

# New to Non-Duality?

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Vedanta is called the science of non-duality. It is not a religion or a philosophy and it is not based on any one person or person's beliefs or opinions. It is therefore called an independent and valid means of self-knowledge, meaning that it stands alone and is based on pure logic. Everything it teaches has been worked out over thousands of years by thousands of *rishis* (wise people) using this logic. It has no real authors, although many texts are subscribed to various people. However, it is not taken to be "their" words because this knowledge does not come from the mind of man; no one thought this up. The logic was revealed by consciousness to the minds of people who were able to hear it and prepared to understand it. It is proven and tested and cannot be argued with because it is just the logic of your own unexamined experience. The word Vedanta means "the knowledge that ends the quest for knowledge." Vedanta is about the true nature of reality and its basic principle is that only knowledge, not experience, can free you of your erroneous beliefs about who you think you are.

Vedanta proves quite categorically that reality is based on non-duality, not on duality. It conclusively resolves the subject-object split, revealing that there is only one principle operating here, not two. That one principle is consciousness, or awareness, also referred to as "the self," out of which everything meaning all the objects arise. Science is not that far from proving this principle to be true, although it is still not widely accepted. This is the strangest thing because it is the most obvious thing there is. Is it not obvious that you are conscious? Was there ever a time when you were not conscious? If that were possible, you would have had to have been there to know that you were not conscious, wouldn't you? Or the body would be six foot under. Who is it that knows what you are thinking feeling and doing at all times? Has it not ever occurred to you that there is something that operates "in you" that knows you? The silent watcher, which Vedanta calls the non-experiencing witness, is consciousness, your true nature. It does not experience, it knows what you are experiencing at all times, and without it the person you think are you cannot experience anything. It is that without which no experience is possible.

Who are you, really? Who you really are remains "after" death because consciousness was never born and never dies. It is prior to everything.

Most people are totally identified with their bodies, their thoughts, feelings and actions. To suggest otherwise is ludicrous. Vedanta says that this ignorance is called *samsara*, a Sanskrit word that means the belief that reality is a duality. Ignorance does not mean stupid, it means the absence of knowledge of your true nature as unlimited, unchanging, whole and complete, non-dual, action-less awareness. This ignorance is the cause of all suffering, because people who are hypnotised by duality chase objects to complete themselves. And no object can do the job because although they can provide temporary relief from desire, whatever it is, the joy they apparently deliver never lasts.

Pretty soon you are off chasing another object in the vain hope that this one will really do the job! It does not take a rocket scientist to realise that this does not work. Just look around, look at people frantically chasing things, relationships, money,

status, security, comfort, pleasure, distraction – you name it. Does anyone gain lasting happiness through objects? Even if you find the love of your life, for instance, and you genuinely love each other for the rest of your lives, one of you is going to die first. Where is the happiness then? And if you win the lottery and can have whatever object your heart desires, is this a guarantee of happiness? Mostly it is a guarantee of the opposite: bondage and misery.

There is temporary joy in the object, but no lasting joy. The joy that comes from obtaining the object comes because the pressure of desire, of the chase, is temporarily halted and thus it seems like the joy comes from the object. But it never does. Using logic, if this was true and objects were really the source of joy, then the same object would give the same joy to everyone, but it is clear that they do not. Look at the obvious ones, like relationships and money. Do these two things make everyone equally happy? Mmmm... it's pretty obvious this is not the case, not so?

So where does the joy come from? Vedanta says that the joy only ever comes from you, consciousness, awareness, the self. You are the joy; it is not something you can gain or lose, it is your true nature.

But duality (Vedanta also calls this *maya*) has tricked you into believing that you are small, inadequate and limited, so you better do your level best to get all the objects or you will never be happy! Well, does that work? Is there evidence to support the belief that objects really are capable of making you happy? How long does that happiness last? It always wears off, that's the thing. It is not permanent happiness or security or joy. It's temporary.

So how to find lasting happiness, something that no one can give you or take away from you? By realising your true nature, who you really are. What everyone is chasing is really themselves: the self.

This is the journey to freedom, freedom from the wrong notion of who you really are. Vedanta is the ticket to freedom.

## **A Basic Glossary**

*Isvara* – The impersonal macrocosmic mind, creative principle, the universal field, what science calls “zero-point energy” and religion has personalised and deified, calling it “God.”

*Maya* – The principle that operates the field of existence, deluding people into believing they are their body-mind, separate from everything, limited and requiring objects to complete them. It is also called ignorance.

*Jiva* – the individual, identified with the body-mind.

*Gunās* – The three basic programmes that run the universal field: the power to project, the power to deny and the power to reveal.

*Samsara* – The belief that reality is a duality, the cause of all suffering.

*Jagat* – The world of objects, everything in creation.