

Two Kinds of Changes in *Mithya*

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Sandra: I saw in one of your *satsangs*, as well as in *Inquiry into Existence*, that you say if consciousness became part of matter, subtle or gross, there would be no sentient beings and no movement in the creation. Please, can you explain this? I find it really confusing. Surely, if consciousness became part of matter, it would mean that matter is conscious, not insentient.

Sundari: This is a very subtle point, and one that is very important to understand. In fact it is the essence of Vedanta. Yoga espouses the idea that in order to “attain enlightenment” we have to get rid of the world and the mind, because they hide consciousness. Vedanta says there is no need to get rid of either, because neither are conscious nor do they hide consciousness. Subtle objects arise from consciousness and are conscious by virtue of the fact that the light of consciousness shines on them. And gross objects, though not conscious, arise from consciousness, as do subtle objects. All we need to do is to remove ignorance of this fact to reveal that non-dual consciousness is always present as the substrate of the creation and without which it could not exist.

Non-dual consciousness is also always present as reflected awareness, the witness of the thoughts and the mind, meaning *Isvara* and *jiva*. Consciousness as reflected awareness appears as a knower when *maya* is operating, first as *Isvara*, the knower of everything, and then as *jiva*, the knower of its subjective reality.

If consciousness became matter, it would have to cease being consciousness to become something else. It would have become limited, bound by time and space – and there would be no sentient objects and no movement possible in the creation. *Isvara* is the uncaused cause of creation; it is both the intelligence behind the substance and the substance itself. However, although the creation arises from it (because *Isvara* is pure consciousness associated with *maya*), *Isvara* cannot become the creation. Therefore the effects (matter) are just an apparent transformation of the cause, awareness. It is not an actual transformation, because if it were, consciousness would have lost its limitless nature when it transformed into matter.

There are two kinds of changes possible in *mithya*, the apparent reality:

1. *Parinama*, “permanent” change. The best example of this is milk and cheese. If we make cheese out of milk, the milk has to stop being milk to become cheese. This process cannot be reversed; we can never get the milk back. Others are the clay and the pot and the gold and ring. The clay and the gold have to stop being clay and gold to become a pot or a ring.

2. *Vivarta parinama*, apparent change. Although the milk seems to have become cheese, the essence of cheese remains milk, without which there would be no cheese. The same applies to the pot and the ring; their essence remains clay and gold. Although it seems as if consciousness has “become the world,” it has not. Owing to the agency of *maya*, it appears as the world. So the world is not real; it is apparently real, which is why it is negatable.

~ Love, Sundari