination against others can also be explored in terms of empathy, as related to ‘the sun in the sky’ analogy

The ‘football match’ analogy (at the bottom of page 2) is a particularly powerful and accessible tool for students, especially if accompanied by a colourful visual display.

This topic of discrimination is also linked to Hindu notions of ‘maya’ (illusion), as illustrated by ‘the rope and the snake’ analogy (please see the verse below and also, for more details, ‘The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Hinduism’ by Rasamandala Das, page 100).

### Relevant Verses from Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam:

As a person puts on new **garments**, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones. (BG 2.22)

The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a **machine**, made of the material energy. (BG 18.61)

He is a perfect yogi who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their happiness and their distress, O Arjuna! (BG 6.32)

The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]. (BG 5.18)

That true knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living beings, though they are divided into many forms, you should understand to be in the quality of goodness. (BG 18.20).

"A human being who identifies the body with his self, who considers its by-products to be kinsmen, who considers the land of birth sacred...is to be considered like an ass or a cow". (SB 10. 84.13)

A person who mistakes a rope for a snake becomes fearful, but he then gives up his fear upon realizing that the so-called **snake** does not exist. (SB 10.14.25).

