

Nisargadatta's Quote on the "Absolute"

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"From the standpoint of the absolute truth [*satya*], all conceptual knowledge is ignorance [*mithya*]." ~ Nisargadatta Maharaj

The problem with such statements is that as *jivas* we all exist in *mithya*, the relative, dualistic world of objects, where knowledge and ignorance condition our experience. Ignorance causes mental disturbance and suffering, whereas knowledge produces peace, contentment and true satisfaction. Therefore if our goal is happiness we cannot avoid the fundamental problem: ignorance.

Nisargadatta often used to teach in experiential terms. At one moment he would emphasize knowledge, stating that "understanding is all," but only to again exalt the "Absolute" as an experiential state.

The "Absolute" he often refers to is the mental state called *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is but a self-induced state of deep sleep or coma. But the "absolute self" is only a poor concept if not contextualized in terms of our human knowledge and experience of freedom – unless of course we take *nirvikalpa samadhi* as enlightenment and freedom.

But since human *jivas* are created only for the sake of transacting in the world of objects, it does not make much sense to be born only to refuse to participate – to be born only to "literally" reject the world of objects. The dualistic world of objects is designed to teach us certain lessons to produce maturity and wisdom. We cannot be free of the world unless we acquire knowledge and wisdom through our interactions with the world. Therefore freedom is only relevant if it is freedom in *mithya*, and in spite of the adversities presented by the world.

The rejection of the world of objects the Vedanta scriptures talk about is not a literal or physical rejection, but the clear and firm understanding that all objects are devoid of real value, for real value is to be found only in the "one" subject, pure consciousness. It means that we are invited to follow the logic presented by the scriptures, analyze, understand and reject the hardwired "belief" that objects are going to complete and secure us. Therefore it does not help to take sleeping pills or go into a mental state in which the intellect and the objects are both absent.

Furthermore, people often confuse "self-knowledge" with "scriptural knowledge," which is the "body of knowledge" that reveals the truth of *jiva's* "absolute" essential nature as limitless consciousness. This body of knowledge called Vedanta is only a "tool" created for us by *Isvara* the Lord (pure knowledge). Whenever properly applied, this "tool" (means of knowledge) has the potential to cancel self-ignorance to produce what is called self-realization and *moksa*. Once it has done its job the "tool" could even be discarded, although it is wise to keep it dearly close to us.

Self-knowledge is the only knowledge beyond knowledge and ignorance. It is not "objective" knowledge, but the knowledge of our absolute, fundamental, independent nature as *sat-chit-ananda*. And it never goes away once it is fully assimilated, because it is the knowledge of one's own all-pervasive, ever-present,

self-evident, self-conscious existence as limitless consciousness.

One does not need to recall or remember this knowledge again and again. Once thoroughly assimilated, it is always good, always present, conditioning our very human experience in *mithya*.