

a burning piece of charcoal. Yet, if the iron is kept in the fire for a sufficiently long time, the qualities of the fire are transferred to the iron piece and the iron's own qualities are temporarily not available at all.

The body, mind and intellect are inert and insentient by themselves. But when they are in contact with the Self, It lends Its glory to them and they seem to be divine by themselves. The BMI are brilliant only as long as they are 'alive'. Once removed from life, they lose their capacities for perceiving, feeling and thinking.

The knowing principle behind the intellect, when it suffuses the thoughts, it becomes the knower. Conscious thoughts of the intellect constitute the knower but there cannot be any knower unless there is something to be known. Thus, the Ātman functioning through the intellect, not only becomes the knower but also the world to be known. The subject and the objects of the world are both the play of the Consciousness through the intellect. When the intellect is hushed up with chloroform or when it has folded up in deep sleep, the subject-object game ends. When thrilled by the Self, it is this intellect itself which manifests as the subject and the object. Both are the effects of the light of Consciousness functioning through the intellect equipment.

In fact, the subject-object relationship is false and unreal. Dream, delusion and imagination are examples. It is I myself who becomes the experiencer and the objects experienced in my day-to-day life. The subject, the object and their play are all in me, myself. In my mental wool-gathering, the subject and the objects are my own projections. Similarly, all that I see at this moment are the delusory creations of my own intellect which has its capacity to project them from the Self. The Ātman has not done anything by Itself, It never does. The intellect which is made up of matter comes to shine in the light of Consciousness. The Spirit suffuses it, and thereafter the mind-intellect equipment becomes thrilled with this capacity to project. Thus the entire world with its subject-object relationship gets projected. The intellect, gathering the semblance

of Consciousness from the Self, becomes the subject, the objects and their relationship.

The subjective world consisting of the ego (perceiver-feeler-thinker), the *vāsanās*, the equipments of experience, the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies, and the world of objects consisting of the objects perceived, the emotions felt and the thoughts entertained, are all projected by the mind fired by Consciousness. The very nature of the entire creation is such that it never remains the same. Moment-to-moment it transforms into something else (*annyathā-bhāva*). Never permanent, it is ever-changing and, therefore, unreal.

The changeless is the Real. The Ātman is something other than the intellect and It never becomes anything other than Itself. It knows no change. It is of Its own nature at all times. It is immutable.

This verse gives a beautiful example to show how from the Infinite, the finite has emerged. But nothing finite has ever come out of the infinite Self. ‘Then how is it that we are experiencing them?’ Such questions would normally arise. ‘The answer is’, Śaṅkara asserts, ‘like an iron piece appearing to be a fire piece when in contact with fire (*ayo-agni-yogādeva*).’

The superimposition can only reflect the qualities of the substratum. On a rope we cannot have the delusory misconception of a cow. And superimposition is always mutual. It cannot be one way only. Śaṅkara enquires into this phenomenon of superimposition and says, ‘It is mutual superimposition (*anyonya-adhyāsa*)’. This is the technical term used by Śaṅkara.

Not only does the rope gain the properties of the snake, but the snake also borrows some properties from the rope. The snake is spotted, slimy, long and has a hood. These snake properties are not in the rope, but they cover the rope. And the rope lends its existence to the fancied snake. The rope exists. The snake exists not. The non-existent snake exists for the deluded man. The imaginary snake has borrowed its existence from the rope. To the rope the