

Reality in 40 Verses

Ramana Maharishi

January 12, 2010

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Invocation	3
3	Text	4
4	Index	16

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 2

Invocation

i

ii

Chapter 3

Text

1

Because the world is seen, we have to infer a common (a Lord) possessing unlimited powers to appear as the diversity. The pictures consisting of names and forms, the seer, the canvas, the light — all these are He Himself.

The Forty begins here. To understand Bhagavan's meaning we have to use the key with which he supplies us in the Invocation. There he declares Reality to be the thought-free Awareness which dwells in the heart. Here he brings in the world in order to meet on their own ground those disciples who do perceive a "real" external world. He is saying something like this: "You see a world and ascribe an omnipotent creator to it. But as we have already seen, this creation is only an appearance, a manifestation of that Awareness of which we were speaking. It has no more reality in itself than have the pictures projected on a screen." From the heart thoughts spontaneously rise, like vapour from the ocean, and turn into a kaleidoscopic world of names, forms, colours, sounds, smells and other impressions. These are in it, or on it as on a canvas of which the heart is itself the seer and the sight.

Pure Consciousness or Pure Mind is thus the pictures, the screen, the seer, and the light or sight.

2

All schools of thought postulate the fundamental triad — God, soul and world — although all three are manifestations of the One. The belief that the three remain eternally lasts only as long as the “I” or ego lasts. To destroy the ego and remain in one’s own state is best.

Most religions are based on the assumption that the triad mentioned in the text is eternal. Bhagavan rejects this assumption as being the child of the ignorant ego which mistakes itself for the body. The “I-am-the-body” notion compels the admissions of an individuality (jiva), a world, its creator, as three distinct, perennial, co-existing entities. Bhagavan, as we have seen, perceives a single existence of which these three are an illusory manifestation which, however, vanishes the moment the eternal “I” is apprehended and the ego perishes.

3

Of what avail to debate whether the world is real or unreal, sentient or insentient, pleasant or unpleasant? Extinguishing the ego, transcending the world, realising the Self — that is the state which is dear to all, and free from the sense of unity and duality.

The same line of thought continues. Destruction of the ego is a *sine qua non* for the realisation of the Self within the heart. It brings to an end all speculation about reality and unreality, God and world, whose true nature will be revealed in actual experience. This is the most blissful attainable state and beyond the plurality of the illusory world.

4

If the Self be with form, God and the world will be also. If one be formless oneself, how and by whom can their forms be seen? Can their be sight without eyes? The Self is the eye, the limitless Eye.

This refers to the *jnani*, who although having a body seem himself as bodiless and formless, and so cannot see God, or in fact see anything with form. The *ajnani* (the non-realised), perceiving himself as a body, takes God also to be a body and worships him in all sorts of material, formal representations. Yet the fact remains that even he perceives everything through his own formless Self, which we have granted to be the only seers, the only knowledge there is — the “limitless Eye”. Those who condemn idol-worship forget that they themselves worship material symbols and icons, and attribute to God forms, dimensions, positions, even sentiments and sense-perceptions exactly as they do to themselves. Having no experience or conception of a formless omniscient spirit, they feel literally lost at the idea of worshipping something not represented in a form. God, thus, appears according to the degree of realisation of one’s Self.

“Can there be sight without eyes?” means that without consciousness there can be no knowledge of anything, just as without a lamp none of the objects present in a dark room can be seen. Can there be a world to an unconscious man?

5

The body is in the form of, and includes, the 5 sheaths. Is there a world apart from the body? Has anyone without a body seen the world?

The body is a complex structure containing a large number of instruments or organs which the Self, as ego uses for a large number of purposes, including among others those of hearing, smelling, seeing, thinking, feeling, memorizing and reasoning. The materials out of which these instruments or parts are made vary from the grossest to the finest. The *emph*Shastras (scriptures) have arranged them in five groups. To each group one sheath of *kosha* is assigned. The *kosha* dealing with purely physical matter is called *annamayakosha* (the sheath of food). The *pranamayakosha* (the vital sheath) looks after the fivefold functions of the vital energies — breathing, assimilation, generation, excretion and locomotion. The *manomayakosha* (mental sheath) contains the faculties of mentation. The *vijñanamayakosha* is the sheath of the intellectual and reasoning faculties, of scientific and philosophic thinking, and last is the *anandamayakosha*, the sheath of bliss, or

causal sheath, which stores up within itself the karmic seeds of every birth and is concerned with that state in which profound peace is enjoyed by the dreamless sleeper. This *kosha* is made of the finest substance, *sattva*, which in itself is happy, due to its freedom from grossness and its close proximity to the blissful Self.

Thus the term body includes all these *koshas*, whose appearance and disappearance cause the appearance and disappearance of all objective and subjective perceptions. Assumption of a body is therefore necessary for the world's enjoyment and the body owes its existence, as we shall see in the next verse, to the five senses, which are the properties of the mind.

6

The world is but the fivefold sense-objects, which are the results of the five senses. Since the mind perceives the world through the senses, is there a world without the mind?

Through the sensory organs lodged in the five *koshas*, the senses display before the mind a variety of objects — physical, vital, emotional, mental and intellectual. Apart from the five sense perceptions, there are all sorts of other internal senses which also arise from the mind, work through the mind, and are understood by the mind — such as the senses of time, of space, or “I” and “mine”, and the artistic, ethical, religious and spiritual senses for instance. Since all these senses form the world we know and have one common origin, which is the mind, the world cannot therefore be other than that mind.

7

Although the world and the awareness of it rise and set together, it is by awareness that the world is known. The source from which they both rise, and into which they both set, always shines without itself rising or setting. That alone is real.

This verse is reminiscent of the Invocation and confirms the previous verse, which make awareness the criterion of existence as well as the source of the world. Awareness “always shines” as the “limitless Eye” mentioned in verse four, the eternal Knower. It goes without saying that the appearance

of the world is simultaneous with the awareness of it, and disappearance of the world simultaneous with the withdrawal of that awareness. For the fact of the awareness of the world is the fact of its existence. We cannot affirm the existence of an object without first affirming awareness of it. Therefore awareness is the only Reality there is.

8

In whatever name and form the nameless and formless is worshipped, therein lies the path of its realisation. Realising one's truth as the truth of that reality, and merging into it, is true realisation.

All roads lead to Rome — all sincere worship comes from the heart, and leads to the formless God in the heart. To believe that one's reality is the same as God's is an important step towards the realisation of Him as Pure Consciousness and the process of merging into Him. How many millions of innocent human beings would have been spared the horror of religious persecutions throughout the centuries in the name of God, and how many wars would have been prevented, had this truth been accepted as the one truth underlying all religions, the basic world faith!

9

The dyads and triads rest on the basic One. Enquiring about that One in the mind, they will disappear. Those who see thus are the seers of truth: they remain unruffled.

The dyads are the pairs of opposites — knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, happiness and misery, birth and death, etc. The triad is triple principle of seen, seer and sight; object, subject and the perception of the former by the latter. As all the numbers stand on, and originate from, the first number, so are the dyads and triads based on, arising from, and of the same nature as the one seer, the perceiving mind. He who realises the world as such retains a uniform serenity in all conditions of life.

10

Knowledge and ignorance are interrelated: the one does not exist without the other. Inquiring to whom is it that knowledge and that ignorance, and arriving at their root cause, the Self, this is true knowledge.

To speak of ignorance is to admit its opposite — knowledge — and *vice versa*. Until we become aware of an object we remain ignorant of its existence. To learn a lesson is to admit our previous ignorance of its content. Knowledge is thus the light which clears away the darkness of ignorance. But knowledge and ignorance which pertain to external objects are mere modes of thought. They come and go, and are therefore of no consequence in the search for Truth. What is of consequence is their knower, who is fixed, changeless, also called first principle because he is efficient, causeless, the eternal thinker, who precedes and survives all his thoughts — “the basic One” (verse nine).

11

Is it not ignorance to know all but the all-knowing Self? When the latter, the substratum of both knowledge and ignorance, is known, knowledge and ignorance themselves both disappear.

It is of course foolish to know about everything in the world, and remain ignorant of one’s own Self. Knowledge of the perishable – the universe and its contents – perishes with the body, and cannot be transferred to another body, except perhaps as tendencies or abilities in the perishable too, which may not have any spiritual value in a future life. The imperishable alone endures and gives imperishable satisfaction, and this lies wholly within ourselves, who are the source and ground of both knowledge and ignorance – that is, of all experiences whatever.

12

True knowledge is neither knowledge or ignorance. Objective knowledge is not true knowledge. Because the Self is self-effulgent, having no second to know or be known, it is Supreme Knowledge – not empty nothingness.

This continues the theme of verses ten and eleven. We have seen that objective knowledge is knowledge of the perishable, the apparent, the non-existent, the unreal (see Invocation). Self-awareness is true knowledge, because it is absolute, i.e. changeless, non-dual, ever-pure (thought-free). This purity is not emptiness because of the lack of perceivable objectives in it, but the ever-shining plenum of Awareness-Being (*chit-Sat*).

13

The Self alone is knowledge, is truth. Knowledge of the diversity is ignorance, is false knowledge. Yet ignorance is not apart from the Self, which is knowledge. Are the ornaments different from the gold which is real?

So the world with all its multiplicity of shapes, colors, smells tastes and so forth is nothing but pure consciousness in substance, like variously-shaped jewelry which is nothing but gold. To perceive shapes, colors, smells and the like as different from one another is ignorance, is illusion, but to see them as the single substance out of which they are made – the pure mind – is true knowledge.

“Yet ignorance is not apart from the Self” because all experiences as thoughts come from the Self and are witnessed by it (verses six and seven).

14

The “I” existing, “you” and “he” also exist. If by investigating the truth of the “I” the “I” ceases, “you” and “he” will also cease and will shine as the One. This is the natural state of one’s being.

“You” and “he” are the world; it stands and falls with the “I” or ego, which constructs it. Realising one’s being is realising the whole world to be the same effulgent being – “the One”. This state of being is experienced by the Self-realised man in the waking state consciously and by all men in dreamless sleep. In dreamless sleep (*sushupti*), the “I”, like everything else, disappears and one remains in one’s native state – in the true “I” but generally without retaining memory of this condition on awakening.

15

On the present the past and the future stand. They too are the present in their times. Thus the present alone exists. Ignoring the present, and seeking to know the past and the future, is like trying to count without the initial unit.

The present *is* always, for even the past was the present in its time, and so also will the future be the present in *its* time. Whatever happens therefore happens only in the present. When Methuselah was born, he was born in the present, and when he died after 9 or 10 centuries he died also in the present, despite the later date. Similarly all that happened to him between those two events happened also in the present. Thus the present is the only significant tense in actuality. Moreover, let us not forget the fact that time is made of instants which are so minute as to have no room either for a past or for a future, but for the present alone. The next verse will tell us that even the present is unreal, being one of the notions of our mind, as past and future are — acts of our memory.

16

Do time and space exist apart from us? If we are the body we are affected by time and space. But are we the body? We are the same now, then and forever.

Of course time and space are mere concepts in us. Because in our long journey in life we pass through multitudes of experiences, we have to conceive past, present and future in order to arrange them conveniently in their sequence of occurrence in our memory. Because we perceive multiplicity, we have to conceive a space in which to accommodate them, like the screen on which cinematograph pictures are spread. Without a screen there can be no pictures. The screen on which the universe actually appears and moves is thus our own mind, from which it emanates as thoughts, either of external physical objects, or of internal concepts, sensations, emotions, including the senses of time and space.

Those who take themselves for the body take *time* to be the creator and destroyer of all things, and thus it inspires them with great fear — fear of future calamities, of death, of loss of fortune and position, or whatever it

may be. Many of them consult astrologers to read the decrees of time and foretell events long in advance of their occurrence. To them birth, youth, old age and death; creation, preservation and dissolution; past, present and future; health and disease, prosperity and adversity all exist without the shadow of a doubt: they fall prey to time and its vagaries. The others who know themselves to be pure spirit are bodiless, timeless and spaceless; and Bhagavan affirms, they are thus free from the hallucination of “We alone are; time and space are not”.

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23

The body does not say “I”. In sleep no one admits he is not. The “I” emerging, all else emerges. Inquire with a keen mind whence this “I” arises.

The body, being insentient, knows nothing about “I” and “not-I”, yet the “I” persists with or without a body – in the waking state or in sleep or swoon - as the man who himself wakes, swoons and sleeps. To know the true nature of this perennial “I”, we have to conduct an inquiry into its source.

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Chapter 4

Index

Index

awareness, 7
body, 6, 9–14
diversity, 4
dyad, 8
form, 6, 8
formless, 6
future, 10
ghost, 6, 9–14
God, 5
I, 12
ignorance, 9
inquiry, 9, 12
knowledge, 9
Lord, 4
mind, 7
past, 10
philosophy, 5
present, 10
Self, 4, 5, 9
senses, 7
sheathes, 6, 9–14
sleep, 12
soul, 5
space, 10
time, 10
triad, 8
world, 4–7, 9–14