

What You Experience Exists But It Is Not Real

Hi James

I have been reading your Tattva Bodh. Thank you for this beautiful offering. It has cleared up many of my questions. I find it very comprehensive. I shall continue to study it.

Shankara explains what Maya is...maya is a result of ignorance or delusion....is he saying that Maya is actually the result of the faulty thinking of the small self? The error is on the part of the human being?

James: No. The faulty thinking is the result of Maya. Maya is the non-appreciation of the self as your self. When you do not appreciate the fact that you are whole and complete impersonal actionless non-dual ordinary awareness, you have the wrong idea about who you are. You identify with the body/mind and the things experienced and you interpret what happens through the ignorance that you picked up along the way, particularly from your parents. So Maya is the 'big blackout' that everyone suffers. We have a separate word for Maya when it shows up in people. It is called *avidya*. It means 'not knowing.'

Kerry: The basic premise is that the Self is only One. There is only One Self, All is Self. Yet it appears that the Self has two modes- absolute and relative. Or unmanifest and manifest. Is this correct?

James: Modes is not the right word, but I think you have it right. The self is what is aware of the manifest (what you see, experience, etc.) and the unmanifest (the Causal Body, the hidden source of what you experience). The self never becomes anything. It seems to become something when Maya is operating.

Kerry: I am struggling to grasp this idea fully. Because I understand that the same *Atma* is transcendent, yet manifests in form (duality), although everything is *Brahman*, surely the different objects are real and appear real. For example, the body appears separate from a tree, and for all intents and purposes they are separate even though we know they are made of the same thing. The world is real. But it is only not real in the absolute sense because it undergoes continuous change.

James: The objects are 'apparently' real. We call it *mithya*. They exist and are experiencible but they depend on consciousness (*atma/brahma*) and you, consciousness, consciousness are free of them. You are real (*satya*). Everyone thinks that because something is experienced it is real. But our definition of reality is 'that which never changes, that which is free of everything, that which never disappears.' So the objects we experience do not fit into this definition. If the things you experience and David the experiencer are real, then where are they in deep sleep? They are unexperiencible 'seeds' in the unmanifest. This is a very important point, Kerry. Understanding this is the essence of Vedanta. It is liberation.

James