

The Objective World Is Not Real

Actually, men see the shadow and take it to be the substance. They see length, breadth, height and thickness and they jump to the conclusion that they have an object before them. They experience a series of sensations and memories and, adding them all up, they infer that there are some objects producing them. This mistaking of Appearance for Reality is misnamed Jnana. How can it ever be Jnana? Can the image of a person ever be “he”? If the image is taken to be “he,” can we call it knowledge? Such is the nature of all knowledge, now what is cognised as an object, is not real at all. Its reality is not cognisable.

The *Adwaithin* (non-dualist) believes *Aham Brahmasmi*, I am Brahman. How has he acquired that conviction? Why does he state so? Ask him and the reply is, “The Sruthi declares so, the Guru taught like that.” But

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learning it from these sources does not entitle him to make that profound statement. If a person is a master of these three words: Aham (I am), Brahma (The Creator) and Asmi (process of merging, union), does he attain the unity with Brahman? No, ceaseless striving through countless births, loyal performance of scriptural duties, these purify the mind. In such a mind, seeds of devotion sprout and when tended with care and knowledge, flowers bloom, fruits appear and ripen and get filled with sweetness and fragrance. When the fruit is eaten, man becomes one with the Supreme, the power that permeates all things, all regions, and which is eternally present and conscious and blissful.

A person may enunciate the formula, Aham Brahmasmi, correctly. His etymology may be perfect; but when he is ignorant of the “world,” unaware of “I” and completely in the dark about “Brahman,” can he ever taste the rare joy of a *Jnani* (liberated person)? It is not mastery of words and their meanings that counts: it is awareness, experience—these are the fundamentals.

Clay alone is real. The pot-consciousness is born of ignorance regarding clay. Clay is the basis, the substance of the pot. How can a pot exist without clay? How can effect exist apart from the cause? The world appears as multiplicity only to the ignorant. To a *Jnani*, Brahman alone, Brahman upon which all else is superimposed, exists. The Atman alone is cognised by him. There is nothing else. That is the Adwaithic experience.

If the world is real, it must be cognised even during the stage of dreamless, deep sleep; but we are not conscious of it at all. So the visible world is as unreal as the dream world. Just as through illusion, a snake is imposed on a rope, the world too is imposed on Brahman. The snake and the rope are not seen at the same time, the entire rope is the snake. So too, Brahman is all this world, all this vast variety of name and form. But this imaginatively conceived variety is fundamentally false. Brahman alone is true.

The sky might be reflected in a pot of toddy, but the toddy does not defile it. Similarly, in this vehicle, the body, the Atman dwells pure and undefiled. The fruits of action, good or bad, fair or foul, adhere to the vehicle, not to the Indweller, the Seer.

When such Jnana dawns, the dark shadows of the three types of Karma—the *Agama* (Karma of the future), the *Samchitha* (Karma of past), the *Prarabdha* (Karma we are presently undergoing)—flee before it. Yes, even Prarabdha karma can be overcome. For, the Will of God is omnipotent and for omnipotence there can be no limit or exception. When through Sadhana (spiritual practice), you win the *Sankalpa* (resolve) of the Lord, you can with that Sankalpa achieve victory over Prarabdha also. Do not be discouraged on any score.

The suffering and travails of this world are illusory and transitory. Fix your mind firmly on this great fact and set out bravely on the path of Sadhana, the Sadhana of Devotion.