



ADVAITA – THE PATHLESS PATH

Your own Master, Papaji, is often called an Advaita master. Sri Ramana Maharshi, who is Papaji's Guru, is credited by many for having enlivened this ancient non-dual philosophy in modern times. May I ask you then, what is Advaita all about?

Advaita is about You; about who or what you are. The great appeal of Advaita is that you don't need any religious background. You don't need to believe in anything at all. People from all backgrounds come to Advaita and are welcomed. A longing inside the heart to know yourself or to be free of suffering must be there for anyone to realise the Truth of what this ancient and practical philosophy is pointing towards.

Advaita is direct in that it points to the Truth immediately, from the very first moment. First it points out that you are complete as you are; then it begins to guide you out of suffering.

There is no path. This is the ultimate Truth. As this understanding deepens, a great unburdening unfolds. Here you are not being told that you must be fit for this journey; that you must meditate daily; be committed or be strong. All that this sort of advice does is put tasks in front of you before

you have even begun your enquiry. The absence of any spiritual practice in Advaita is the main difference when compared with many other paths that start with the assumption that you are your mind, that you are bound and that you have to do something to become free. Advaita shows you right from the beginning that who you really are has always been free. You are being pointed directly towards the ever-perfect and unchanging reality of Being – your core Self. First, discover Truth, then do whatever pleases your heart.

There is actually a lot of freedom in Advaita then.

There is not just a lot of freedom, there is *total* Freedom. Why? Because Advaita is pointing out that Freedom is not something you can earn. Freedom is what you are.

So in that Freedom, how are emotions looked upon and handled?

Emotions are only the expression of the universal Being. Everything, not only emotions but every action, every thought, every movement; all is included in this marvellous expression of the Beingness. Advaita does not focus on interpreting any particular movement. Little attention or importance is put on this ‘play of waves’. Emotions are given room to express, to exhaust their expression and find peace again inside the Being.

The presence and play of emotions are not a measure of the pure Awareness you are. The one who has awakened to the Truth, is no longer identified with any object, thought, person or emotion. They do not suffer any disappointment for they

are free from expectations. They are one with the natural flow of manifestation, with the natural dance of the cosmic energy as it appears in these bodies. Although conditioning may still manifest, there is no inner association with that. Thus, they remain naturally free. Without identifying with personal memory, all the noise of conditioning dissolves. The very concept of conditioning, itself recognised as mere thought, gradually fades away in time.

My background is yoga and meditation. To be in satsang and to read about Advaita confuses me somehow.

This is natural. The mind is confused, because mind is always trying to get, to understand, to have the feeling ‘I know this’, ‘I understand this’, ‘I know where I am going’. The mind is very much on a linear, progressive projection. So, initially, when it is hit by something as simple as non-duality, where there is nowhere for it to ‘go’, nothing for it to ‘grasp’, the conditioned mind will get very confused, very confused indeed.

So, it is actually quite simple.

It is even simpler than simple. Simple implies that there is something you need to do that is not difficult, but This exists before even the idea of it being simple is thought of. It is experienced as difficult because you cannot get the notion out of your mind that you are bound.

Countless concepts are picked up by the mind, and in clinging to those untruths we suffocate our spontaneity,

the recognition of our inherent Being. So it is the mind that says, 'I don't understand!' How can the mind understand total simplicity when its nature is to make complex what is already natural?

What is self-enquiry?

Self-enquiry is the mirror in which the Eternal recognises itself. By looking with the aid of this mirror, you come to know instantaneously who you really are; not who your body is, not who you think you are or who others say you are; no, through this looking a direct non-dual perception of your Self is revealed.

Your Self is not an object, how can the mind find or reach that which is not an object? I don't just mean physical objects. A thought is as much an object of perception as any material thing is, and so are feelings, images, memories and sensations. In short, all phenomena are objects. Mind is accustomed to interpreting and measuring phenomena. So how can the mind discover that which is aware of phenomena, which is your own Self – the one Reality?

You are aware of anything that appears in front of you on the screen of Consciousness. Where is the world without you? Where and what are thoughts without you, the perceiver of them? Where are experiences without you, the one who perceives them? You are the root and source of every experience. There cannot be any experience without you.

I've been told that Advaita Vedanta is the highest spiritual teaching.