

Advaita

Advaita is one of the most prominent, profound, and widely followed philosophical systems in Indian philosophy (Vedanta). In Sanskrit, the word "**Advaita**" literally translates to "**Not-two**" or **Non-duality**.

According to Advaita philosophy: **There is only one Ultimate Reality in existence, known as "Brahman" (Universal Consciousness)**. The experienced universe (Jagat) and all individual living beings (Jivas) are merely different manifestations of that single Brahman, rather than distinct or separate entities.

1. Core Principles

- **Brahma Satyam, Jagan Mithya** (*Brahman alone is real; the world is illusory/impermanent*)
 - **Brahman:** The unchanging, eternal, all-pervading pure consciousness.
 - **Mithya:** This does not mean the world is a complete void or non-existent. Rather, it means the world is constantly changing and temporary. For example, a dream feels completely real while you are dreaming, but fades upon waking up. Similarly, the physical world is a relative, temporary state of reality.
- **Jivo Brahmaiva Naparah** (*The individual soul is non-different from Brahman*)
 - The individual self (*Jivatma*) and the Supreme Self (*Paramatma / Brahman*) are not two distinct entities; they are one and the same.
 - **Analogy:** Although there is only one sun in the sky, its reflection appears in multiple water pots. If a pot breaks, the reflected sun simply merges back into the single sun. Similarly, due to the body-mind complex (*Upadhi*), we appear to be separate individuals, but the inner consciousness in everyone is identical.

2. Maya and Ignorance (Avidya)

Why are we unable to perceive this non-duality directly?

- **Maya (Cosmic Illusion):** The creative power or principle that presents the single Brahman as a multitude of diverse forms and names.
- **Avidya (Ignorance):** Mistaking a coiled rope for a snake in dim light causes fear. As soon as light (knowledge) shines upon it, one realizes it was always just a rope. Similarly, once true self-knowledge dawns, one realizes that everything in existence is Brahman.

3. Liberation (Moksha)

In Advaita, liberation is not a journey to a physical place or a future heaven.

- It is the experiential realization: **"I am not merely this body or mind; I am that eternal Brahman."**
- This state of realization is defined as **Sat-Chit-Ananda** (*Sat* = Absolute Existence, *Chit* = Absolute Consciousness, *Ananda* = Absolute Bliss).

Key Preceptor

While the roots of Advaita lie in the ancient *Prasthanatrayi* (the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahma Sutras), it was systematically consolidated and formulated into a cohesive philosophical tradition by **Adi Shankaracharya**.

In Essence:

"If I identify as the body or mind, I am limited and finite. But if I recognize myself as the underlying Consciousness, I see that the same singular Reality exists within me and everyone else." — This is Advaita.

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