

About Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta is a school of Vedic philosophy giving a unifying interpretation of reality, called non-duality. The following quote by Robert Adams, spiritual teacher, summarizes Vedanta teaching:

"There is no body, no "i", no me, there is no thing that can ever become enlightened. When the me no longer exists, there is absolutely no one who became enlightened. That being is resting in his true nature, in nothingness, absolute nothingness. There is no you as you appear. The appearance of you which you think you are is false. This is why I say all of your problems, all of your nonsense that you go on with, all your worries, all your cares, all your emotions, they do not exist. They never have existed and they will never exist. It is all the game of maya, the leela (illusion). It does not exist. No one in this room exists. There is no you and there is no me. There is only the SELF and when the (small) self realizes it is the SELF, it is no longer the self. For there was never a real self to begin with." Robert Adams.

This is a beautiful Advaita Vedanta quote but can many people really understand it without confusion? This is a statement about the Absolute Reality (That which is permanent, real and always free from ego): the Self as Pure Consciousness. This is the perspective of an awakened mind. Yet, most people are trapped in the relative reality (the appearance of the world) and the illusion of a separate I (the small self). In this case, such statements (which seem to deny the relative reality and ego), can actually bring more confusion than clarity. They may even end up in feeding the subtle spiritual ego of the seekers. Hence, today, some people deny the importance of knowing the ego, under the pretext that imperfections are illusions only. They may use spiritual concepts such as: "Whatever has to happen will happen", "All is Divine Consciousness", "I am not the doer", "Individuals are not responsible" to justify egoistic behaviour. They may falsely claim that they are already Self-Realised or, on the contrary, assert that there is no such thing as Enlightenment, Truth or God.

If everything is an illusion, should ego be ignored then? Should one surrender to whatever is in the outer world? Imagine some people go with their young kids to a friend's house and let their kids touch and break everything. Would this make sense? Would you justify this behaviour by saying: "Whatever has to happen will happen", "All is Divine Consciousness", "I am not the doer" or "Anyway, it does not matter because the world is an illusion"? Luckily, parents do not have their minds filled with spiritual concepts. So naturally, parents intervene to prevent their kids from making a mess. Advaita concepts are beautiful but they have to be understood with an open heart and a mature mind.

The Self is already perfect, beyond boundaries of time and forms, but this needs to be realised at the level of the individual mind. For this, knowing who you are and consequently, sincerely doing your best for unity and harmony is all that matters. If you really are looking for enlightenment, this is the main thing to remember. Try to avoid unnecessary criticisms, holding onto conclusions, lying, hurting people. Try to remain open minded.

By knowing who you truly are, you naturally do your best for unity and harmony, without forcing anything and without pretending anything.

Drop any idealistic views you may have on enlightenment and extraordinary states. This can be the greatest trap and limitation. Simply do your best, according to your possibilities. Do not lie to yourself. This is all that matters to BE yourself. Yet, the ego mind is often not satisfied with its condition. So generally it wishes to reach a certain state, to feel blissful. By wishing to be different from its current condition, the ego-mind is creating its own limitation to realise the Self. What is 'Here and Now' is the door to Eternity.

Understand also that ego does not like what seems ordinary. Ego wants to feel special and admires what seems special. If you really understand that and fully accept your present condition without comparing, playing any role, and without looking for anything extraordinary, you will realise and see your true nature: Nothing - the source of everything. Pure Consciousness is the space allowing manifestation to be.

All bodies are within You. Nothing is separate. Being conscious of your true self is naturally a source of unity and harmony. Therefore, the only limit to individual freedom is: "lack of respect for others and oneself". How could one, being conscious, lack respect for anybody, including oneself?

But how to really be clear regarding the limit to individual freedom? For example, if you don't do things the way others do, is this acting against unity and harmony? If you prefer to live isolated and are not interested in any 'jobs'; does this mean that you lack respect for your family for example? When you get angry, do you truly lack respect? Every case is different and depends upon people, their environment and circumstances. We cannot generalize about what is proper behaviour. To answer any question regarding self-respect, honestly ask yourself : "Do I truly lack respect for others by doing so?" and "Do I lack respect for myself?" Then you know from deep within, independently of people's opinions and moral conditioning, whether you are behaving in a conscious way or not. To be aware of that is very simple when one is honest, and it makes you free from all moralistic judgments.

Self realisation is about awareness. The purpose of any spiritual teaching is awareness - consciousness, which in other worlds could also be defined as playfulness or inner silence or spontaneity.

There are mainly two types of awareness. One comes from the mind that is sharp and recognises one's Presence and objects in the field of consciousness (thoughts, emotions, bodies, the external reality). The other type of awareness comes from the Heart. It is not attached to details and does not grasp the totality of objects in the field of consciousness. Yet, it automatically knows what the most appropriate behaviour is to respect both others and oneself. One's being is spontaneous and feels what to do and say. If something is not respectful and harmonious, uneasiness is automatically felt. Like this, there is clarity and it is easy to follow the inner movement: the inner answer. By listening to one's nature, answers are very clear. The body/mind is a wonderful instrument to have clarity.

It is also at the level of the body/mind that the experience of enlightenment happens. From the Absolute perspective, nothing happens because there is no longer an 'i' (ego) to say "i" have become enlightened... But in truth, enlightenment is experienced. One sees one's real nature. There is nothing to hide and there is nothing to praise. Vanity vanishes when both qualities of Self and defects of ego are recognised and accepted. Paradoxically, fully recognising one's true beauty may be the most difficult thing to do. Yet, Self-recognition: 'I am Divine', is the end of ego. So know you are Divine but drop any serious identification with being Divine. Just be spontaneous. The body/mind is a precious gift to know the Self and feel its Presence as Joy, Peace and Love. The body/mind is the gateway to the Absolute.

Once your true nature is realised, there is really nothing to do. "There is no problem", because ego is not perceived as a real problem. The body/mind organism is not really you. You are conscious. You feel light, playful and if you don't, it does not matter much also. Nothing really matters!

Your true nature is realised when you know who you really are and you do not resist your ego. Then you can be aware of ego without identifying with it. Consequently, your mind is automatically rooted in the Heart. Ego dissolves.

By lack of understanding, some people still resist knowing their ego. Consequently, ego influences them, often without their knowledge. What happens when someone's consciousness is still influenced by ego and this person hears "there is no ego, no world and nothing to realise. You are already perfect"? This person may believe so, but this belief may not be grounded on true personal experience. Inner resistance to ego remains. There is no awareness of it. As long as there still is duality with ego, true inner silence cannot be found.

Finally, when the subtle spiritual ego operates, it can hardly be recognised. So what to do? Is there anything that can be done? Again, while considering the Absolute Reality only, one may say there is nothing to be done, because there is nothing to realise and the Self is already perfect. Again, this is the perspective of a someone awakened. In order to realise the Self, there is something to realise, which then opens the door that there was 'nothing' to realise. This is the famous buddhist quote which says something like: 'At the beginning you see the mountain and the stream, then you realise that there is no mountain and no stream and then the mountain and the stream appear again', but you see them with different eyes. All is perfect when one does not identify with ego!

Let us not play with concepts and depths of reality. Let us understand that the ocean is One and yet there are depths of reality. At the deepest level of the ocean, there is pure consciousness and at the surface, there is ego consciousness. Yes, all is consciousness but ego consciousness (false ideas) is a veil over pure consciousness. 'Here and Now', ego can be recognised and it can dissolve in the light of awareness. Solutions can obviously be found to help be aware, even the subtle ego who subtly tries to prove its superiority. As long as this one is not seen, you are still, in some ways, looking for power.

Simply be conscious of the state of your mind. There are mainly three states of consciousness:

1) Ego consciousness:

In this case, one's conscious Presence is not recognised (you don't know who you truly are). Consequently, your mind is trapped by ego, for example, " This person is not nice so I will not be nice". In such case, you believe what you think. There is no distance from your thoughts. This is ego consciousness. It leads to unfair judgment and the feeling of separation and suffering.

2) The state of Consciousness absorbed in itself:

In this case, Consciousness realises its own Presence as Absolute Reality and the relative reality as pure illusion. There is no interest in the external world. This can lead to the experience of pure bliss described in Hindu terms as *nivirkalpa samadhi*.

The state of Consciousness absorbed in itself does not last because Consciousness in the body/ mind has not completely realised its true nature. Emptiness contemplates emptiness only. Yet, emptiness and fullness are One. Slowly, the external reality reappears and this can be felt as disturbing. There still is resistance to ego. Especially, coming out of the state of pure bliss may be experienced as suffering. There can be the desire to "return" there. One may feel that the Self has been lost. Can the Self ever be lost? Attachment to extraordinary states can only hide ordinary peace, which is always available. The Self as conscious Presence (open and neutral) embraces all states and is free from any state. Your Conscious Presence is always available. The veil of forgetfulness simply needs to be removed.

3) The natural state of Consciousness:

In this case, one realises emptiness and fullness are absolutely One. The external reality is perceived as a "coat" over Pure Consciousness. There is absolutely no separation and no duality with whatever comes and goes, ego thoughts, emotions and the external reality. The Self is integrated. All is part of Consciousness. All is Divine. This is called Heart Consciousness, the deepest Consciousness. All is within who you are. One's Presence is neutral, neither high nor low, neither shining nor dull, etc. It is open to the truth of what is "here and now". This is the natural state of consciousness that can embrace all states with detachment. From a place of deep acceptance of reality (what is here and now), one is rooted in the Heart and behaves naturally in the world. You are deeply at peace with everybody and yet you can say "No" to some people when they are not respectful. In this case, Self-realisation is Truth realisation. It is Grace. There is freedom from ego and absolute non-duality.

Tilicho (6/9/2013).