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Chapter I

Adhyâropa

On Superimposition

7. Greatly afflicted by the three kinds of distress *(tâpatraya)*, intensely seeking release from bondage so as to be free from this painful existence, a disciple distinguished by long practice of the four-fold *sâdhana,* approaches a worthy Master and prays:

8-12. "Lord, Master, ocean of mercy, I surrender to you! Pray save me!"

Master: Save you from what?

Disciple: From the fear of recurring births and deaths.

Master: Leave *samsâra* and fear not.

Disciple: Unable to cross this vast ocean of *samsâra,* I fear recurring births and deaths. So I have surrendered to you. It is for you to save me!

Master: What can I do for you?

Disciple: Save me. I have no other refuge. Just as water is the only thing to put out the flames when the hair of one's head is on fire, so also a sage such as you is the sole refuge of people like me, who are on fire from the three kinds of distress. You are free from the illusion of *samsâra,* calm in mind and sunk deep in the incomparable Bliss of *Brahman*, which is beginningless and endless. Certainly you can save this poor creature. Pray do!

Master: What is it to me if you suffer?

Disciple: Saints like you cannot bear to see others suffer, as a father his child. Motiveless is your love for all beings. You are the *guru* common to all, the only boat to carry us across this ocean of *samsâra.*

Master: Now, what makes you suffer?

Disciple: Bitten by the cruel serpent of painful *samsâra,* I am dazed and I suffer. Master, pray save me from this burning hell

and kindly tell me how I can be free.

13-17. *M.:* Well said, my son! You are intelligent and well-disciplined. There is no need to prove your competence to be a disciple. Your words clearly show that you are fit. Now look here, my child!

In the supreme Self of Being-Knowledge-Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ânanda*) who can be the transmigrating being? How can this *samsâra* be? What could have given rise to it? And how and whence can it arise itself? Being the non-dual Reality, how can you be deluded? With nothing separate in deep sleep, not having changed in any manner, and having slept soundly and peacefully, a fool on waking shouts out, "Alas, I am lost!" How can you, the changeless, formless, supreme, blissful Self shout forth, "I transmigrate. I am miserable!" and so on? Truly there is neither birth nor death; no one to be born or to die; nothing of the kind!

D.: What does exist then?

M.: There exists only the beginningless, endless, non-dual, never-bound, ever-free, pure, aware, single, Supreme, Bliss-Knowledge.

18. *D.:* If so, tell me how this mighty, massive delusion of *samsâra* veils me in dense darkness like a mass of clouds in the rainy season.

19-20. *M.:* What can be said of the power of this illusion *(Mâyâ)*? As a man mistakes a post for a man, so also you mistake the non-dual, perfect Self for an individual. Being deluded you are miserable. But how does this illusion arise? Like a dream in sleep, this false *samsâra* appears in the illusion of ignorance which is itself unreal. Hence your mistake.

21-24. *D.:* What is the ignorance?

M.: Listen. In the body appears a phantom, the "I"-conceit, to claim the body for itself, and it is called *jîva*. This *jîva* always has an outward bent, taking the world to be real and himself to be the doer and experiencer of pleasures and pains, desirous of this and that, undiscriminating, not once remembering his true nature, nor enquiring, "Who am I? What is this world?" but wandering in the *samsâra* without knowing himself. Such forgetfulness of the Self is ignorance.

25. D.: All the *shâstras* proclaim that this *samsâra* is the handiwork of *Mâyâ* but you say it is of ignorance. How are the two statements to be reconciled?

M.: This ignorance is called by different names, such as *Mâyâ, pradhâna, avyakta* (the unmanifest), *avidyâ,* Nature, Darkness and so on. Therefore samsâra is but the result of ignorance.

26. *D.:* How does this ignorance project the samsâra?

M.: Ignorance has two aspects: Veiling (*âvarana*) and projection (*vikshepa)*. From these arises the *samsâra*. Veiling functions in two ways: in the one we say, "It is not," and in the other, "It does not shine forth".

27-28. *D.:* Please explain this.

M.: In a discourse between a Master and a student, although the sage teaches that there is only the non-dual Reality, the ignorant man thinks: "What can be non-dual Reality? No. It cannot be." As a result of beginningless veiling, though taught, the teaching is disregarded and the old ideas persist. Such indifference is the first aspect of veiling.

29-30. Next, with the help of sacred books and a gracious Master, he unaccountably but sincerely believes in the non-dual Real, yet he cannot probe deep and remains superficial, saying: "The Reality does not shine forth". Here is knowledge knowing that It does shine forth yet the illusion of ignorance persists. This illusion that It does not shine forth is the second aspect of veiling.

31-32. *D.:* What is projection?

M.: Though he is the unchanging, formless, supreme, blissful, non-dual Self, the man thinks of himself as the body with hands and legs, the doer and experiencer. He objectively sees this man and that man, this thing and that thing, and is deluded. This delusion of perceiving the external universe on the non-dual Reality enveloped by it, is projection. This is superimposition (*adhyâropa*).

33. *D.:* What is superimposition?

M.: To mistake something which is, for something which is not—like a rope for a snake, a post for a thief, a mirage for water. The appearance of a false thing on a real, is superimposition.

34. *D.:* What is here the unreal superimposition on the real

thing, the substratum?

M.: The non-dual Being-Knowledge-Bliss or the supreme *Brahman* is the Real. Just as the false name and form of snake is superimposed on a rope, so also on the non-dual Reality there is superimposed the category of sentient beings and insentient things. Thus the names and forms which appear as the universe, make up the superimposition. This is the unreal phenomenon.

D.: In the Reality which is non-dual, who is there to bring about this superimposition?

M.: It is *Mâyâ*.

D.: What is *Mâyâ*?

35. *M.:* It is the ignorance about the aforesaid *Brahman*.

D.: What is the ignorance?

M.: Though the Self is *Brahman*, there is not the knowledge of the Self (being *Brahman*). That which obstructs this knowledge of the Self is ignorance.

D.: How can this project the world?

M.: Just as ignorance of the substratum, namely the rope, projects the illusion of a snake, so ignorance of *Brahman* projects this world.

36. *M.:* It must be regarded an illusion because it is superimposed and does not exist either before (perception) or after (knowledge).

D.: How can it be said that it does not exist either before (perception) or after (knowledge)?

M.: In order to be created, it could not have been before creation (i.e., it comes into existence simultaneously with or after creation); in dissolution it cannot exist; now in the interval it simply appears like a magic-born city in mid-air. Inasmuch as it is not seen in deep sleep, shocks and *samâdhi*, it follows that even now it is only a superimposition and therefore an illusion.

37. *D.:* Before creation and in dissolution, if there is no world, what can exist then?

M.: There is only the basic Existence, non-fictitious, non-dual, undifferentiated, *ab extra* and *ab intra (ajâtîya, vijâtîya,* and *svagata bheda),* Being-Knowledge-Bliss, the unchanging Reality.

D.: How is it known?

M.: The *Vedas* say: "Before creation there was only pure

Being". *Yoga Vasishtha* also helps us to understand it.

D.: How?

38. *M.:* "In dissolution the whole universe is withdrawn leaving only the single Reality which stays motionless, beyond speech and thought, neither darkness nor light, yet perfect, namely, untellable, but not void," says the *Yoga Vasishtha*.

39. *D.:* In such non-duality how can the universe arise?

M.: Just as in the aforesaid rope-snake (example), the ignorance of the real substratum lies hidden in the rope, so also in the basic Reality there lies hidden ignorance, otherwise called *Mâyâ* or *avidyâ*. Later this gives rise to all these names and forms.

40-41. This *Mâyâ*, which is dependent on the unrelated Knowledge-Bliss-Reality, has the two aspects of veiling (*âvarana*) and projection (*vikshepa)*; by the former it hides its own substratum from view; and by the latter the unmanifest *Mâyâ* is made manifest as mind. This then sports with its latencies, which leads to the projecting of this universe with all the names and forms.

42. *D.:* Has anyone else said this before?

M.: Yes, Vasishtha to Râma.

D.: How?

43-50. *M.:* The powers of *Brahman* are infinite. Among them, that power becomes manifest through which it shines forth.

D.: What are these different powers?

M.: Sentience in sentient beings; movement in air; solidity in earth; fluidity in water; heat in fire; void in the ether; the decaying tendency in the perishable; and many more are well-known. These qualities remained unmanifest and later manifested themselves. They must have been latent in the non-dual *Brahman* like the glorious colors of peacock feathers in the yolk of its egg or the spread out banyan tree in the tiny seed.

D.: If all powers lay latent in the single *Brahman* why did they not manifest simultaneously?

M.: Look how the seeds of trees, plants, herbs, creepers, etc. are all contained in the earth but only some of them sprout forth according to the soil, climate and season. So also the nature and extent of powers for manifestation are determined

by conditions. At the time *Brahman* (the substratum of all the powers of *Mâyâ*), joins the power of thinking, this power manifests as mind. Thus, *Mâyâ*, so long dormant, suddenly starts forth as mind from the supreme *Brahman*, the common source of all. Then this mind fashions all the universe. So says Vasishtha.

51. *D.:* What is the nature of this mind which forms the power of projection of *Mâyâ*?

M.: To recollect ideas or latencies is its nature. It has latencies as its content and appears in the witnessing consciousness in two modes:"I" and "this."

D.: What are these modes?

M.: They are the concept "I" and the concepts "this", "that", etc.

52. *D.:* How is this I-mode superimposed on the witnessing consciousness?

M.: Just as silver superimposed on nacre presents the nacre as silver, so also the I-mode on the basic witness presents it as "I" (i.e. the ego), as if the witness were not different from the ego but were the ego itself.

53. Just as a person possessed by a spirit is deluded and behaves as altogether a different person, so also the witness possessed by the I-mode forgets its true nature and presents itself as the ego.

54. *D.:* How can the unchanging witness mistake itself for the changing ego?

M.: Like a man in delirium feeling himself lifted in air, or a drunken man beside himself, or a madman raving incoherently, or a dreamer going on dream-journeys, or a man possessed behaving in strange ways, the witness, though himself untainted and unchanged, yet under the malicious influence of the phantom ego, appears changed as "I".

55. *D.:* Does the I-mode of mind present the witness altered as the ego, or itself appear modified as the ego in the witness?

56-57. *M.:* Now, this question cannot arise, for having no existence apart from the Self, it cannot manifest of itself. Therefore it must present the Self as if modified into the ego.

D.: Please explain it more.

M.: Just as the ignorance-factor in the rope cannot project

itself as snake but must make the rope look like a snake; that in water unable to manifest itself, makes the water manifest as foam, bubbles and waves; that in fire, itself unable, makes the fire display itself as sparks; that in clay cannot present itself but presents the clay as a pot, so also the power in the witness cannot manifest itself but presents the witness as the ego.

58-60. *D.:* Master, how can it be said that through *Mâyâ* the Self is fragmented into individual egos? The Self is not related to anything else; it remains untainted and unchanged like ether. How can *Mâyâ* affect it? Is it not as absurd to speak of fragmentation of the Self as to say, "I saw a man taking hold of ether and moulding it into a man; or fashioning air into a cask?" I am now sunk in the ocean of *samsâra*. Please rescue me.

61. *M.: Mâyâ* is called *Mâyâ* because it can make the impossible possible. It is the power which brings into view what was not always there, like a magician making his audience see a celestial city in mid-air. If a man can do this, can *Mâyâ* not do that? There is nothing absurd in it.

62-66. *D.:* Please make it clear to me.

M.: Now consider the power of sleep to call forth dream visions. A man lying on a cot in a closed room falls asleep and in his dream wanders about taking the shapes of birds and beasts; the dreamer sleeping in his home, the dream presents him as walking in the streets of Benares or on the sands of Setu; although the sleeper is lying unchanged yet in his dream he flies up in the air, falls headlong into an abyss or cuts off his own hand and carries it in his hand. In the dream itself there is no question of consistency or otherwise. Whatever is seen in it appears to be appropriate and is not criticized. If simple sleep can make the impossible possible what wonder can there be in the almighty *Mâyâ* creating this indescribable universe? It is its very nature.

67-74. To illustrate it, I shall briefly tell you a story from the *Yoga Vasishtha*. There was once a king named Lavana, a jewel of the Ikshvâku line. One day when all were assembled in the court hall, a magician appeared before him. Quickly he approached the king, saluted and said: "Your Majesty, I shall show you a wonder, look!" At once he waved a flail of peacock feather

before the king. The king was dazed, forgot himself and saw a great illusion like an extraordinary dream. He found a horse in front of him, mounted it and rode on it hunting in a forest. After hunting long, he was thirsty, could not find water and grew weary. Just then a low caste girl happened to come there with some coarse food in an earthen dish. Driven by hunger and thirst, he cast aside all restrictions of caste, and his own sense of dignity, and asked her for food and drink. She offered to oblige him only if she could be made his legitimate wife. Without hesitation he agreed, took the food given by her, and then went to her hamlet where they both lived as husband and wife and had two sons and one daughter.

All along the king remained on the throne. But in the short interval of an hour and a half, he had led another illusory life of wretchedness, extending over several years. In this way Vasishtha had related several long stories to Râma in order to impress on him the wonderful play of *Mâyâ* by which the impossible is easily made possible.

75-76. There is no illusion which is beyond the power of mind to spread, and no one not deluded by it. Its characteristic is to accomplish that which is impossible. Nothing can escape its power. Even the Self which is always unchanging and untainted, has been made to look changed and tainted.

D.: How can it be so?

M.: See how the sky which is impartite and untainted, looks blue. The supreme Self, too, though always pure, has been invested by it with the ego and is made to parade as *jîva,* just as *Lavana* the king lived as a low-caste wretch.

77. *D.:* If the supreme Self has, by joining the I-mode of the mind, become the illusory *jîva* he should appear as a single *jîva.* But there are many *jîva*s. How can the single Reality manifest as innumerable *jîva*s?

78-80. *M.:* As soon as the illusion of a single *jîva,* becomes operative in the pure supreme Self, it naturally begets other illusory *jîva*s in the pure ether of Knowledge. If a dog enters a room walled by mirrors, it first gives rise to one reflection in one mirror, which by a series of reflections becomes innumerable, and the dog finding itself surrounded by so many other dogs

growls and shows fight. So it is with the Self of pure, non-dual ether of Consciousness. The illusion of one *jîva* is perforce associated with illusion of several *jîva*s.

81-83. Again, the habit of seeing the world as you, I, he, etc., forces the dreamer to see similar illusory entities in dreams also. Similarly, the accumulated habits of past births make the Self, which is only pure Knowledge-Ether see numberless illusory *jîva*s even now. What can be beyond the scope of *Mâyâ* which is itself inscrutable? Now this done, listen to how the bodies and the spheres were created.

84-85. Just as the supreme Self is presented as "I" by the I-mode of *Mâyâ*, so also It is presented by the "this"-mode as the universe with all its contents.

D.: How?

M.: The power of multiplicity is the "this"-mode whose nature is to be imagining "this" and "that". In the ether of Consciousness it recollects the millions of latencies, as "this" and "that". Being stirred up by these latencies, the *jîva* though itself the ether of Consciousness, now manifests as the individual body, etc., the external worlds and the diversities.

D.: How?

86-89. *M.:* First, mind appears in the impartite ether of Consciousness. Its movements form the aforesaid latencies which show forth in various illusory forms, such as, "here is the body with organs and limbs," "I am this body,"—"here is my father," "I am his son," "my age is such and such," "these are our relatives and friends,"—"this is our house," "I and you," "this and that," "good and bad," "pleasure and pain," "bondage and release," "castes, creeds and duties," "Gods, men and other creatures," "high, low and middling,"— "enjoyer and enjoyments," "many millions of spheres," and so on.

D.: How can the latencies themselves appear as this vast universe?

90. *M.:* A man, remaining unmoving and happy in deep sleep, when stirred up by the rising latencies, sees illusory dream-visions of creatures and worlds; they are nothing but the latencies in him. So in the waking state also, he is deluded by the latencies manifesting as these creatures and worlds.

91. *D.:* Now, Master, the dream is but the reproduction of mental impressions formed in the waking state and lying dormant before. They reproduce past experiences. Therefore dream-visions are rightly said to be only mental creations. Should the same be true of the waking world, this must be the reproduction of some past impressions. What are those impressions which give rise to these waking experiences?

92. *M.:* Just as the experiences of the waking state give rise to the dream-world, so also the experiences of past lives give rise to this world of the waking state, (which is) nonetheless illusory.

D.: If the present experience is the result of the preceding one, what gave rise to its preceding one?

M.: That was from its preceding one and so on.

D.: This can extend back to the time of creation. In dissolution all these impressions must have been resolved. What was left there to start the new creation?

M.: Just as your impressions gathered one day lie dormant in deep sleep and become manifest the following day, so also the impressions of the preceding cycle *(kalpa)* reappear in the succeeding one. Thus, these impressions of *Mâyâ* have no beginning, but appear over and over again.

93. *D.:* Master, what was experienced on previous days can now be remembered. Why do we not remember the experiences of past lives?

94-95. M.: This cannot be. See how the waking experiences repeat themselves in the dream but are apprehended in the same way as in the waking state, but differently. Why? Because sleep makes all the difference, inasmuch as it hides the original bearings and distorts them, so that the same experience repeated in the dream is differently set, often aberrant and wobbling. Similarly, the experiences of past lives have been affected by comas and deaths so that the present setting is different from the past ones and the same experience repeated in a different way cannot recall the past.

96. *D.:* Master, dream-visions being only mental creations are transient and are soon dismissed as unreal. So they are properly said to be illusory. On the contrary, the waking world is seen to be lasting and all evidence goes to show that it is real. How can

it be classified with dreams as being illusory?

97-98. *M.* : In the dream itself, the visions are experienced as proven and real; they are not at that time felt to be unreal. Similarly at the time of experience, this waking world also seems to be proven and real. But when you wake up to your true nature, this will also pass off as unreal.

D.: What then is the difference between the dream and waking states ?

99. M.: Both are only mental and illusory. There can be no doubt of this. Only, the waking world is a long, drawn-out illusion and the dream a short one. This is the only difference and nothing more.

100. *D.:* Should waking be only a dream, who is the dreamer here?

M.: All this universe is the dream-product of the non-dual, untainted, Knowledge-Bliss only.

D.: But a dream can happen only in sleep. Has the supreme Self gone to sleep in order to see this dream?

M.: Our sleep corresponds to Its ignorance which hides Its real nature from time immemorial. So It dreams the dream of this universe. Just as the dreamer is deluded into thinking himself the experiencer of his dreams, so also the unchanging Self is by illusion presented as a *jîva* experiencing this *samsâra.*

101. On seeing the dreamlike body, senses, etc., the *jîva* is deluded into the belief that he is the body, senses, etc.; with them he turns round and round through the waking, dream and deep sleep states. This forms his *samsâra.*

102-104. *D.:* What is *jâgrat* (the waking state)?

M.: It is the phenomenon of the I-mode along with all the other modes of mind and the related objects. Taking on I-ness in the gross body of the waking state, the individual goes by the name of *vishva*, the experiencer of the waking state.

D.: What is dream?

M.: After the senses are withdrawn from external activities the impressions formed by the mental modes of the waking state reproduce themselves as visions in dreams. The experiencer of this subtle state is known as the *taijasa.*

D. : What is deep sleep *(sushupti)?*

M. : When all the mental modes lie dormant in causal ignorance, it is said to be deep sleep. Here the experiencer known as *prâjña* has the bliss of Self.

105. The *jîva* revolves in this merry-go-round owing to the operation of his past *karma* according as it bestows waking, dream or deep sleep experience. This is *samsâra.* In the same way the *jîva* is subject to births and deaths as a result of past *karma.*

106. Nevertheless, they are merely appearances of the deluded mind and not real. He (only) seems to be born and to die.

D.: How can birth and death be illusory?

M.: Listen carefully to what I say.

107-109. Just as when the *jîva* is overcome by sleep, the bearings of the waking state give place to new ones of dream in order to reproduce past experiences, or there is a total loss of all external things and mental activities, so also when he is overpowered by coma before death, the present bearings are lost and the mind lies dormant. This is death. When the mind resumes the reproduction of past experiences in new settings, the phenomenon is called birth. The process of birth starts with the man's imagining: "Here is my mother; I lie in her womb; my body has those limbs". Then he imagines himself born into the world, and later says: "This is my father; I am his son; my age is such and such; these are my relatives and friends; this fine house is mine," and so on. This series of new illusions begins with the loss of former illusions in the coma before death, and depends upon the results of past actions.

110-113. The *jîva* overpowered by the unreal coma before death has different illusions according to his different past actions. After death, he believes: "Here is heaven; it is very lovely; I am in it; I am now a wonderful celestial being; so many charming celestial damsels are at my service; I have nectar for drink," or, "Here is the region of death; here is the god of death; these are the messengers of Death; Oh! they are so cruel—they pitch me into hell!" or, "Here is the region of the *pitris;* or of Brahmâ; or of Vishnu; or of Shiva," and so on. Thus, according to their nature, the latencies of past *karma* present themselves

before the Self, who remains always the unchanging ether of Consciousness, as illusions of birth, death, passage to heaven, hell or other regions. They are only delusions of the mind and not real.

114. In the Self of the ether of Consciousness there is the phenomenon of the universe, like a celestial city seen in mid-air. It is fancied to be real but is not indeed so. Names and forms make it up and it is nothing more.

115. *D.:* Master, not only I, but all others, directly experience this world of sentient beings and insentient things and take it as proven and real. How is it said to be unreal?

116. *M.:* The world, with all its contents, is only superimposed upon the ether of Consciousness.

D.: By what is it superimposed?

M.: By ignorance of the Self.

D.: How is it superimposed?

M.: As a painting of sentient beings and insentient things presents a scene upon a background.

117. *D.:* Whereas the scriptures declare that all this universe was created by the will of *Îshvara*, you say it is by one's own ignorance. How can these two statements be reconciled?

118. *M.:* There is no contradiction. What the scriptures say—that *Îshvara*, by means of *Mâyâ*, created the five elements and mixed them up in diverse ways to make the diversities of the universe—is all false.

D.: How can the scriptures say what is false?

M.: They are guides to the ignorant and do not mean what they appear to on the surface.

D.: How is that?

M.: Man, having forgotten his true nature of being the all-perfect ether of Consciousness, is deluded by ignorance into identifying himself with a body, etc., and regarding himself as an insignificant individual of mean capacity. If to him it is told that he is the creator of the whole universe, he will flout the idea and refuse to be guided. So, coming down to his level, the scriptures posit an *Îshvara* as the Creator of the universe. But it is not the truth. However, the scriptures reveal the truth to the competent seeker. You are now mistaking the nursery tale for metaphysical truth. In this connection

you may remember the child's tale in *Yoga Vasishtha.*

119-134. *D.:* What is it?

M.: It is a fine story to illustrate the emptiness of this universe. On hearing it the false notions of the world being real and its creation by *Îshvara*, will all disappear. Briefly put, the story runs as follows: A child asked its nurse to tell an interesting story. Accordingly she told the following:

Nurse: Once upon a time a most powerful king whose mother was barren, ruled over all the three worlds. His word was law to all the kings in these worlds. The barren mother's son had extraordinary powers of illusion to make, foster and unmake worlds. At his will he could take on any one of the three bodies: white, yellow or black. When he took on the yellow body, he had an urge and would, like a magician, create a city.

Child: Where is that city?

N.: It hangs in mid-air.

C.: What is it called?

N.: Absolute Unreality.

C.: How is it built up?

N.: It has fourteen royal roads, each divided into three sections in which there are respectively many pleasure gardens, huge mansions and seven luxurious tanks—adorned with strings of pearls. Two lamps—one warm and the other cool—always light the city. In it the barren mother's son built many fine houses, some on high, some in the middle and others on low ground. Each of them has a black velvety top, nine gateways, several windows to let in the breeze, five lamps, three white pillars, and walls plastered nicely. By his magic he created fearsome phantoms, one to guard each house. As a bird enters its nest, he enters any of these houses at his will and sports at his pleasure.

135-140. With his black body, he protects these homes through the phantom guards. With his white body he instantaneously reduces them to ashes. This barren woman's son, who like a fool repeatedly produces, protects and destroys the city at his whim, was once tired after his work, refreshed himself bathing in the quaffing waters of mirage and proudly wore flowers gathered from the sky. I have seen him; he will soon come

here to present you with four strings of gems made from the lustre of broken fragments of glass and anklets of nacre-silver.

The child believed the tale and was pleased. So it is with the fool who takes this world to be real.

141-148. *D.:* How, does this story illustrate the point?

M.: The child of the legend is the ignorant man of the world; the wet-nurse is the scripture which speaks of the creation by *Îshvara*; the barren mother's son is the *Îshvara* born of *Mâyâ*; his three bodies are the three qualities of *Mâyâ*; his assumption of the bodies is the aspect of Brahmâ, Vishnu or Rudra. In the yellow body Brahmâ who is the thread running through the whole universe, creates it in the ether of Consciousness, which corresponds to mid-air in the fable; its name is Absolute Unreality; the fourteen royal roads are the fourteen worlds; the pleasure gardens are the forests; the mansions are the mountain ranges; the two lamps are the sun and the moon; and the luxurious tanks adorned with strings of pearls are the oceans into which so many rivers flow.

149-155. The houses built on the high, middle and low ground, are the bodies of the celestials, men and animals; the three white pillars are the skeleton of bones; and the plaster on the walls is the skin; the black top is the head with hair on it; the nine gateways are the nine passages in the body; the five lamps are the five senses; and the phantom watchman is the ego.

Now *Îshvara* the king, who is the son of the barren mother *Mâyâ*, having built the houses of the bodies, enters into them at will as the *jîvas,* sports in the company of the phantom egos and moves about aimlessly.

156-160. With the black body he functions as Vishnu, otherwise known as *Virât,* and sustains the universe. With the white body as Rudra, the Destroyer, the In-dweller in all, he withdraws the whole universe into himself. This is his sport and he is pleased with it. This pleasure is said to be the king's refreshing himself in the waters of mirage. His pride is of his sovereignty. The blossoms from the sky are the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence. The anklets are heaven and hell; the four strings of glass-lustre are the four stages of *mukti*: *sâlôkya, samipya, sarupya* and *sayujya,* meaning equality in rank, condition or

power and final identity. The king's expected arrival to present the gifts is the image-worship which fulfills the prayers of the devotees.

In this manner the ignorant student of the scriptures is deluded by his ignorance into believing the world to be real.

161. *D.:* Should heaven and hell and the four stages of beatitude *(mukti)* be all false, why should a part of the scriptures prescribe methods of gaining heaven or beatitude?

162-164. *M.:* On seeing her child suffer from pain in the stomach, a fond mother desirous of administering pepper to the child, but aware of the child's dislike of pepper and love of honey, gently coaxes the child with a smear of honey before forcing the pepper into its mouth. In the same way the scriptures, in their mercy, seeing the ignorant student suffer in the world, desirous of making him realize the truth, but knowing his love for the world and dislike of the non-dual Reality which is subtle and hard to understand, gently coax him with the sweet pleasures of heaven, etc., before laying bare the non-dual Reality.

165. *D.:* How can the ideas of heaven, etc., lead him on to the non-dual Reality?

M.: By right actions, heaven is gained; by austerities and devotion to *Vishnu*, the four stages of beatitude. On knowing it a man practices what he likes among these. By repeated practices in several rebirths his mind becomes pure and turns away from sense-enjoyments to receive the highest teaching of the non-dual Reality.

166. *D.:* Master, admitting heaven, hell, etc., to be false, how can *Îshvara* so often mentioned by the scriptures, be also declared unreal?

167. *M.:* Well, passages dealing with *Îshvara* in all His glory, are succeeded by others which say that *Îshvara* is the product of *Mâyâ*, and the *jîva* of ignorance *(avidyâ)*.

D.: Why do the scriptures contradict themselves with passages of different import?

M.: Their aim is to make the student purify his mind by his own efforts such as good actions, austerities and devotion. To coax him, these are said to yield him pleasures. Being them-

selves insentient, these cannot of their own accord yield fruits. So an all-powerful *Îshvara* is said to dispense the fruits of actions. That is how an *Îshvara* appears on the scene. Later the scriptures say that the *jîva, Îshvara* and the *jagat* (world) are all equally false.

168. *Îshvara*, the product of illusion, is no more real than the dream-subject, the product of sleep. He is in the same category as the *jîva,* the product of ignorance, or of the dream-subject, the product of sleep.

169-174. *D.:* The scriptures say that *Îshvara* is the product of *Mâyâ*.How can we say that He is of ignorance?

M.: The ignorance of the Self may function singly or totally as we speak of single trees or a whole forest. The total ignorance of all the universe is called *Mâyâ*. Its product *Îshvara* functions as *Virât* in the universal waking state; as *Hiranyagarbha* in the universal dream state, and as the Indweller in the universal deep sleep. He is omniscient and omnipotent. Beginning with the will to create and ending with the entry into all creatures, this is His *samsâra*. The individual ignorance is said to be simply ignorance. Its product, the *jîva*, functions respectively as *vishva, taijasa* and *prâjña* in the individual waking, dream and deep sleep states. His knowledge and capacity are limited. He is said to be doer and enjoyer. His *samsâra* consists of all that lies between the present wakeful activities and final liberation. In this way the scriptures have made it clear that *Îshvara*, the *jîva* and the *jagat* are all illusory.

175-179. *D.:* Now, Master, just as the ignorance of the rope can give rise to the illusion only of a snake, so one's ignorance may spread the illusion of oneself being a *jîva*. But how can it be extended to create the illusions of *Îshvara* and *jagat* as well?

M.: Ignorance has no parts; it acts as a whole and produces all the three illusions at the same time. The *jîva* manifesting in the waking and dream states, *Îshvara* and *jagat* also manifest. As the *jîva* is resolved, the others are also resolved. This is proved by our experience of the waking and dream manifestations, and their disappearance in deep sleep, swoons, death and *samâdhi*.

Moreover, simultaneous with the final annihilation of *jîva*-hood by knowledge, the others also are finally annihilated along

with it. The sages whose ignorance has completely been lost with all its attendant illusions and who are aware only as the Self, directly experience the non-dual Reality. Hence it is clear that the ignorance of the Self is the root-cause of all the three illusions—*jîva*, *jagat* and *Îshvara*.

180. *D.:* Master, should *Îshvara* be the illusion of ignorance, He must manifest as such. Instead, He appears as the origin of the universe and our Creator. It does not look reasonable to say that *Îshvara* and the *jagat* are both illusory products. Instead of appearing as our creation, He appears as our Creator. Is it not contradictory?

181-183. *M.:* No. In dreams the dreamer sees his father who was long ago dead. Though the father is created by himself as an illusion of dream, the dreamer feels that the other is the father and himself the son, and that he has inherited the father's property which again is his own creation. Now look how the dreamer creates individuals and things, relates himself to them and thinks that they were before, and he came after. So also with the *Îshvara*, the *jagat* and the *jîva*. This is only the trick of *Mâyâ* who can make the impossible possible.

D.: How is *Mâyâ* so powerful?

M.: No wonder. See how an ordinary magician can make a whole audience see a celestial city in mid-air or how you can yourself create a wonderful world of your own in your dreams. If such is possible for individuals of mean powers, how can the other not be possible for *Mâyâ* which is the universal material cause? To conclude: all these including *Îshvara*, *jîva* and *jagat* are illusory appearances resulting from one's ignorance and superimposed on the one Reality, the Self.

This leads us to consider the ways of removing the superimposition.

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