

of being limited by the jail. When the dream ends, neither is there a jail nor is there a jailor. Similarly, when the delusion is removed, when the avidyā has ended by the knowledge of Brahman, then with regard to the supreme Reality, never is there any jīvahood. A delusion may give us an experience which is seemingly real but being a mere delusion, it has no existence (Sat).



यावद्भ्रान्तिस्तावदेवास्य सत्ता
मिथ्याज्ञानोज्ञमितस्य प्रमादात् ।
रज्ज्वां सर्पो भ्रान्तिकालीन एव
भ्रान्तेनर्शो नैव सर्पोऽपि तद्वत् ॥ १९७ ॥

*yāvadbhrāntistāvadevāsyā sattā
mithyājñānojjṛmbhitasya pramādāt,
rajjvāṁ sarpo bhrāntikālīna eva
bhrānternāśe naiva sarpo'pi tadvat.* (197)

197. *Having been caused by an error of judgement and false understanding, the jīvahood can exist only as long as the delusion lasts. The rope is mistaken to be the snake only when there is an illusion. Once the illusion is destroyed, there can be no snake, so too, in this case.*

Concluding the argument, Śaṅkara tells the student that as long as there is confusion and delusion, so long there will be the existence of the individuality, the jīva. The jīvahood exists only as long as the delusion lasts.

The delusion or non-apprehension of Reality gives rise to the misapprehension that 'I am the body,' 'I am the mind,' 'I am the intellect.' With reference to the world of objects, there arises a feeling, 'I am the doer'. With reference to the mind and intellect, there arises the feeling, 'I am the enjoyer'. These feelings in their aggregate constitute the jīvahood. Since they have arisen out of delusion, they will last only as long as the delusion lasts.

As long as the nature of the rope is not understood and as long as the knowledge of the rope is not fully realised, so long the delusion continues and the snake vision persists. In utter mental confusion alone can you have the vision of the serpent. When the mental confusion has ended, the snake cannot be. With the knowledge of the rope, the misconception that it is a snake must necessarily vanish.

Likewise, as long as the Ātman in us is not experienced, the pluralistic phenomenal world is experienced through the instruments of the body, mind and intellect. There will also be the triple world of the subject, the object and the relationship between them. Once the Ātman is realised, the entire perceived, pluralistic, phenomenal world will roll away and disappear. The experience of the Self is gained in an immediate knowledge.

This experience comes not as a result of any special sādhanā. All sādhanās help the seeker to withdraw from his BMI preoccupations. Real knowledge comes only through intuition. It is immediate. In *Kaṭhopaniṣad* it is said, 'It is like lightning'. It is sudden, quick. Teaching yourself to withdraw from worldly preoccupations takes time. When the mind is withdrawn from all its preoccupations, the experiences of the Infinite are instantaneous. This experience has been explained by hundreds of examples throughout the Upaniṣads. In Buddhist literature it is called 'prajñāna' – 'instant Consciousness'. Intellectual analysis (vijñāna), is necessary for certain types of students. Philosophy and religion are only helpful handmaids to prepare the mind of the seeker for the direct and immediate experience of the Infinite.

This infinite Self is experienced not because of religion, nor because of philosophy. They are as much help as our pilgrimages, rituals, vows, japa, austerities (tapas), and meditations (dhyāna). Experience of the infinite Brahman does not depend upon anything. It is not a 'mediate experience', meaning, it is not gained through the instrument of any equipment. It is not because of the Teacher