

## Embracing the Light of Eternity

By Munir Peter Reynolds

In recent essays I have built up a teaching around awareness as the reality of what we are. Here I would like to go further with this exploration. In order to bring this into focus, I'd like to take as my text a teaching from the Hindu Vedas which the great sage Ramana Maharshi often quoted:

"The world is illusory;  
Brahman alone exists;  
The world is Brahman". (repeat)

At first this may sound like sleight of hand or a tautology. But the implications of this teaching are subtle, profound and extraordinary. The understanding of this teaching requires inquiry, which is looking with our direct experience at what is true and allowing the truth to dissolve false beliefs and assumptions in us. I want to credit Rupert Spira for the insights here about this text.

"The world is illusory." This teaching has been misinterpreted to mean that the world isn't real. The world is very real! But, just not real in the way we take it to be.

We would say that a mirage in the desert is real and *appears* to be a pond of water. Something is definitely there. But, when we investigate, we find that it is in fact simply the interplay of light, heat and thermals on the air, not actual water. So there *is* a reality to a mirage, but not the one we first interpreted it to be. That is what is meant by "the world is illusory".

We do not realize that our way of looking at ourselves as human beings and at the world is filled with assumptions, beliefs, and biases that are unexamined and which - this is very important - are *not actually congruent with our direct experience*.

The Inward Facing Path

So, the first step toward understanding is to take the "inward facing path." We relax attention on objects - thoughts, feelings and perceptions - and sink

back into the subject in order to clarify what it is within us that knows the world, the nature of mind itself.

As I have explored with you in previous talks, it is "I" within each of us that knows. As an example, let's consult "I" here for a moment about our direct experience....

Look at this room. The experience of what we call "seeing" arises in you, doesn't in, in the clear open field of awareness. (Even though awareness isn't a space, we can use that metaphor in order to talk about it.)

Now, the sound of my voice arises in you. We assume, don't we, that the sound of my voice comes from "outside" you, and that the experience of seeing happens "inside" you. But, is that actually true? In fact, don't both seeing and hearing arise in precisely the same seamless, placeless, intimate "space" or field of awareness? Check me on this and see that it is true.

Likewise, let's add in the feeling of your feet on the floor - a sensation arises in the same inner space, along with hearing and seeing. These "experiences" are transparent to one another.. you can see, hear and sense your feet all at the same time, and it is all happening in the same space of awareness.

Actually, there is not even hearing, seeing and sensing as separate activities - it all happens as *one* experience - unfolding seamlessly in the "within" of you. There are not even separate sounds. There is only "hearing". Not separate objects, only "seeing". And so on.

We're told that the universe is made of matter, and that mind exists inside a body made of matter. Which of us have ever seen matter? It is a concept is it not, and a very basic one on which our whole civilization is based - but none of us have any direct experience of the truth of it, do we? And mind, as we are beginning to see is prior to the thought of matter

We assume that "I" is located inside the body. Close your eyes. Now doesn't your experience of the body become a loose group of vibrations "floating" within the field of awareness, the field of "you"? Without looking in a mirror, isn't this the only experience of a "body" that you've ever had? (You can open your eyes.)

Through investigations like these we come to realize that awareness is primary and everything we know proceeds from that. We can say we really

know something when we "put light on it." It is the light of awareness that illuminates experience within us, and it doesn't come in broken down or categorized by "inside and outside", "seeing or hearing", "male and female", "good and bad". We have fragmented our experience, including ourselves from the world, and taken that to be the way it is.

If we use the metaphor of life as a movie, we have jumped to conclusions when we assume the apparently separate persons and objects in the movie have their own separate existence independent of the screen. From the point of view of a character in the movie, it all seems very real. But after taking the "inward facing path" we see that the character and everything else in the movie is made known by the screen, awareness, which is unmoved and unchanged by anything that ever happens within it.

### Realization

This leads us to the second statement "Brahman alone exists." This is like an exclamation, a revelation.... It is like saying, "Oh my God, I have overlooked the fact that *everything* I know arises within me, in the light of awareness as a seamless, connected and complete whole." This light of knowing *is* the reality of the Universe - everything *is* consciousness. As Jesus declared in the Gospel of Thomas, "Split a piece of wood, I am there. Lift up a stone: you will find me there."

No matter what we sense, perceive, feel, think, or know, it ALL arises within awareness, is known by "I", - and that is all there is to the what we call the "world". "Brahman" is the name the Hindus give to this one, infinite, eternal reality. We could substitute "Awareness" for Brahman. Awareness alone exists. So, the world is not the mirage we take it to be - it is actually Brahman, or the Godhead, or Infinite Consciousness.

As we explore further, in time it is revealed that the stories I tell myself, my personal pain, the suffering that seems so real, that happened to "me", are *interpretations* made based on myself as a separate self, located inside a body and a world made of matter. In pure awareness these personal impressions are revealed to be just the journey of infinite intelligence back to itself, through the limited temporary form of this one.

Secondly, I know experience by the light of the "I am", *the same "I Am" that everyone and all sentient beings share*. Reality is one and the consciousness that knows it is also one.

### The Outward Facing Path

Having thoroughly understood this fact that everything is made of awareness from direct experience, we are ready to turn around and "take the outward facing path", returning to life, to the movie and the apparent objects in it, with a different understanding:

Then the third statement of Ramana Maharshi, "The world is Brahman" is understood. The world, the body, the mind, the heart - are a single indivisible reality. There are no separate objects or separate persons who have an existence in their own right. The illusion of separation is generated by the finite mind, the only way infinite intelligence can know anything - by refracting itself into subjects and objects.

Take a moment and soften your focus. Look at this - see it all at once. Be the knowing of it. No object stands out from any other - *ex sistere* - the Latin for "to stand out". It is the same with everything else arising in your experience right now. It all arises together as a seamless whole *within you*. It's very simple, but requires *being aware of being aware*.

Adyashanti calls this practice, "The Eyes of Eternity." It's always now, and it's always *this*, forever.

All apparent existence is conferred by the only thing that is real: Consciousness. As the Bhagavad Gita says, "The unreal has no existence and the real never ceases to be." This is exactly the same understanding of "the unborn" that Moslems confer to Allah, that Buddhists understand from the Heart Sutra as "form is emptiness and emptiness is form", as Meister Eckhart described as "the Godhead."

Realizing that the World is Brahman, or Awareness, means to begin to live a life consistent with this understanding.

So to recap this: We took "the backward step" by falling back into the pure knowing of our experience in awareness. A simple recognition takes place that we've been immersed in an "illusory" world, one in which we have assumed a *separate existence* among the elements of the movie. Having

recognized this, we return to the movie and find that we are the heartfelt, aware *knowing* of it...neither separate from, nor harmed by anything that ever happens in it.

The world is illusory;  
Brahman alone exists;  
The world is Brahman.

Granted, this understanding takes some time to assimilate, and especially to bring out of us the residue of having lived life for years or decades through a separate self. I'm a student of this! But, what would it mean to take this understanding I'm speaking about as directly and fundamentally true? How does this play out in our lives?

The Cathedral of Life

In *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats*, the poet Percy Shelly wrote, "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity." The word "stains" here does not mean "blemishes" but rather "emanates" or "shines with", the white light or radiance of eternity.

What I love about this line is that it imbues reality with depth, beauty and infinite significance. It returns it to its rightful altar of devotion, like walking through a "Cathedral of Life". It frees the ego from its illusions and elevates the real Self to an incredible potential.

The nondual understanding, rather than being a dry, impersonal teaching actually brings reality very, very close to us and redeems life from the distortions and demands we have placed upon it. It makes real Love possible because it brings us out of separation. Because it is based on the utterly common experience of awareness the nondual understanding has the potential to heal humanity from thousands of years of racial and nationalistic identifications, wars, struggles and abuse of the environment. It brings the potential for Love in action.

I find it tempers the worry and anguish I may feel about such things as climate change or politics. It's all happening within God's infinite being. There is a lot of room in eternity for things to work out differently.

It also allows us to love the world as our own self. As HIK said, "The world is evolving from imperfection to perfection. It needs all love and sympathy; great tenderness and watchfulness are required from each one of us."

A line in the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic reads, "Let not *surface things* delude us..." Let's not be deluded by the colorful, stained glass of life, as real, ecstatically beautiful and often painful as it may seem. It appears as events, objects, dramas, birth, death, trauma...an endless play of *Maya*. But, our real life rests in the eternal, the unborn and the undying... *the Light that reveals it*. Our true purpose is to live from that, beyond all distinctions and differences. That is "Embracing the Light."

Being true to that light means backing out of "what we are not", the habitual ways we collapse into separation, being just a person angry at the world, or crushed by our interpretations of what is happening, the accumulated habits of a materialist view of life.

Can we allow ourselves to be awed by the magnificence, beauty and tragedy of life, while always remaining rooted in being? It is all ONE. Meister Eckhart said, "The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love."

It is all one, and it is all LOVE. William Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* wrote, "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." Cleansing the doors of perception requires inquiry, persistence and being still.

When separation is dropped, everything appears as it is - infinite, that is, devoid of finite qualities. We find that Love arises in us for everything and everyone - *as we recognize it as our Self*. We have a natural response to life because we see it as it is, in its real context. The mirage in the desert has been penetrated.

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity."

Can we allow the great sun of being to supersede, to shine within and through all experiences, including limitation, enthrallment or suffering. Rest

as that. Then life and you within it appear as it truly is - devoid of finite qualities - that is, Infinite.

This understanding reveals the "dome of many colored glass" and the "white radiance of eternity" as nothing less than your very own being.