

ADVAITA IN DAILY LIVING

The fundamental and basic concept of Advaita is that Consciousness, or God, or the Source is all there is. A-dvaita – not two. If that be so, then what is this manifestation and all of its innumerable contents, which include us? Where do they come in? In Advaita, it is Consciousness AS this manifestation, Consciousness AS me.

How can the philosophy of Advaita help me in my daily living?

Who is this me to be helped?

Here I am with this name and form, a human being with this human body, a human being with his hopes and desires, his ambitions and his wants, his joys and his pains, his victories and his failures, his anxieties and his frustrations. Here I am, a human being, facing life moment by moment,

having to take decisions, having a certain position in life, and claiming such possessions as there are. I cannot get away from this human body, from this ego identified with this body, this ego with its free will and intellect, this ego with its sense of personal doership, and its sense of separation from others as well as from the Source. I cannot get away from the emotions and feelings that dominate and enslave me, and yet have become the 'raison d'être' of my life. As this ego who thinks he is this name and form, this human being, I have to live my life so long as there is life in this body.

How can Advaita help me in my day to day living? As Ramesh Balsekar often asked, "What use is any philosophy if it does not help us in our day to day living?"

Advaita first invites me to inquire into my real nature. What is my real nature? Who or what am I?

I identify with this body and call myself a human being, but am I actually this body? Of course, I am not this body. I AM THAT that is aware of this body as a vehicle for my journey through life from birth to death. I AM THAT that is aware of the acts that take place through this body according to its destiny.

I AM THAT that is aware of this body when it is in the waking state as my waking body. I AM THAT that is aware of the body in the dreaming state, which is my dream body. My dream world is as real to me in the dream state as my waking world is in the waking state. Furthermore, while in the deep sleep state I am not even aware of having a body at all. I am not even aware of myself. There are no waves. The water is still. However, this body is still living.

I am not these emotions, feelings, and thoughts, which affect the body. I AM THAT that is aware of them as they rise and set within me.

I am not this free will and intellect. I AM THAT that is aware of them as they are being used to produce the acts that take place through this body in its day to day life.

I am not this personality, this individual, or this ego, which conceives of itself as a human being. I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it engages in the body's daily activities.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it thinks it is the thinker of its thoughts, the doer of its acts, and the feeler of its feelings and emotions.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with a position or an occupation in life.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with various 'good' and 'bad' qualities e.g. I am loving, I am selfish, I am caring, I am angry.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with various relationships in life e.g. I am a husband, I am a father, I am an enemy, I am a friend.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with the so called achievements or failures that take place through the body according to its destiny (i.e. the body's destiny).

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with a particular name.

I AM THAT that is aware of the ego as it identifies with various 'personal' possessions.

Who am I then really? Who am I who is aware of all of these things yet remains independent of them? Who am I in my own right, not in relation to anyone or anything else?

I...AM. I EXIST. I AM Pure Existence: the Impersonal Awareness in which all of these things rise and set as thoughts, as movements of Consciousness, as ripples on the waters of my Being. Existence, Knowledge, Power, Peace... I AM. I do not have to think or believe that I exist. I KNOW I exist, prior to thought. That Knowledge, prior to thought, I AM. The moment I think or say "I AM," I have already moved out of KNOWLEDGE and into thought, the realm of the ego.

That Impersonal Awareness that, as Identified Consciousness, is aware as thought of this body, I AM. That that is aware as thought of the actions that take place through this body, I AM.

That Impersonal Awareness that, as Identified Consciousness, is aware of these emotions and feelings as thoughts, I AM.

That Impersonal Awareness that, as Identified Consciousness, is aware of this free will and intellect as thought, I AM.

That Impersonal Awareness that, as Identified Consciousness, is aware of the ego as thought, and of the