

Satyam (Truth) – Mithya (Illusion)

Advaita - Satyam, Mithya

Question 1: To know about Advaita, why should we first know about Satyam and Mithya? You are saying they both are like foundation stones, right?

Answer: Advaita means 'that which is not two'. That means everything is one, and there is no second—this is the philosophy. To understand this great truth, we must first clearly know 'what is real (Satyam), and what is not real (Mithya)'. If there is no proper understanding of Satyam and Mithya, Advaita cannot be understood, and there is a chance of misunderstanding it. That is why Satyam and Mithya are like the foundation stones for Advaita. Leaving them aside, understanding Advaita is impossible.

The objects in this world - three types

Question 2: Actually, whatever we think about, how many types of objects are there in this world?

Answer: Whatever we think about, we come to know that there are three types of objects or substances in the world around us. They are:

1. **Jiva (I):** Meaning us, people like us, animals, birds - every living being with life like this.
2. **Jagath (The world composed of three qualities):** Meaning the earth, water, trees, mountains, sky, buildings that we see with our eyes - everything like this that is lifeless, moving, and non-moving.
3. **Iswara (God):** The power we believe is creating and running this world.

These three are also called 'Tattvatrayam'. No matter how many ways we think, we think only within the scope of these three.

Different Arguments About These Three Substances

Question 3: Everyone is explaining about these three substances in different ways, right? What are they?

Answer: Many philosophers and religions throughout history have explained these three substances—Jiva, Jagath, and Iswara—in various ways. Let's look at some of the important ones:

1. **Dvaitam:** According to this argument, Jiva, Jagath, and Iswara—all these three exist separately and truly. Jiva is the servant of God, and Jagath is God's creation. These three will always remain separate.
 - For example, Madhvacharya's Dvaita philosophy.

2. **VishishtAdvaita:** According to this argument, Jiva and Jagath are parts within Iswara; they are not separate from Him, but they are distinct. Just like how the branches and leaves of a tree are distinct but still a part of the tree, it is like that. Even though everything is Iswara, the living beings and the world created by Him are real.
 - For example, Ramanujacharya's Vishishtadvaita philosophy.
3. **Advaita:** According to this argument, in reality, Jiva and Jagath are not separate from Iswara. Iswara alone is the supreme truth, and everything else is not just a part of Him, but His reflection (Mithya). That means, everything is one—there is nothing other than 'Brahmam'. Jiva and Jagath are merely appearance forms, they are not eternal.
 - For example, Sankaracharya's Advaita philosophy.

Apart from these, there are also philosophies like Samkhyavadam which says 'all this is the play of nature', Buddhist philosophy which says 'everything is emptiness (shunya)', and Atheism which says 'there is no Iswara'.

The Greatness of Advaita - Solution to Problems

Question 4: Among these arguments, why is Advaita the greatest? How does it solve problems?

Answer: Why they say Advaita is great is because it shows a complete solution to all the problems in our life. Even if other arguments solve problems to some extent, they cannot give complete liberation.

Let's see how Advaita solves problems:

- **For True Happiness:** We constantly try for happiness in life, but sorrows keep coming across. According to Advaita, this world we see, our body, our mind—all these are not eternal; they change. If we depend on these, sorrow is inevitable. Because they never remain the same, they can only give us temporary happiness.
- **The Root Cause is Ignorance:** According to Advaita, the root cause of all our problems is 'ignorance' – that is, not knowing who the real 'I' is, and believing that this visible world is real.
- **The Real 'I' is Brahman:** Advaita says, you are actually not this body, not the mind. You are the supreme truth, Brahman. You are the pure Atma (soul), the embodiment of bliss.
- **Understanding Mithya:** Advaita explains that this world, the Jiva (the notion of 'I'), all these are Mithya (those that are not real, merely appearances). Mithya does not mean 'it does not exist', it means 'it is not real'. For example, everything seen in a dream does not truly exist, but in the dream, they seem real, don't they? Similarly, this world is also like that. This is merely an illusion (reflection) appearing upon Brahman itself.
- **Absence of Difference:** Because we see the difference that 'I am separate, the world is separate, God is separate', problems are arising. When 'the world' does not give what 'I' desired, there is sorrow. There is fear that 'I' will die. Advaita removes this difference.

When it is known that everything is Brahman and you too are Brahman, there is no fear or sorrow.

- **Moksham:** This itself is Moksham. Moksham does not mean going away to some heaven. Freedom from bondages itself is Moksham. It is liberation from the bondage of ignorance that 'I am this body' and 'this world is real'. When this knowledge is attained, you become liberated while living itself (Jeevanmukta).

Therefore, Advaita leads us from ignorance towards knowledge, and bestows true peace and bliss.

The Visible World, The Invisible Iswara

Question 5: But this is very strange, isn't it? In our experience, it truly feels that Jiva (I) exists, and the world exists. Iswara, on the other hand, never comes into experience. In such a case, what is it to say that what is visible does not exist, and what is invisible exists?

Answer: Your doubt is very natural; many people get this same question. Based on our daily life experiences, saying that what is visible does not exist and what is invisible exists does feel strange. However, Advaita explains this a bit deeply:

- **What is Experience?** We call 'what is visible' as experience. But experience does not mean just seeing with the eyes. The things visible in a dream also come into experience, don't they? They do not exist after waking up, right? Similarly, when we see a rope in the dark and think it is a snake, that snake also truly comes into experience. But it is not a snake, it is only a rope.
- **Truth Means That Which is Eternal:** According to Advaita, 'Truth' means that which remains without changing always, which exists in all three periods of time (past, present, future). If you observe, your body has changed from childhood until now. The world is also constantly changing (buildings collapsing, trees growing, rivers changing). Therefore, these are not eternal. Even though they are visible, their 'truthfulness' does not stand.
- **The Invisible Iswara:** Iswara is not visible to our five senses, is not heard, and is not caught. Because He is beyond this world. He is not an object in the world. He alone is the basis and source for everything. We cannot see the air, but it exists, right? We cannot see electricity, but it works, right? Iswara is also like that. Just because He is not visible does not mean He does not exist.
- **Not Appearing Due to Ignorance:** Why He does not come into experience is due to our ignorance alone. We are thinking of our body itself as 'I', and thinking of this world as real. Our entire vision is upon external objects. We are unable to recognize the real 'I' (Atma/Brahman) inside us. When self-knowledge (Atmajnanam) arises, that Iswara will be experienced not as separate from us, but as our own true nature.

Therefore, Advaita is not saying 'it does not exist', it is saying 'it is not real'. Just because what is visible is not reality, what is invisible is not untruth. This requires a deeper inquiry.

Sun - Earth

Question 5A: In our experience, it truly feels that Jiva (limited-I) exists, and the world exists. Iswara, on the other hand, never comes into experience. In such a case, what is it to say that what is visible does not exist, and what is invisible exists? That means we cannot believe what is visible. For example, it feels to us that the earth does not move, but in reality, it is rotating very fast. Similarly, it feels like the sun is rotating around the earth, but in reality, the earth alone is rotating around the sun. Hence, we cannot believe what we have perceived through the senses.

Limitation of Senses

Our senses are very limited. They can perceive only those things that are visible to us. But there are many invisible things; they are beyond the senses.

- **Movement of the Earth:** To us, the earth feels stable, but in reality, it is rotating very fast.
- **The Sun:** To us, the sun feels like it is rotating around the earth, but in reality, the earth alone is rotating around the sun.

The Visible and The Invisible

The truth to be perceived through these examples is that what we have perceived through our senses is not always true. Our senses can deceive us. By assuming that what we are seeing is true, we remain in ignorance.

- **Jiva, Jagath:** To us, Jiva and Jagath feel like they truly exist. But they are formed only due to our illusion.
- **Iswara:** Iswara does not come into experience for our senses because He remains beyond the senses. He is the ultimate truth of this universe. We can know Him not with the senses, but only with our inner, unmoving-awareness (Achala-Eruka).

In this way, we must stop believing what is visible and try to know what is invisible experientially. That itself is our true nature.

Determining the Truth - Pramanas (Means of Knowledge)

Question 6: Then how should we determine the truth? If we do not believe our experience, what should we believe?

Answer: This is a very important question. According to Advaita, there are certain 'Pramanas' (proofs, instruments) to determine the truth. If we believe only what is visible to our eyes, we will mistake a rope for a snake and commit an error.

There are three types of Pramanas:

1. **Pratyaksha Pramanam (Direct Perception):** This is knowing by directly seeing, hearing, and touching with the senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin).

- **Limitation:** This is useful for worldly transactions, but it cannot know everything. For example, Iswara is not visible to us, heaven and hell are not visible. What is seen in a dream is also direct perception, but it is not real.
2. **Anumana Pramanam (Inference):** This is guessing and knowing based on what is directly seen.
- **Limitation:** For example, seeing smoke, one can infer that there is fire. But smoke can come even without fire (like from a smoke machine). This is also a means of knowledge that has certain limitations.
3. **Shabda Pramanam / Aagama Pramanam (Verbal Testimony):** This is believing the words of trustworthy people and the scriptures. 'Aapta Vakyam' (words of a trustworthy person) or 'Shruti' (Vedas, Upanishads) come under this category.
- **Importance:** This Pramanam reveals matters that are beyond the reach of Pratyaksha and Anumana Pramanas (for example, Iswara, Atma, Moksham, the Law of Karma). Our Maharshis (sages) have offered us the truths they visioned through deep meditation and through their own experience, via these scriptures.

Advaita believes mostly in Shabda Pramanam. Because, our senses and mind are limited. They can perceive only the visible world. But to perceive the supreme truth, pure knowledge without these limitations is required. That itself is the 'Shabda Pramanam' present in the Upanishads.

For example, if a doctor gives you a medicine and says, "Even though this medicine is visible to you, it does not reduce your fever. But, it kills the invisible virus," you will believe the doctor's words, right? Similarly, one must believe the words of the scriptures.

When the Words of the Scriptures are Different from the World

Question 7: No matter how authoritative the scriptures are, what they say is different from the world, isn't it? If it says this world does not exist and Jiva does not exist, how to believe it? How to reconcile this?

Answer: What you said is true. What the scriptures say feels different from our daily experience. When Advaita says 'the world does not exist, Jiva does not exist', it appears to us as very strange and unbelievable. Let's see some examples to reconcile this:

- **Dream (Svapna):** In a dream, we see various worlds and people. They feel real indeed. But as soon as we wake up, we come to know that they all do not exist. Saying the dream world is 'Mithya' does not mean 'it does not exist'. It means 'it has no existence in the waking state'. Similarly, this world composed of three qualities is also like a big dream; when we are in the sleep called our ignorance, this feels real. When the waking called knowledge comes, it is understood that this is not separate from Brahman.
- **Rope-Snake Illusion:** Seeing a rope in the dark, we think it is a snake. At that time, that snake actually appears, and fear also arises. But when a lamp is brought, it is known that it is not a snake, it is only a rope. Here, 'the snake does not exist' means, 'in reality it is not a snake, it is only a rope'. Similarly, this Jagath or the world composed of three qualities is merely an illusion appearing upon Brahman.

- **Gold-Ornaments:** Gold is real (Satyam). Bangles, chains, rings made of gold—all these are merely 'names' and 'forms'. A bangle can be melted to make a ring. Then we say the bangle 'does not exist'. Does that mean the bangle really went out of existence? No, it exists as gold itself, its form changed. Similarly, Brahman is the truth. Jiva and Jagath are merely names and forms that have come upon Brahman.

Advaita is not saying 'it does not exist', it is saying 'it is not real' (Mithya). If this world does not exist at all, how are we speaking, how are we doing works? Advaita calls it 'Vyavaharika Satyam' (empirical/transactional reality). That means, for us to do works, to live, this feels 'real'. But when viewed from the perspective of 'Paramarthika Satyam' (the absolute truth), this is merely an appearance (reflection) that is not separate from Brahman.

How to reconcile this? To believe what the scriptures say, understanding merely with the intellect is not enough. For that, Sadhana (meditation, self-inquiry) is necessary. Only through this Sadhana can we personally attain the experience told by the scriptures. Only then will this 'strange' doubt be cleared.

In the division of Satyam-Mithya, about which should we know first?

Question 8: Then in this division of Satyam-Mithya, about which should we know first?

Answer: In Advaita Vedanta, knowing about both 'Satyam' and 'Mithya' is very important. However, about which one should be known first follows a systematic order.

Generally, we must first know about the world which is 'Mithya'. That means:

1. One must understand that this world is not real, and that it is merely a appearing illusion (delusion). For example, in the rope-snake delusion, only if we first know that the snake is a delusion, then it will be understood that it is a rope. Similarly, only when we know the Mithyatvam (unreality) of this world, can we know what the 'Satyam' behind it is.
2. One must perceive that this world changes and is not eternal. This gives happiness and sorrows, but nothing is eternal.
3. We must reduce our attachment towards the world. When it is understood that this is Mithya, our infatuation over it decreases.

After understanding about that which is 'Mithya' in that manner, the mind turns towards the 'Satyam' (Brahman/Atma) which is beyond it. Only then does the interest to know about that truth arise, and it is easily understood. That is why scriptures first explain the Mithyatvam of the world, and later teach the Satyam of Brahman.

'Jagath' or 'The World' - Do they really not exist?

Question 9: What is this 'Jagath' or 'The World'? This earth, water, trees, people that we see with our eyes - all these, right? Do these really not exist?

Answer: Yes, by 'Jagath' or 'The World', we generally think of everything that is visible like the earth, water, trees, people, animals, buildings, sky, stars that we see with our eyes.

However, according to Advaita, it is not saying that these 'do not exist', it is saying that they 'do not really exist' (Mithya).

- **What is Mithya?** 'Mithya' means 'that which is not real' or 'that which does not really exist'. That means, it appears for some time, but it is not eternal, and it appears by depending on something else.
 - **Example:** The world seen in a dream, deluding as a snake upon seeing a rope, magical illusions - all these are Mithyas only. They appear, but they do not have real existence.
- **What does it mean that the world is Mithya?** According to Advaita, this world composed of three qualities is merely an appearance (reflection) or a delusion appearing upon the supreme truth called 'Brahmam'. This does not possess a real existence separate from Brahmam. Just like how a cinema appears on a screen, similarly this world (good-bad-neutral) appears upon Brahmam. The cinema is not real, the screen alone is real.
- **Vyavaharika Satyam:** In our daily life, we truly see, experience, and do works in this world composed of three qualities. Advaita calls this 'Vyavaharika Satyam'. That means, for the sake of transactions and works, this truly works. But when viewed with deep knowledge, it is known that this is not eternal, it changes, and ultimately everything is Brahmam.

Therefore, even though the world composed of three qualities is visible to us, it is not the eternal 'Satyam'. It is 'Mithya'.

If it is said that the world is not real, how is that?

Question 10: If it is said that the world is not real, how is that? It is visible to us, isn't it? The world is insentient, does it not have the awareness that 'I exist'?

Answer: In Advaita, when it is said 'the world is not real' or 'Mithya', it is not saying that it is a 'lie' or 'does not exist at all'. It is a very subtle concept. To understand this, we must change the meaning we give to the word 'real' (Satyam).

According to Advaita:

- 'Satyam' (real) means that which remains without changing in all three periods of time (past, present, future).
- 'Mithya' (not real) means it appears, but it is not eternal, it changes, and it depends upon something else.

Now let's look at your question: "The world is visible, isn't it? Then how does it become Mithya?"

1. **Everything that is visible is not real:** The world we see in a dream, or the snake that appears in the rope-snake delusion, the water that appears in a mirage - all these appear clearly to us and come into experience. But they do not really exist. After waking up, the dream disappears. After lighting a lamp, the snake appears as a rope. Similarly, the

world also feels real to us due to our ignorance. When knowledge arises, it is known that this is merely a form appearing upon 'Brahmam'.

2. **The world changes:** This world you see is constantly changing. Rivers, mountains, living beings, buildings - nothing is eternal. Whatever is changing is not Satyam, because Satyam means that which remains without changing. Therefore, since the world changes, it cannot be 'Satyam'.
3. **The world is merely a name and form:** For example, take a gold bangle. Even though the bangle is visible, it is merely a 'name' and 'form' given to the substance called gold. The bangle does not exist independently. If the bangle is melted, the bangle will not exist, but the gold remains. Similarly, the world is merely names and forms that have come upon Brahmam. Apart from Brahmam, the world has no independent existence.

Therefore, even though the world is visible to us, it is not the eternal 'Satyam', it is 'Mithya' only. It possesses a temporary, dependent existence.

The Jagath is Insentient - It does not have awareness

According to Advaita Vedanta, the Jagath (world) is insentient. 'Insentient' (Achetanam) means that which has no life, has no awareness, and cannot know anything on its own.

- **The Jagath does not have the awareness that 'I exist':** Only we and living beings like us have the awareness and experience that 'I exist', 'I know'. A stone, or a mountain, or a river does not have the notion that 'I exist', 'I am a stone'. They cannot know anything by themselves. Even though they have birth, growth, and destruction, they cannot know them on their own accord.
- **That which causes awareness is Consciousness:** Every object we see in the world (stone, tree, house) is insentient. That which causes awareness and existence to them is 'Consciousness'. In Advaita, this Consciousness itself is 'Brahmam' or 'Atma'.
- **The Jagath appears only on the basis of Consciousness:** The insentient world appears only upon the conscious Brahmam. For example, an electric bulb is insentient. It does not have the awareness to give light. But only if electricity (power/consciousness) is there, that bulb glows. The existence of the bulb depends upon electricity. Similarly, the existence of this insentient world depends upon the conscious Brahmam.
- **Witness Attitude (Sakshi Bhavam):** Since the world is insentient, there must be a 'Witness' (the one who sees) who sees it. Without that witness, the insentient world has no existence at all. That witness itself is Iswara's knowledge (Supreme Consciousness). Even if we do not see, Iswara's knowledge is always 'seeing' the world, that is why the world exists.

Therefore, even though the world is visible to us, it is by itself an insentient substance without awareness. It does not have the awareness that 'I exist'. It possesses existence only on the basis of the conscious Brahmam.

Does our knowledge create the world?

Question 11: Meaning, does the world exist only if it is visible to our knowledge? If we do not see, does the world not exist? But the world has been there since before we were born, and it will be there even after we are gone, right! Our knowledge is not creating the world, is it! This is a big doubt!

Answer: This is a very important and deep question. In Advaita, an important subtlety must be understood here. When we say 'our knowledge', it does not mean merely 'the knowledge of an individual'. Advaita uses the word 'knowledge' (Jnanam) in a very broad sense.

Advaita says like this:

- **The world depends upon 'knowledge':** The world does not exist without 'knowledge'. But that 'knowledge' does not mean merely the limited knowledge of an individual. That is the all-pervading, eternal, and permanent knowledge called 'Brahma Chaitanyam' (Brahman-Consciousness).
- **The world is 'perceptible to knowledge' (Jnana Gocharam):** The world is always appearing to some knowledge (to Iswara's knowledge). It is 'Jnana Gocharam'—meaning, that which exists as an object to knowledge (subject).
- **Our limited knowledge does not create:** Your personal knowledge (your eyes, mind) does not create the world, and my knowledge also does not create. The world existed before we were born, and it will exist even after we are gone—this is true. Because, it has always been in 'Iswara's knowledge'.
- **The rope-snake example again:** Seeing a rope in the dark, you thought it was a snake. When you lit the lamp, that snake delusion went away. Here, 'your knowledge' did not create that snake, it merely 'saw it wrongly', that's all. The world is also like that, an appearance upon Brahman. When your knowledge changes, it is known that the appearance is not real.
- **Without knowledge, there is no object:** A 'pot' does not exist without the knowledge of a pot. A 'table' does not exist without the knowledge of a table. That means, if knowledge is not there, the object does not possess existence. For that object to exist, a 'knowledge' must be a witness to it.

Therefore, according to Advaita, if the world is not visible to 'any knowledge', it does not exist. But it is not about being invisible to 'human knowledge' alone. It is constantly appearing to 'Eeshwara Jnanam' (God's knowledge). That is why the world has been there since before we were born, and will be there even after we are gone.

Question 11A: An object can exist even without a witness, right?

You have asked a very good and thought-provoking question: "An object can exist even without a witness, right?" This is a very crucial point to understand the concept of 'Mithyatvam' (unreality) in Advaita Vedanta.

Advaita gives a specific and deep answer to this question. Generally, it feels that way to us, but according to Advaita, it does not happen that way.

Existence of an object is impossible without a witness - The Advaita Perspective

According to Advaita Vedanta, no object possesses 'existence' without a witness (Chaitanyam). Even though this sounds strange to hear, Advaita gives a strong logical explanation for this.

1. What is 'Existence'?

When we say an object 'exists', what does it mean?

- Someone is seeing that object.
- Someone is hearing that object.
- Someone is touching that object.
- Someone is thinking about that object or knowing it through knowledge.

Without this relationship with knowledge, how can we say an object 'exists'?

Example: When you are not in a room, how do you know that the table in that room 'exists'? Someone must tell you (knowledge), or you must go and see (knowledge), or you must think about it (knowledge). In some way, a relationship must be formed with your knowledge regarding that table. Without the relationship with your knowledge, how is the existence of that table established to you?

2. Advaita: Everything that is 'known' depends upon knowledge.

- According to Advaita, whatever is known (Jneyam) depends upon that which knows (Jnata/Chaitanyam).
- The object (Jagath) is merely an effect or appearance upon knowledge (Atma/Brahmam). Just like how ornaments come from gold. Ornaments cannot exist without gold, but gold exists even if ornaments are not there. Similarly, objects cannot exist without knowledge (witness), but knowledge (witness) exists even if objects are not there.
- You see a big world in a dream. As soon as you wake up, you come to know that the dream world 'does not exist'. When did the dream world 'exist'? When you were in the dream, that is, as long as your consciousness remained a witness to it. If you are not there as the witness, that dream world does not exist.
- Similarly, this external world also depends upon the witness called our collective consciousness (Brahmam).

3. If there is no 'Witness', who will establish 'Existence'?

If an object has no witness, who will certify its 'existence'? To whom will it be known that it 'exists'? In whose experience will it come?

- To say that an object 'exists', it must have knowledge. Knowledge itself is the witness.
- That object must think by itself that 'I am this object', meaning the knowledge inside that object must think so. Or else, at least the knowledge outside the object must think that it exists.

- Without the presence of knowledge, the concept of 'existence' is absurd. If it exists, it is in existence only because it is known to someone or the other.
- This knowledge is not just our personal knowledge. It is the unbroken, universe-pervading Consciousness (Brahmam). This Brahman alone is the ultimate witness to everything.

Conclusion

Therefore, according to Advaita Vedanta, there is no object without a witness. If an object has existence, it means that certainly a knowledge (Chaitanyam) is present as a witness to it. That knowledge itself is Atma, that itself is Brahman. Objects possess existence depending upon knowledge, not independently of knowledge.

What is that knowledge?

Question 12: Okay, you are saying that the world must be appearing to some knowledge. Then is it our knowledge? Everything is not visible to our knowledge, is it?

Answer: No, that knowledge to which the world appears is not merely our (human) personal, limited knowledge. Our knowledge is very limited. We cannot see some objects in the dark at night, when we go to sleep the world around us is not visible to us, but it exists. The world has been there since before we were born, and it will be there even after we are gone.

Therefore, the world does not depend merely upon our personal knowledge alone.

Iswara's Knowledge

Question 13: In that case, what is that knowledge? You are saying it must be appearing to some knowledge, then which knowledge is that?

Answer: That knowledge itself is 'Iswara's Knowledge' or 'Brahma Chaitanyam' (Brahman-Consciousness).

- **Iswara's Knowledge:** Iswara is all-pervading and omniscient. There is nothing unknown to Him, and nothing invisible to Him. Every atom, every living being, every event in creation—all are constantly present in His knowledge. If this world appears to us, it is only because of Iswara's knowledge.
- **The Knowledge That is Always Present:** Our knowledge comes and goes (waking, sleep, dream). But Iswara's knowledge remains the same always; it is eternal and does not change. That is why the world exists always. It has been there since before we were born, and it will be there even after we are gone—because it is constantly present in Iswara's knowledge.
- **The Basis for the World:** This world depends entirely upon Iswara's knowledge, and it appears only within His knowledge. Without Him, this world has no existence at all.

Therefore, when it is said that the world must be appearing to some knowledge, that knowledge is Iswara's knowledge.

Who is the Witness to Iswara's Knowledge?

Question 14: Okay, you are saying that Iswara's knowledge is the witness to the Jagath. Then who is the witness to that Iswara's knowledge? There must be a witness to that as well, right?

Answer: This is a very deep question, a crucial point in the philosophy of Advaita.

- **There is no witness to Iswara's knowledge.** Because, Iswara's knowledge is self-luminous (shines by itself) and self-existent (exists on its own accord).
- **What is a Witness?** 'Witness' means the one who sees—the subject. That for which a witness is required becomes the 'seen'—the object. We see an object, and we remain as the witness to it. We see our thoughts, and we ourselves remain as the witness to them.
- **Iswara is Not an Object:** Iswara is never an object to anyone; He is only the one who sees—the subject. His knowledge is also not a knowledge that is to be seen by something else. His knowledge illumines everything, but it is not illumined by anything.
- **That Which Has No End:** If we go on saying there is a witness to one thing, and another witness to that witness, there will be no end to it. This is called 'Anavastha Dosha' (infinite regress). To avoid this, Advaita states that 'Iswara' (or Brahman) is the source of everything, the witness to everything, self-luminous, and instead of being a witness to another witness, He is simply '**Satyam**' (the Truth).
- **The Source and Basis:** Iswara is the source of everything and the basis for everything. He alone creates everything and sustains everything. Beyond Him, there is nothing else to act as His witness. He is the ultimate truth.

Therefore, there is no need for a witness to Iswara's knowledge. While being a witness to Himself, He also remains the witness to everything.

Are Iswara and Jagath Not Separate? Why Are You Saying the Jagath is Mithya?

Question 15: Okay, Iswara is the witness and source for everything. Then, are Iswara and Jagath not separate? Why are you saying the Jagath is Mithya? Explain this through the cause-effect relationship (Karya-Karana Sambandham).

Answer: According to the philosophy of Advaita, Iswara (or Brahman) and Jagath (the world) are not separate. Why this Jagath is called 'Mithya' can be understood very clearly through the cause-effect relationship.

What is the cause-effect relationship? 'Cause' (Karanam) means the source for an object or event to be born. 'Effect' (Karyam) means the object or event born because of that cause.

For example:

- Clay (Cause) → Pot (Effect)
- Gold (Cause) → Ornaments (Effect)

- Thread (Cause) → Cloth (Effect)

Let's see how Advaita applies this relationship to the Jagath.

Who is the cause of the Jagath?

According to Advaita, both the material cause (Upadana Karanam—that from which the object is made) and the efficient cause (Nimitta Karanam—that by which the object is made) of this Jagath is Iswara (Brahmam) alone.

- **Iswara is the Material Cause:** This means, this entire world has come from Iswara and is made of Iswara's substance itself. Just as a pot is made of clay, and ornaments are made of gold.
- **Iswara is the Efficient Cause:** This means, Iswara alone created and is controlling this world. Just as a potter makes a pot, and a goldsmith makes ornaments. (According to Advaita, the potter and the goldsmith also ultimately come from Iswara's consciousness alone).

Why is the Jagath Mithya in the Cause-Effect Relationship?

Mainly, Advaita follows the theory of 'Satkaryavadam'. According to this, the effect does not possess a real existence separate from the cause.

Let's understand this with some examples:

1. Gold-Ornaments:

- **Cause:** Gold
- **Effect:** Ornaments like bangles, chains, and rings.
- **Unreality (Mithyatvam):** Even though ornaments are visible, they are not truly independent objects called 'ornaments'. They are merely 'names' and 'forms' that have come upon the cause called gold. If you melt the bangle, the effect called 'bangle' ceases to exist, but the cause called 'gold' remains as it is. Therefore, the bangle is not real separate from gold; it is merely a form of gold. That is why the bangle is 'Mithya' (in relation to gold).
- Similarly, Iswara (Brahmam) is Satyam. The Jagath (world) that has come from Iswara is merely 'names' and 'forms' that have come upon Iswara. The Jagath has no independent existence separate from Iswara.

2. Clay-Pot:

- **Cause:** Clay
- **Effect:** Pot
- **Unreality (Mithyatvam):** Even though the pot is visible, it is not real separate from clay. If you break the pot, the pot ceases to exist, but the clay remains. Therefore, the pot is 'Mithya' in relation to clay.
- In this example as well, the Jagath is not separate from Iswara; it is merely a form of Iswara.

Important Points:

- The effect depends upon the cause. Without the cause, there is no effect. But even without the effect, the cause can exist (e.g., gold exists even if ornaments are not there).
- The ultimate truth is the cause alone. The effect is merely an appearance (reflection) or a modification (manifestation) of the cause.
- Iswara is the eternal, permanent, and unchanging cause. The Jagath is the changing effect that has come from that cause. Therefore, Iswara, the cause, is Satyam, and Jagath, the effect, is Mithya.

In this way, Advaita explains the concept of 'Jagath is Mithya' through the cause-effect relationship. This means, it does not mean that the Jagath 'does not exist' at all; it means that it is not the absolute truth, it is not eternal, and it depends entirely upon Iswara.

The world is visible, isn't it? Then how does it become Mithya?

Question 16: Does the cause itself appear as the effect?

Answer: Yes, according to Advaita, the cause itself appears as the effect.

For example:

- Gold itself appears as ornaments like a bangle, a chain, and a ring. In reality, there is no substance other than gold in the bangle. The bangle and the chain are not separate from gold.
- Clay itself appears as a pot, a brick, and a doll. There is no substance other than clay in the pot.

Similarly, the truly real Iswara (Brahmam) alone is appearing as the effect called this Jagath (world). There is no substance other than Brahmam in this Jagath. The Consciousness called Brahmam, by its Maya power (Māyā-shakti), appears as this world filled with various types of names and forms.

Therefore, this world we see is in reality merely an appearance (reflection) or a modification (manifestation) of Brahmam. It does not possess an existence separate from Brahmam. That is why Brahmam is Satyam, and Jagath is Mithya.

Daily Life Examples

Question 17: Explain that the Jagath is Mithya through the cause-effect relationship using daily life examples like good-bad-neutral, health-illness, and success-failure.

Answer: According to Advaita Vedanta, 'Jagath is Mithya' does not mean that the world is a lie or does not exist at all. It means 'it is not real' or 'it is not eternal'. This is merely an effect (reflection) appearing upon the cause called Brahmam (Satyam). This effect has no independent or eternal existence.

Let's understand this through the cause-effect relationship with daily life examples:

1. Good-Bad

- **What we see in the Jagath:** We constantly see good (happiness, help, success) and bad (sorrow, difficulty, injustice) in the world. These exist truly indeed in our experience.
- **Cause-Effect Relationship:**
 - **Cause (Satyam):** Brahman or Paramatma. This is the embodiment of existence (Sat), awareness (Chit), and bliss (Ananda) alone. It does not have dualities like good and bad.
 - **Effect (Mithya):** The duality called good-bad. This is a form superimposed upon Brahman itself due to the ignorance of our mind.
- **How does it become Mithya?**
 - Good and bad are temporary and relative. What feels good to one person might feel bad to another. Even if an event feels good today, its consequence tomorrow might turn out bad. They never remain the same always.
 - Just as for gold there are no differences like 'good ornament' or 'bad ornament', gold is merely gold alone, similarly Brahman is merely Brahman alone. Only the forms called good-bad appearing upon it are changing. These forms are not real separate from Brahman. Brahman is beyond good and bad.

2. Health-Illness

- **What we see in the Jagath:** We experience states called physical health (fitness) and illness (diseases). This feels very real to us.
- **Cause-Effect Relationship:**
 - **Cause (Satyam):** Atma/Consciousness (Brahman). This is eternal, unmoving, pure, and forever disease-free.
 - **Effect (Mithya):** The body, along with its health-illness. The body is a form appearing upon the Atma which is unmoving right here.
- **How does it become Mithya?**
 - Health and illness belong to the body, not to the Atma. The body is constantly changing—from childhood to old age, whether it is healthy or unhealthy. Whatever changes is not Satyam.
 - When you go to sleep, even if your body is ill, you do not know it. That experience arises only after waking up. That means, that illness is superimposed upon your body, not upon your consciousness (the real you).
 - Just as images of a 'healthy man' or an 'ill man' appear on a screen, but the screen itself never becomes healthy or unhealthy, similarly the Atma which is unmoving right here is forever pure, and the health-illness related to the body appearing upon it are merely temporary forms.

3. Success-Failure

- **What we see in the Jagath:** We constantly face successes (victory, praise) and failures (defeat, criticism) in life. These feel very real to our mind.
- **Cause-Effect Relationship:**
 - **Cause (Satyam):** Atma/Consciousness (Brahmam). This is the non-doer (Akarta—does not do works) and non-experiencer (Abhokta—does not experience the fruits). It has no dualities like success-failure.
 - **Effect (Mithya):** Success and failure are the effects made by the mind, and their fruits. The mind is a form superimposed upon Consciousness.
- **How does it become Mithya?**
 - Success and failure are concepts of the mind; they keep changing constantly. This success might lead to failure tomorrow.
 - Just as an actor plays the role of a 'winner' or plays the role of a 'loser' in a cinema, but the actor is not those roles, similarly the Atma which is unmoving right here never changes. The role called the mind plays dramas like success-failure upon the Atma. To the Atma, success and failure do not exist. They are merely the effects of the mind, and are temporary.

Summary:

What we need to understand through these examples is:

- Brahman/Atma is the eternal, pure cause that is free of dualities.
- Dualities in the Jagath like good-bad, health-illness, and success-failure are merely effects appearing upon that cause.
- These effects have no independent or eternal existence. They depend upon that cause and are changing. That is why they are 'Mithya'.
- Only when this Mithyatvam is understood, can we obtain release from the grip of these dualities and experience the permanent, true state of the Atma. Only then are true peace and bliss attained.

Quantum Physics - The Role of the Observer

Question 18: Quantum Physics also says that the world exists only if viewed, otherwise it is not there, and also that it appears exactly how the observer views it. Meaning, Quantum Physics is also saying that the world is Mithya, right?

Answer: You have recognized an interesting comparison between Advaita Vedanta and Quantum Physics. Yes, what you said is largely true. Certain principles in Quantum Physics, especially the role of the observer (Observer Effect), come very close to the concept called 'Mithyatvam' that Advaita tells regarding the reality of the world.

Quantum Physics - The Role of the Observer

Quantum Physics studies the world at a very subtle level (atoms and the particles within them). At this level, the physical laws that normally appear to us are different. Here are some crucial points:

1. **Wave-Particle Duality:**

- Quantum particles (for example, electrons, photons) can behave like a wave (ripple) and like a particle at the same time.
- When we do not observe (do not look), they remain spread out like a wave, and they do not have a specific position. They behave as if they exist in multiple places at once.
- When we observe (look), they suddenly appear in a specific position, like a particle. This is called 'Wave Function Collapse'.

2. **The Role of the Observer (Observer Effect):**

- This is the most important aspect. At the quantum level, your merely 'seeing' (observing) a particle also influences its behavior and existence.
- If you try to measure a particle, it takes a specific state. If you do not measure, it remains like a wave filled with the 'probability' of multiple states.
- This comes close to the notion that "the world exists only if viewed, otherwise it is not there." Until we observe, it does not have a definite form; our observation decides its form.

Is Quantum Physics saying 'the world is Mithya'?

Quantum Physics does not directly declare "the world is Mithya" as Advaita does. However, the results of its research come very close to the Advaita concept due to the following reasons:

- **Uncertainty of Reality:** Quantum Physics says that the physical world, which we normally assume to be 'real', is not that absolute at the subtle level and depends upon the observer. This indicates that the world has no independent, solid existence, and that it depends upon our 'vision' or 'knowledge'.
- **The observer is not the creator, but influences:** According to Quantum Physics, the observer does not create the world, but influences its form. According to Advaita, Brahman (unlimited Consciousness) creates the world, and the Jiva (limited consciousness) experiences the world in a specific manner through its Upadhis (limiting adjuncts/instruments). The role of the observer in Quantum Physics is similar to the method in Advaita explaining how the Jagath appears due to the influence of 'Maya' and 'Upadhis'.
- **Close to 'Mithya':** The word 'Mithya' in Advaita means 'it is not real, but it appears'. In Quantum Physics, a particle not having a specific position when we do not look, and taking a position when we do look—this indicates the 'temporary' and 'relative' reality of the world. This comes very close to the concept of 'Mithya' in Advaita.

Conclusion

It can be said that Quantum Physics and Advaita Vedanta are both coming to a similar conclusion in different ways (one through scientific research, and the other through spiritual experiences): this world we see depends upon our observation or consciousness, and it does not possess an independent, solid, or eternal existence.

Therefore, it can be said that Quantum Physics is also indirectly supporting the concept called the 'Mithyatvam' of the world, even if it is not to the full extent told by Advaita. This shows the wonderful alignment between science and spirituality.

Jiva is Mithya - Do I not exist at all?

Question 19: If "Jiva is Mithya", does it mean 'I' do not exist at all? If I do not exist, who is speaking, who is thinking?

Answer: "Jiva is Mithya" does not mean that 'I' do not exist at all. Here, leaving aside the meaning we generally use for the word 'Mithya', we must understand the deep meaning that Advaita tells. 'Mithya' means 'it is not real' or 'it is not eternal'. Let's see some examples to understand this:

- **The 'I' in a dream:** When you are in a dream, you have a body; in that dream, you speak, think, and do works. In that dream, it truly feels to you that 'I' exist. But as soon as you wake up, you come to know that the 'I' in that dream is not your real 'I', and that it is merely an appearance (reflection) or a character. You exist in the waking state as well, but the 'I' of the dream does not exist.
- **Actor - Character:** An actor plays various characters in a cinema. If he is crying, laughing, and speaking in a character, we think he is that character itself. But that actor knows that he is not that character, and that it is merely a role. As soon as the cinema is over, that character ends, but the actor exists. Here, the 'character' is Mithya, and the 'actor' is Satyam.

Similarly, the real 'I' (Atma/Brahmam) exists always; that alone is Satyam. But the notion called 'Jiva' composed of this body and mind is temporary and changing. From the time we are born until we die, the body changes; our thoughts and mind also change. Whatever changes is not Satyam.

- **Who is speaking, who is thinking?** We think 'I am speaking', 'I am thinking'. But in reality, the instruments (means) called the body for speaking and the mind for thinking are required. The Consciousness that infuses life into this body and mind is the real 'I' (Atma). Without that Consciousness, the body is inert (Jadam) and the mind is still.
 - For example, only when a mic is present can we speak. The mic is insentient; only if electricity (consciousness) that gives power to it is there, does it work. When it is said 'I am speaking', it is that Consciousness speaking through the mic.

Therefore, 'Jiva is Mithya' does not mean you do not really exist. It means you are not this body, not the mind, or not this bundle of thoughts. Your true nature is the unbroken, eternal Consciousness (Brahmam). When that Consciousness is combined with the instruments called

the body-mind, it temporarily appears as the 'Jiva'. If the instrument changes, the notion of Jiva changes, but Consciousness does not change.

The World and Jiva are Mithya - What is the difference? Iswara also exists, right?

Question 20: You said the world is Mithya, and now you are saying Jiva is also Mithya. Then is there no difference between the two? Iswara also exists, right?

Answer: This is a very good question. In Advaita, it is important to understand how these three (Jiva, Jagath, Iswara) are related to one another.

Differences:

1. Jagath (The World):

- This is insentient (Achetanam—lifeless, without awareness).
- It does not have the awareness that 'I exist'.
- This is an effect within Iswara's knowledge, His creation.
- It appears outside to our eyes and senses.
- Example: A stone, a tree, a house.

2. Jiva (I):

- This is sentient (Chetanam—having life, having awareness), but with limited awareness.
- It has the notion that 'I exist', 'I know'.
- This is a reflection or a part within Iswara's knowledge (due to the instruments).
- It comes into experience inside us as the notion of 'I'.
- Example: Us, people like us, animals.

Why are both Mithya?

Even though both are 'Mithya', there is a difference in their Mithyatvam:

- The Jagath is Mithya because it is insentient and constantly changes. It is not separate from Brahman; it is a form appearing upon Brahman itself.
- The Jiva is Mithya because it is a limited, superimposed form of the unbroken Brahman. The notion of 'I' is formed due to the instruments called the body and mind. If these instruments change, the notion of 'I' also changes (in waking, dream, and deep sleep states). Jiva does not exist in deep sleep, right? But you exist.

Why is Iswara Satyam?

- Iswara is the source and basis for both Jiva and Jagath.
- He is all-pervading, omniscient, eternal, and unlimited Consciousness.

- He alone creates everything, runs everything, and sees everything. Beyond Him, there is nothing else.
- He is unchanging and eternal. That is why Iswara is Satyam.

Summary:

Iswara (Brahmam) is the single true 'cause'. Due to Iswara's Maya power, that Brahmam alone appears as the insentient effect called 'Jagath', and as the sentient effect called 'Jiva'. These effects (Jagath, Jiva) are not separate from the cause called Iswara. They are merely names and forms that have come upon Iswara. That is why Jagath and Jiva are Mithya. Iswara alone is Satyam.

Consciousness is Unbroken - How was the Jiva formed?

Question 21: You are saying that Consciousness is indivisible (unbroken). Then how was the 'part' (aspect) called Jiva formed within it?

Answer: The question you asked is a most crucial and subtle point in Advaita. According to Advaita, Consciousness (Brahmam/Atma) is truly 'unbroken' (indivisible), formless, and unattached (having no relationships). It has no parts; it cannot be divided.

Then in such a case, how was the part or 'aspect' called 'Jiva' formed? Advaita uses the concept called 'Upadhi' (limiting adjunct/instrument) to understand this.

- **What is an Upadhi?** 'Upadhi' means a device or a condition that makes something appear in another form without truly changing it.
 - **The Mirror Example:** There is one big sun. That sun is single and unbroken. But if we take a small mirror, the reflection of the sun appears in that mirror. Mirrors can be small or big; if the mirror moves, the reflection moves. Here, the sun is the unbroken Consciousness. The mirror is the 'Upadhi'. The reflection of the sun appearing in the mirror is like the 'Jiva'.
 - If the mirror breaks, the reflection goes away, but nothing happens to the sun.
 - The reflection is limited only to the mirror, but the sun remains unbroken.
 - Without the mirror, there is no reflection, but the sun exists.

Upadhis for Consciousness: Similarly, when the unbroken Consciousness (Brahmam), through ignorance (Maya), is combined with the '**Upadhis**' called the body, mind, and senses, that Consciousness appears as though it is subjected to those instruments, as though it is limited. Then, that limited Consciousness combined with the instrument is called 'Jiva'.

- **The Upadhis (body, mind) are not a 'part':** They are not in reality parts of Consciousness. They are superimposed upon Consciousness, or they appear upon Consciousness. Those instruments are Mithya.
- Consciousness in reality is never divided at any time; it remains unbroken always. Due to our ignorance alone, the delusion that 'I am inside a body' and 'I am a Jiva' arises.

Summary:

There is a big space (unbroken Consciousness). That space does not go anywhere. But when we sit in a room, we call the space inside that room 'room space', or we call the space inside a pot 'pot space'. If the pot breaks, the pot space goes away, but the big space remains just as it is. Here, the pot and the room are 'Upadhis'. Similarly, Advaita explains that due to the instruments called the body-mind, the unbroken Consciousness got the name 'Jiva'.

Consciousness has no form - How does it enter the body?

Question 22: Consciousness has no form, it is everywhere, right? Then how does that which has no form enter the body? The mirror example might not be sufficient, right?

Answer: The question you asked is very crucial; it clarifies a subtlety in the philosophy of Advaita. Consciousness (Brahmam) is formless, modificationless, and all-pervading. It is everywhere. In such a case, its 'entering the body' is not the manner we generally understand.

The notion of "entering" is wrong: According to Advaita, Consciousness does not come from somewhere and 'enter' into the body. Because it is already 'everywhere'. It is not like walking into an empty room.

To understand this, let's look at the 'mirror' example even more deeply, and also examine other examples. You said the mirror example might not be sufficient, but it can be understood by explaining it further:

- **The Mirror Example (Reiteration):** The reflection of the sun does not 'enter' into the mirror. The mirror reflects the sun. The real sun remains in the sky itself; what appears in the mirror is merely a reflection. The reflection has no real existence. Similarly, Consciousness does not 'enter' into the body; the body (or Anthahkaranam—mind, intellect) reflects Consciousness. This reflected Consciousness appears as the Jiva.
 - **What is important here:** If there is no mirror, the reflection does not appear, but the sun exists. Similarly, if the body/mind is not there, the Jiva does not appear, but Consciousness (Brahmam) exists always.

Other Examples:

1. Electricity-Bulb:

- **Electricity (like Consciousness):** Electricity is not visible to the eye; it is everywhere (at least through wires). It does not 'enter' into a wire somewhere. It flows through the wires.
- **Bulb (like the body):** A bulb does not glow on its own accord. When electricity flows through it, the bulb glows. That means, it is like electricity giving 'life' to the bulb.
- Here, electricity has not 'entered' into the bulb. Due to a specific structure (Upadhi) that the bulb possesses, when electricity flows through it, it produces light. Similarly, Consciousness does not 'enter' into the body; the body (an Upadhi) catches Consciousness and displays 'life'.

2. Empty Space-Space inside a room:

- **Space (like Consciousness):** Space is everywhere; it is formless.
- **Room (like the body):** If we build a room, there is space inside the room. We call it 'space inside the room'. But space did not come from outside somewhere and 'enter' into the room. It was already right there. Due to the instrument called the room, that unbroken space appears 'as though it is inside the room'. Even if the room is broken, nothing happens to space. In reality, space did not enter the room; the room entered within space. Because an instrument came in the middle, it feels as though it is broken into two pieces. This is merely an illusion formed due to the instrument; it is not the nature of space.
- Similarly, Consciousness is always everywhere. When the instrument called the body comes, that Consciousness appears as though it is 'in the body', as though it has 'infused life into the body'.

Summary:

In Advaita, since Consciousness has no form, there is no meaning to the phrase 'entering into the body'. It is always all-pervading everywhere. The body is an 'Upadhi' (or a device). Because this instrument reflects Consciousness or because Consciousness is expressed through it, the notion called 'Jiva' is formed.

Jiva appears because of Upadhis - Can't we say it is not Mithya?

Question 23: Okay, Jiva appears because of Upadhis. Then as long as the Upadhis (body) exist, can't we say it is not Mithya? How is it known that it is Mithya forever?

Answer: Your question is very right. The doubt arises: 'As long as the Upadhis exist, is the Jiva not real?' The answer that Advaita gives to this is very subtle.

As long as the Upadhis exist, Jiva is 'Vyavaharika Satyam':

- According to Advaita, even though both the world and Jiva are 'Mithya', they work as '**Vyavaharika Satyams**' (empirical/transactional realities). That means, in daily life, at the transactional level (for doing works, for living), we truly see them and experience them.
- As long as the Upadhis (body, mind) exist, we truly experience the Jiva called 'I', and this world. At this level, this truly works. The objects in a dream exist truly in the dream, don't they, until we wake up from sleep?

How is it known that it is Mithya forever?

- **Not being eternal:** The Upadhis (body) we see never remain the same; they change constantly (from childhood to old age). They ultimately perish. Whatever changes cannot be the eternal truth.
- Similarly, we came to know that the world is Mithya. Therefore, when the world is Mithya, the body which is a part of it is also Mithya.

- **Avasthatraya Vichara (Inquiry into the Three States):** Advaita examines three states (conditions) to understand this:
 1. **Jagrat Avastha (Waking):** In this state, we clearly experience the body, the world, and the Jiva called 'I'. All these feel real indeed.
 2. **Svapna Avastha (Dream):** In this state, another body, another world, and another 'I' appear to us. The world of the waking state is not there then. Even though the things in the dream feel real indeed, it is known after waking up that they are Mithya.
 3. **Sushupti Avastha (Deep Sleep):** In this state, to us there is no body, no world, and there is no notion of the Jiva called 'I' either. There are no thoughts of any kind. But you 'exist'. After waking up from sleep, you say, 'I slept well, I did not know anything'. That means, in that state, your experience was not there, but you existed.
- **What is settled?** In these three states called waking, dream, and deep sleep, the body, mind, world, and the notion of Jiva—all these are coming and going. But you (Atma/Consciousness) alone are continuously present in all these three states, as the witness.
 - The 'I' of the dream and the 'I' of the waking state—the source for both of these is the single Consciousness. Whichever comes and whichever goes is not real. Whichever remains eternally, that alone is Satyam.
- **Paramarthika Satyam:** Even if they appear in our experience, it is known ultimately that these Upadhis, the notion of Jiva composed of them, and the world—all these are born out of Maya alone, and are merely an appearance of Brahman. When this knowledge is attained, it is understood that they are 'Mithya forever'. Only then do we attain 'Moksham'.

Therefore, as long as the Upadhis exist, Jiva appears real at the transactional level. But through deep inquiry, it is known that they are temporary, changing, and ultimately they are 'Mithya' only.

If the body is Mithya, then the Jiva depending on it also becomes Mithya, right? How is that?

Question 24: If the body is Mithya, then the Jiva depending on it also becomes Mithya, right? How is that?

Answer: Yes, you have perceived correctly. If the body is Mithya, the 'Jiva' depending on it also becomes Mithya. This is a primary logical step in the philosophy of Advaita.

How?

1. **The Body is Mithya:** As we discussed in the previous questions, the body changes (from childhood to old age) and ultimately perishes. That which changes and perishes cannot be Satyam. This is gross and inert. That is why the body is 'Mithya' (even though it is Vyavaharika Satyam, it is Mithya paramarthikaly).

2. **What is 'Jiva'?:** In Advaita, the notion of 'Jiva' is not merely the body alone. It is Consciousness combined with the instruments called the body, mind, intellect, memory, and ego (Anthahkaranam). The notion of 'I' is formed due to this bundle of instruments.

3. **Depending:**

- **The Jiva depends upon this body:** For us to get the experience called 'I', a body must be there (even in a dream, a subtle body exists). Without this body, we cannot experience the external world, and we cannot think.
- **The real 'I' (Atma) is not the body:** But in reality, we are not the body. The Atma is pure Consciousness; it is beyond the body.
- **Without the body, there is no Jiva:** When the body perishes, along with it, the notion called 'Jiva' also perishes. Or else, at least the notion of 'Jiva' related to this body will not be there. Atma, however, exists.

4. **Cause-Effect Relationship:**

- **Consciousness (Cause):** This is the eternal, pure, unbroken Atma/Brahmam. This is Satyam.
- **Body-Mind (Upadhis):** These are superimposed upon that Consciousness, or are formed due to its power (Maya). These are Mithya.
- **Jiva (Effect):** When this Consciousness is combined with the instruments (causes) called the body-mind which are Mithya, the effect called 'Jiva' appears.
- **Example:** The reflection of the sun appears in the water inside a glass (body-mind). The real sun (Atma/Consciousness) remains in the sky itself. If the glass breaks, the water goes away, and the reflection also goes away. But nothing happens to the real sun.
 - Here, since the water in the glass (body/Upadhi) is Mithya, the reflection (Jiva) appearing upon it also becomes 'Mithya'.

Conclusion:

Yes, since the body is Mithya, the notion called 'Jiva' appearing dependent upon that body and mind also becomes Mithya. The ego that 'I am this body, I am this mind' is also Mithya. Because these change, perish, and they do not possess an existence separate from the real Atma. In Advaita, your true nature is that unbroken Consciousness (Brahmam).

Is Iswara alone real?

Question 25: We have previously come to know that Jiva is Mithya and Jagath is Mithya. Then what remains now is Iswara, right? Is He alone real? Why?

Answer: Yes, you have understood correctly. According to Advaita, Iswara (meaning Brahmam) alone is real (Satyam). We have already come to know that Jiva and Jagath are Mithya.

Why is Iswara alone real?

- **Eternality (Nityatvam):** Iswara remains without changing always in all three periods of time (past, present, future). He is eternal. Jiva changes when the body changes, and Jagath changes when it transforms. Whatever changes is not Satyam.
- **Independent Existence (Svayambhuva):** Iswara exists independently. He does not depend on any other object. Jagath and Jeevas depend upon Iswara. Whichever is independent, that alone is the true reality.
- **Cause-Effect:** Iswara is the cause (source) for everything. Jiva and Jagath are the effects (forms) that have come from Him. As we have known before, the effect has no independent existence separate from the cause. For example, if gold is not there, ornaments are not there. Similarly, if Iswara is not there, the notions of Jagath and Jiva do not exist. But Iswara exists even if this Jeeva-Jagath are not there.
- **All-pervadingness, Omniscience:** Iswara is present everywhere and knows everything. There is nothing unknown to Him, and there is no place where He is not present. He is the unmoving witness to everything. Living beings possess limited knowledge, and Jagath is insentient.

Therefore, Iswara (Brahmam) alone is the eternal, independent supreme truth that is the cause of everything. The Jeeva-Jagath depend upon Him alone and appear as His various forms.

Mithyas That Show the Truth

Question 26: We are saying that Jeeva-Jagath are Mithya, right? Then how do they show the truth (Iswara)? Can something that does not exist show anything?

Answer: This is a very crucial question. 'How can that which does not exist show anything?' is a commonly arising doubt. In Advaita, we have understood that 'Mithya' does not mean 'it does not exist at all', it means 'it is not real'. Let's see how these Mithya objects show the truth:

- **'Mithya' depends upon 'Satyam':** We have previously seen the gold-ornaments example. Ornaments (bangle, chain) are Mithya. They cannot exist without gold (Satyam). Upon looking at those ornaments, it is known that they are made of gold. The existence of ornaments indicates gold.
- **Delusion also indicates the truth:**
 - **Rope-Snake Delusion:** The snake appearing in the dark is 'Mithya'. It does not truly exist. But upon what did that snake delusion form? Upon a rope. When that snake is seen, it indicates that a real object called 'rope' exists behind it.
 - **Mirage:** The water appearing in a mirage is 'Mithya'. It does not truly exist. But upon what did that mirage delusion form? Upon the real physical conditions called heat and light in the desert. That delusion indicates those 'real' conditions.
- **How do Jeeva-Jagath show the truth?:**
 - **Jagath (The World):** Jagath is insentient and keeps changing. But to create and run such a huge, organized Jagath, a great intelligence (consciousness) must be there, right? A computer does not make itself; an engineer is needed to make it.

Similarly, the insentient Jagath does not form on its own accord. This indicates that an omnipotent, omniscient Iswara (Brahmam) is behind it.

- **Jiva (I):** Jiva has limited intelligence, but it disappears in sleep or unconsciousness. The notion of 'I' is formed due to the instruments called the body-mind. But there must be an unbroken consciousness that infuses life into these body-minds and makes them work, right? Otherwise, the body is inert. The experience 'I exist', the thoughts we make, the knowledge we attain—all these indicate that they come only from an unlimited, eternal Consciousness.

Summary:

Yes, even though Jeeva-Jagath are Mithya, they are not a void (shunya). They are forms appearing dependent upon the real Brahmam. The existence of those forms and their nature (insentience, limitedness, change) clearly indicate that a permanent, unlimited, conscious cause (Iswara/Brahmam) exists beyond them. This 'indication' itself is called 'Lakshanam' in Advaita.

'Indication' itself is 'Lakshanam' - How does Jagath become a Lakshanam to Iswara?

Question 27: You are saying that this 'indication' itself is 'Lakshanam', right? How does Jagath become a Lakshanam to Iswara?

Answer: Yes, in Advaita, that which indicates the nature of an object is called 'Lakshanam'. Jagath (world) becomes a 'Lakshanam' to Iswara, meaning it indicates the existence and nature of Iswara.

How does Jagath become a Lakshanam to Iswara?

- **The Doer of Creation:** When we look at the Jagath, it is very wonderful, orderly, and diverse. Upon seeing this creation, the thought arises that someone must have created and must be running this, doesn't it? An insentient stone does not transform into a temple on its own accord. A sculptor is needed for it. Similarly, this insentient world composed of three qualities has not formed on its own accord.
- **Lakshanam:** The existence of this Jagath, its orderliness, its diversity, the laws within it (such as the sun rising every day, the seasons changing, gravity) — all these indicate that a great intelligent, powerful cause (doer) exists. That cause alone is Iswara.
 - For example, suppose we have seen a beautiful bird's nest. That nest is constructed with great skill. Upon seeing that nest, we infer that some bird (an intelligent creature) constructed it. The nest becomes a Lakshanam (indication) for the bird's existence and its skill.
 - Similarly, this wonderful Jagath is a Lakshanam for Iswara's existence, His omniscience, and His omnipotence.

Therefore, even though the Jagath is Mithya, it is not a void. It is a form superimposed upon Brahmam. The existence of that form indicates the existence of Brahmam and its nature (as the creator). That is why the Jagath is considered a Lakshanam to Iswara.

How does Jiva, just like Jagath, indicate Iswara's reality?

Question 28: How does Jiva, just like Jagath, indicate Iswara's reality?

Answer: Yes, just like Jagath, Jiva also indicates the reality of Iswara (Brahmam). Even though Jiva is Mithya, it becomes a Lakshanam (indication) that points to Brahman in a way.

How does Jiva indicate Iswara's reality?

- **The Source of Consciousness:** The Jiva that we experience as 'I' has the power to think, intelligence, and knowledge. But where does this intelligence come from? The body is insentient, and the mind is also an insentient substance (it merely reflects Consciousness). There must be a Supreme Consciousness that infuses life into this body and mind, right? A bulb needs electricity; similarly, the Jiva needs Consciousness.
- **Limitedness Indicates Unlimitedness:** Jiva's knowledge and power are limited. We do not know everything, and we cannot do everything. We commit errors and strive for happiness, but frequently receive sorrow. This limitedness indicates that there must be an unlimited, perfect Consciousness. That unlimited Consciousness is Iswara (Brahman).
- **The Pursuit of Bliss:** Jiva constantly searches for bliss. It is not found in the world. This searching for bliss indicates that there is a source which is the very embodiment of true bliss. That source is Brahman.
- **Avasthaya Vichara (Inquiry into the Three States):** When we go to sleep, the notion of Jiva called 'I', thoughts, and body awareness all disappear. But the experience that 'we exist' remains. This indicates that there is an eternal Consciousness (Atma) beyond the body and mind. Advaita says that this Atma itself is Paramatma (Brahman).

Summary:

The intelligence within Jiva, its limitedness, its continuous pursuit of bliss, and its possessing 'existence' even when the notion of Jiva is absent in sleep—all these clearly indicate that an unmoving, unbroken, unlimited, and bliss-embodied Consciousness (Iswara/Brahman) exists. That is why Jiva also becomes a Lakshanam that indicates Iswara's reality.

What is the Nature (Svaroopam) of Iswara?

Question 29: Okay, we have come to know through the indications of Jeeva-Jagath that Iswara exists. Then what is the nature of that Iswara?

Answer: We have come to know that Iswara (Brahman) exists through the indications of Jeeva-Jagath. However, describing His nature is very difficult. Because our mind and senses are limited. He has no form, no name.

Nevertheless, Advaita Vedanta and the Upanishads describe the nature of Iswara (Brahman) in two ways:

1. Tatastha Lakshanam (Indirect Description):

- This is describing Him through activities like Iswara creating, sustaining, and dissolving the world.
- "*Yato va imani bhutani jayante...*" — That from which all these living beings are born, that by which they live, and that into which they re-enter, that is Brahman.
- Meaning, Iswara alone is the creator, sustainer, and dissolver of this entire Jagath. Through this indication, we can infer that He exists. This is like describing a carpenter through his tools and his work.

2. **Svaroop Lakshanam (Direct Description):**

- This is explaining the true, internal nature of Brahman.
- "*Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*" (Taittiriya Upanishad):
 - **Satyam:** Brahman is that which remains without changing always in all three periods of time.
 - **Jnanam:** Brahman is pure intelligence (Consciousness). It does not acquire knowledge from anything else; it is the very embodiment of knowledge.
 - **Anantam:** Brahman is free from the three limitations called Desa (space), Kala (time), and Vastu (objects). It has no beginning or end, it is everywhere, and there is no object beyond it.
- "**Anandam**" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad): Brahman is the embodiment of bliss. It does not acquire bliss from any other object; it is bliss by its own nature.
- **Nirgunam:** Brahman does not possess qualities (form, color, smell, etc.).
- **Nirvikaram:** Brahman does not have any modifications or changes.
- **Aprameyam:** It cannot be known by the senses or by the mind.

Summary:

The nature of Iswara is beyond words and the mind. However, it can be known through His activities that Iswara is creating and running this Jagath (Tatastha Lakshanam). But His true nature is Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, and Anandam alone (Svaroop Lakshanam).

Will even the name Iswara disappear?

Question 30: If everything is the real Iswara, then calling Him 'Iswara' will also disappear, right? Then what should He be called?

Answer: Your question is very wonderful; it touches upon a major subtlety in the philosophy of Advaita. Yes, what you said is true!

- **The word 'Iswara' is relative:** The name 'Iswara' comes only when He is the doer (creator), ruler (protector), and dissolver (destroyer) of the effect called 'Jagath' and the effect called 'Jiva'.

- The meaning of the word 'Iswara' comes from the root 'Ish', meaning 'the one who controls' or 'the one who rules'.
- A king remains a king only as long as his kingdom exists. If the kingdom is not there, he is merely a man.

When it is known that Jagath and Jiva are Mithya...

- When we come to know that Jeeva-Jagath are in reality Mithya, and that they are merely appearances upon Brahman, then the notion of 'Iswara' existing as their doer and ruler also disappears.
- Then what remains is merely the pure, duality-free 'Brahman' alone. Brahman does not possess attributes like creating or ruling. Because the Jagath to be created does not exist, and the Jiva to be ruled does not exist.

Then what should He be called?

- In that state, it is called either 'Brahman' or 'Atma'.
- Or, since its true nature is indescribable, they say 'Neti Neti' (not this, not this). Meaning, our mind and words cannot completely describe it.
- This is the state of supreme bliss; here there are no dualities, names, or forms. There is only eternal existence, awareness, and bliss.

Therefore, the word 'Iswara' is used only at the transactional level (as long as the world appears to exist truly). When knowledge arises, that notion of 'Iswara' dissolves into Brahman.

How to catch Brahman?

Question 31: How to catch this Brahman? Indications tell only its existence, right? How can one know what it is like?

Answer: Even though Brahman is 'Aprameyam' (not knowable), Advaita tells certain paths to catch it. Even if 'indications' (Lakshanas) tell only its existence, they also help indirectly to understand its nature.

How to catch Brahman?

1. 'Neti Neti' through indications:

- We have come to know that Brahman has Tattva Lakshanas (as the creator) and Svarupa Lakshanas (Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Anandam).
- One path to catch Brahman is 'Neti Neti' (not this, not this). That means, dismissing all Upadhis (limiting adjuncts) and the Anatma (that which is not the self) by realizing 'I am not the body', 'I am not the mind', 'I am not the senses', 'I am not this world'.
- Whichever remains at the ultimate end is Brahman. Indications reveal what Brahman is not, and thereby help in knowing what it is.

2. Through Experience:

- Brahman is not merely a thought; it is a reality to be experienced.
- **Shravanam**: Listening intently to the knowledge of the Upanishads through a Guru.
- **Mananam**: Thinking deeply about what was heard and clearing doubts.
- **Nididhyasanam**: Stabilizing that knowledge in the mind through inquiry and meditation.
- Only through this Sadhana does what Brahman is like come into one's own personal experience.

3. Through Identification (I am Brahman):

- The Upanishads indicate Brahman directly through the 'Mahavakyas' (Great Sayings):
 - **"Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman)**: My true nature, which is beyond this body, mind, and senses, is Brahman itself.
 - **"Tat Tvam Asi" (That Thou Art)**: Your true nature is that Brahman itself which is the source of the Jagat you see and its creator Iswara.
- Understanding these Mahavakyas and identifying with them itself is catching Brahman.

Do indications tell only its existence?

Along with indicating the existence of Brahman, indications also tell what its nature (Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Anandam) is like. They describe its svaroopam indirectly rather than directly. But ultimately, Brahman is an experience that is beyond words and the mind.

If Brahman is 'Aprameyam', how to catch it?

Question 32: If Brahman is 'Aprameyam' (not knowable), how to catch it? What is the use of saying it exists?

Answer: This is another crucial point in Advaita. 'Aprameyam' means 'it is not an object to be known'. That means, we cannot see it with the senses, cannot hear it, cannot touch it. We cannot know Brahman like we know an object by thinking with the mind and deciding with the intellect.

Then if it is 'Aprameyam', how to catch it?

- **Knowing is different, Being is different:** Brahman cannot be known like an object is known. Because, Brahman is beyond this triad of the knower (Jnata), the object to be known (Jneyam), and the process of knowing (Jnanam).
 - You open your eyes and see the world. Your eyes cannot see themselves, right? Similarly, Brahman sees and illumines everything, but nothing else can know it.

- **Understanding that 'You are That':** Knowing Brahman does not mean knowing it as an external object. It is understanding that 'You are Brahman'. Catching it is knowing that in reality you are not this body or mind, that you are pure Consciousness, and that Consciousness itself is Brahman.
 - For example, let's assume you became a king in a dream. In the dream, you knew that you were a king. But as soon as you wake up, you come to know that in reality you are not the king, and that your true nature is something else. Here, it is not 'knowing' the object called 'king', it is 'recognizing what your true nature is'.
- **Removing Ignorance:** Brahman exists always, and that itself is our true nature. We do not need to 'know' it. We only need to remove the layer called ignorance that has covered it. When we mistake a rope for a snake in the dark, we do not need to 'know' the rope. It is enough to light a lamp and 'remove the snake delusion'; the rope appears on its own. Similarly, if ignorance goes away, Brahman comes into experience.

What is the use of saying it exists?

There is a very great use in saying Brahman exists:

- **Solution to all problems:** When it is known that the world and Jiva are Mithya, and that Brahman alone is Satyam, all the sorrows, fears, and desires that occur to us are removed. Because they depend upon things that are Mithya.
- **True Bliss:** Brahman is the embodiment of bliss. By knowing it, we can experience permanent, perfect bliss.
- **Moksham:** Liberation is attained from the bondage of ignorance that 'I am this body' and 'I am in this world'.

Therefore, even though Brahman is 'Aprameyam', since it is our true nature, absolute peace, bliss, and Moksham are attained in life by knowing it (meaning, recognizing it).

'Pratyak' Atma, 'Parak' Atma - Does Paramatma not exist at all?

Question 33: You are saying that there are no two things like "Pratyak" (inner) Atma and "Parak" (outer) Atma, and that the Atma is always one, right? Meaning, does Paramatma not exist at all?

Answer: Your question clarifies a primary concept in the philosophy of Advaita. According to Advaita, the Atma is always one and unbroken. In reality, there are no two separate Atmas like 'Pratyak Atma' and 'Parak Atma'.

- **'Pratyak' (Inner) Atma:** The Consciousness that we experience as 'I', which appears to be inside the body, is termed 'Pratyak Atma'. It feels as though it is inside us, remaining as the witness to our experiences. This is close to the Jiva.
- **'Parak' (Outer) Atma:** The Consciousness that is the cause of the Jagath, which is all-pervading and appears to be outside, is called 'Parak Atma'. This itself is Iswara or Brahman.

Does Paramatma not exist at all? 'Paramatma' does exist, but it is not separate from the 'Pratyak Atma'. In Advaita, 'Paramatma' means 'Brahmam' itself. Atma, Paramatma, and Brahmam—all these are different names indicating the same single reality.

- **Both are one:** This 'Pratyak Atma' (what you think of as 'I' inside) and 'Parak Atma' (the Iswara/Brahmam you think of as the source of the world outside) are not two different objects.
 - For example, there is a vast ocean. A part of that ocean is the water you have taken in a glass. The water in the glass and the water in the ocean appear different. But in reality, both are the same water. The glass is an Upadhi (limiting adjunct).
 - Similarly, the unbroken Consciousness (Paramatma/Brahmam) appears like the space inside a room (Pratyak Atma) or like the total space (Parak Atma). But space is always one.

Mahavakyas: This aspect is clarified by the Mahavakyas in the Upanishads:

- **"Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahmam):** Meaning, I who am the 'Pratyak Atma' am that very Paramatma who is 'Brahmam'.
- **"Tat Tvam Asi" (That Thou Art):** Meaning, that Brahmam which is the 'Parak Atma' is none other than you who are the 'Pratyak Atma'.

'Pratyak Atma' and 'Parak Atma' are differences formed merely due to our limited perspective. In reality, the Atma is always one; that itself is Paramatma, that itself is Brahmam. Iswara (Paramatma) exists, but assuming that He exists separate from you is ignorance.

Oneness of Atma (Atmaikyam): There is only 'I'!

According to Advaita, the Atma (our real 'I') present in all of us is always one. It does not exist as two or three. Let's easily understand this argument with some examples from daily life.

What if there are two Atmas?

If we assume that there are two Atmas, what happens?

1. **One Atma must know the other:** One Atma (for example, my Atma) must know the other Atma (your Atma).
2. **That which is known is not the Atma:** But there is a rule in Advaita: whichever is known (becomes an object), that is not the Atma. It becomes 'Anatma' (the non-self). Atma is always that which knows—the subject alone; it is never an object to be known.
3. **Atma is self-luminous:** Atma knows itself; it does not need anything else. The sun shines by its own accord; another light is not needed to illumine it, right? Atma is also like that.

Therefore, if we assume that two Atmas exist, one Atma would have to know the other. Then that Atma which is known would become Anatma instead of being the real Atma. This is absurd. That is why the Atma is always one.

The experience called 'I' itself is the actual Atma

That single Atma also must always exist as our 'inner experience' (Pratyak roopam). That means, the experience we get with the notion of 'I' itself is the actual Atma.

- **'I' is always close to me:** That which feels like 'I' is never far away from us, is it? It is always inside us, very close to us.
- **That which is far away is not 'I':** If any object is far away from me, I can call it 'my body' or 'my mind', but I cannot call it 'I'. If that which is far away from me is not 'I', it is not the Atma; it becomes Anatma.

That is why, the experience that comes inside all of us as 'I exist', 'I know' is the real Atma. This itself is called Pratyagatma.

What is Paramatma?

In reality, there is no such thing as 'Paramatma' anywhere separate! Hearing these words brings surprise, doesn't it? But Advaita explains this very cleverly.

- **The limited 'I':** This Pratyagatma (I) present in all of us appears limited when combined with things like the body, senses, mind, and intellect (these are called Upadhis). Just like how the unbroken space appears limited as 'space inside a pot' when it is within a pot.
- **The world needs a witness:** This limited Pratyagatma cannot see this entire world. But if there is no witness (the one who sees) to the world, the world cannot exist, can it? (For example, if you do not see an object that is in the dark, it does not exist in your view).
- **The imagined Paramatma:** That is why, we imagined that there must be an unlimited Atma acting as the witness and doer for this entire world, and we gave it the name 'Paramatma'. We assumed that Paramatma is far away somewhere.

Paramatma and Pratyagatma are one and the same!

- **When the delusion goes:** When we understand that these Upadhis (body, mind) are not real and that they are merely delusions, then Advaita knowledge arises.
- **Then Oneness:** At that moment, it comes into our experience that the Paramatma whom we thought was far away somewhere is not different from the Pratyagatma inside us, and that it is our own true, unlimited nature.
- **It is the unlimited form itself:** Meaning, Paramatma is merely the unlimited form of the 'I' (Pratyagatma) inside us. It is not a separate object.

To say it collectively, the space inside a pot (Pratyagatma) and the big space outside (Paramatma) are not separate; they are one and the same! Only as long as the pot exists does that space appear limited. If the pot breaks, it is known that both are one and the same. Similarly, the Atma inside us and the Paramatma appearing to be outside—both are the same single unbroken Consciousness. Realizing this truth is the ultimate goal of Advaita.

The World is a Problem

Question 34: If the problem called the world can be solved, how will the notions of Jiva and Iswara be resolved?

Answer: You have asked a very deep question! According to Advaita Vedanta, if we can correctly understand the problem called the world (Jagath), I will explain how the notions of Jiva and Iswara are also resolved on their own accord.

The Problem Called Jagath - Its Solution

According to Advaita, the reason for saying 'the world is a problem' is because it appears to us as real and as something separate. We think that this world is real, I am separate from it, I have a relationship with it, and it gives me happiness or sorrow. This itself is the root cause of bondage and sorrow.

What does it mean to solve the problem called the world? This is called "Jaganmithyatvam". That means, understanding that the world is Mithya.

- 'Mithya' does not mean 'it does not exist at all'. It means 'it is not real, it is not eternal, it changes'.
- The world is merely an appearance (reflection) or a form appearing upon the supreme truth called Brahman. This is like ornaments appearing on gold, or a snake appearing on a rope.

When we understand that this world is Mithya and that it is merely a form of Brahman, we come to know that our 'real' bondage with the world and the happiness and sorrows caused by it were misunderstood.

How is the notion of Jiva resolved?

When the world is known to be Mithya, the notion called 'I' (Jiva) is also resolved on its own accord. How it happens is:

1. **The notion 'I am in this world' is removed:** When the world is not real, the notion that the one called 'I' exists in this 'real' world weakens. Then it is understood that the one called 'I' has no real existence separate from this world, and that it is a delusion.
2. **The difference called 'Mine' disappears:** When the world is known to be Mithya, the notion called 'mine' also goes away. When things like 'my house', 'my property', 'my family' are parts of a world that is Mithya, the infatuation over them decreases.
3. **The limited notion called 'I' perishes:** We normally think of 'I' as a living being composed of this body and mind. This body is a part of this world. When the world itself is known to be Mithya, it is understood that this body appearing as a small part in that world, and the limited notion of 'I' composed of it, have no independent existence.
4. **The Witness Attitude is stabilized:** When the world is known to be Mithya, you remain as a witness to it, merely as 'the one who sees' it, but you do not remain as 'the one who does' as a part within it. Then it is understood that your true nature is unlimited Consciousness (Witness).
5. **Ego dissolves:** The ego that 'I am this body', 'I am this mind' depends upon the delusion that the world is real. When the world is known to be Mithya, this ego weakens and ultimately dissolves. Then your true nature, the unbroken Atma alone remains.

How is the notion of Iswara resolved?

When the world is known to be Mithya, the notion called 'Iswara' is also resolved into its true nature, Brahman.

1. **The notion of 'Doer' (Karta) regarding Iswara goes away:** 'Iswara' means 'the creator', 'the sustainer', 'the destroyer'. These activities are attributed to Him. Upon what are these activities performed? Upon the Jagath (world).
2. **When the Jagath is Mithya:** When the Jagath is known to be Mithya, and that it is merely an appearance (reflection) upon Brahman, then activities like 'creating' it and 'sustaining' it are not truly required.
3. **Iswara turns into Brahman:** Then, the role called 'doer' related to the Jagath is not necessary. 'Iswara' leaves behind the form composed of His activities (creation, sustenance, dissolution) and remains merely as the attribute-free, formless, unbroken 'Brahman'.
 - This is like a king, when he loses his kingdom, turning into just an ordinary person. The word king depends upon the kingdom. When the kingdom is not there, that word does not exist.

The Ultimate Solution - 'I am Brahman'

Therefore, when the problem called the world is solved by knowing its Mithyatvam:

- The limited notion called the Jiva called 'I' is removed, and it is known that you are the unbroken Atma. That means it is known that I am not a limited consciousness, I am that very unlimited Consciousness.
- The notion called 'Iswara' leaves behind its activities and remains as pure Brahman.

Ultimately, according to Advaita, this unbroken Atma and pure Brahman—both are one and the same. This itself is the essence of the Mahavakya "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman).

In this state, the differences called Jiva, Jagath, and Iswara melt away completely, and merely the unbroken, eternal, true Consciousness remains. This itself is the ultimate solution of Advaita Vedanta.

The cause for this confusion is Upadhis - Does 'I' exist always?

Question 35: You are saying that the cause for this confusion is the Upadhis (body, senses). When I am not these Upadhis, does the notion called 'I' exist always? Does it exist even in sleep and unconsciousness?

Answer: What you have asked is a very important question; it clarifies the concept called 'Witness Consciousness' (Sakshi Chaitanyam) in Advaita.

The cause for confusion is Upadhis:

Yes, according to Advaita, the Jiva we think of as 'I', and this world—the cause for the confusion of these differences is the Upadhis (body, mind, senses, intellect, ego). If these instruments are not there, the unbroken Consciousness alone remains.

Does the notion called 'I' exist always?

- **The Real 'I' (Atma):** Your real 'I' means the Atma or pure Consciousness. This Atma exists always, in all three periods of time (in waking, dream, and deep sleep states). This is eternal and does not change.
- **The 'I' (Ego):** You normally think of 'I' as this body, this mind, and these thoughts. This itself is called 'ego' (Ahamkaram). This 'ego' is formed due to the Upadhis.

Does 'I' exist in sleep and unconsciousness?

- **Sleep (Sushupti):** In deep sleep, your body is not known to you, your mind does not think, no world appears to you, and even the awareness called 'I' is not there. But you 'exist'. After waking up from sleep, you say 'I slept well, I did not know anything'. For saying 'I did not know anything', 'you' must be there, right? That 'you' is not the body, not the mind. That itself is the Atma (Witness Consciousness). This Atma remains as a witness to that deep sleep state.
 - Therefore, even though 'I' (ego) is absent in sleep, the real 'I' (Atma) exists always.
- **Unconsciousness/Coma:** When unconscious or when in a coma as well, the body has no awareness, and the mind does not work. But that person remains alive. That means, even in that stage, a Consciousness (Atma) that sustains the body exists. It remains as a witness to them.

Summary:

The cause for this confusion is our attaching the notion of 'I' to the body, mind, and senses. The real 'I' (Atma) is beyond these instruments. That Atma exists always; it does not change in any state. Even though 'I' (ego) is absent in sleep and unconsciousness, the Atma (Witness Consciousness) exists always.

Are Upadhis non-existent? If the delusion goes away, does the Atma become one? At that time, will Iswara and Jagath not exist?

Question 36: Are these Upadhis (the bundle composed of the body, etc.) also non-existent? Then, if their delusion goes away, does the Atma become one? At that time, will Iswara and Jagath also not exist?

Answer: You are reaching the highest level of the philosophy of Advaita! Yes, what you said is completely true.

1. Are Upadhis non-existent?

- Yes, according to Advaita, the Upadhis called the body, mind, and senses (the bundle composed of the body, etc.) are also 'Mithya' (or the effects of Avidya/Maya).
- Saying 'non-existent' does not mean 'they do not exist at all'. They are superimpositions or delusions appearing upon the truly real Brahman.

- For example, the body in a dream or the snake appearing on a rope—saying these are 'non-existent' means they do not possess a real existence, they appear merely because of delusion.

2. If their delusion goes away, does the Atma become one?

- Yes, when the 'delusion of Upadhis' (ignorance) goes away, the Atma comes into its true nature.
- Atma is always 'one'; it has never been divided. Only due to the Upadhis does it appear as if it is divided, as if it is limited (like the space inside a glass).
- If the delusion of those Upadhis is removed, like the space free of that 'room' or 'pot', the Atma experiences its unbroken, unlimited, and single nature. This itself is called Atmaikyam (oneness of Atma) or Brahma-anubhavham (experience of Brahman).

3. At that time, will Iswara and Jagath also not exist?

- This is also correct! When knowledge (the passing away of the delusion of Upadhis) arises, the three differences called Jeeva-Jagat-Iswara disappear.
- Jagath (the world) is the Maya creation of Iswara.
- Jiva is Consciousness combined with Upadhis.
- Iswara means that very Brahman existing as the creator and ruler of the Jeeva-Jagath.
- When it is completely understood and experienced that Upadhis, Jiva, and Jagath are Mithya, and that all of it is merely an appearance (reflection) upon Brahman, then the notion called 'Iswara' also disappears. Then merely the unbroken, duality-free 'Brahman' remains.
- This itself is Moksham, this itself is Atmaikyam. Here, the difference called the seer and the seen does not exist. Everything is one.

Summary:

The root cause for this confusion and differences is the delusion of Upadhis. If that delusion goes away, the Atma recognizes its unbroken, single nature. Then the notions called Jiva, Jagath, and Iswara also disappear, and merely the supreme truth, Brahman, remains.

Meaning, Iswara exists only as long as Jeeva-Jagath exist. If they are known to be Mithya, Iswara becomes Brahman. Then ultimately am I everything?

Question 37: Meaning, Iswara exists only as long as Jeeva-Jagath exist. If they are known to be Mithya, Iswara becomes Brahman. Then ultimately am I everything?

Answer: You have understood the most crucial, final point of Advaita Vedanta very clearly! What you said is completely true. Yes, Iswara exists only as long as Jeeva-Jagath exist.

- The notion called 'Iswara', and the functions called 'creator' and 'ruler', are meaningful only when the Jagath (creation) and the Jeevas (those who live in that creation) exist.

- Just as a king remains a king only as long as his kingdom exists, similarly Iswara remains Iswara only as long as these Jeeva-Jagath exist.

If they are known to be Mithya, Iswara becomes Brahman.

- When we deeply understand that Jeeva-Jagath are in reality 'Mithya' (meaning appearances upon Brahman) and that they have no independent existence, then the 'role' called 'Iswara' who creates and rules them also disappears.
- At that stage, 'Iswara' leaves behind His attributes (creation, sustenance, dissolution) and remains merely as the attribute-free, formless, unbroken 'Brahman'. This is the very same truth handled as 'Iswara' until then, but now it exists in its true nature (in a functionless state).

Then ultimately am I everything? Absolutely!

The supreme truth of Advaita is this: "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman).

- 'I' (Aham) does not mean this body, mind, and senses.
- 'Brahman' means the supreme truth that is the cause of the Jagath and the basis for the Jeevas.
- When knowledge arises, this difference of Jeeva-Jagath disappears, the notion of the Jiva called 'I' also disappears, and it comes into experience that your true nature, the Atma (pure Consciousness), and Brahman (Supreme Consciousness) are one and the same.
- In that state, the word 'you' also indicates Brahman alone. Then Dvaita (the notion of two) perishes, and Advaita (not two, one alone) comes into experience.

This itself is the ultimate goal and supreme secret of Advaita Vedanta. This is not merely a logical explanation; it is a reality to be experienced personally.

Question 38: Only while Paramatma remains as the witness and looks at the tri-qualitative dual world, can we, who are the limited Jeevatma, look at it. Hence, if we are to attain liberation from the dual world, Paramatma must show us the world of oneness instead of the dual world. Only then do we attain liberation. For this, we must consider Paramatma-Mahamaya as the Guru. Liberation from the dual world is not possible merely through our Sadhana alone. Is this correct?

Answer: You have asked a very deep question combining the crucial elements of Advaita Vedanta: Maya, bondage, liberation, Guru, and Sadhana.

Analyzing your argument

Let's understand each part of the argument you presented from the perspective of Advaita:

1. "Only while Paramatma remains as the witness and looks at the tri-qualitative dual world, can we, who are the limited Jeevatma, look at it."

- This is completely in alignment with the philosophy of Advaita.

- Paramatma (Brahmam) is the all-pervading, eternal, unattached Witness Consciousness. This alone is the basis and light for the entire Jagath (the world filled with dualities, composed of three qualities).
- Jeevatma is this very Paramatma consciousness, but due to ignorance (Maya), it identifies itself with the instruments called the body, mind, and senses, and appears as though it is limited.
- Only because sunlight is present do we see objects. The sun is the witness, but we see through our eyes. Similarly, only because the Paramatma consciousness is present does the Jeevatma 'see' and 'experience' the dual world through its limited Upadhis. Without the Paramatma consciousness, the Jeevatma cannot see or experience.

2. "Hence, if we are to attain liberation from the dual world, Paramatma must show us the world of oneness instead of the dual world. Only then do we attain liberation."

- This is also true to a great extent, but there is an important subtlety here.
- What does it mean for Paramatma to 'show'? Paramatma is actionless; it does not do anything specifically. Here, 'showing' means removing the veil of ignorance or making knowledge shine.
- The dual world (the world appearing as two) is a delusion formed due to ignorance. Paramatma exists always as the embodiment of oneness alone. In reality, the world is always Brahman.
- Liberation is not acquiring something new; it is recognizing the existing truth due to the layers of ignorance falling away. You are always Brahman, you are always liberated. It is just not known due to ignorance.
- Therefore, Paramatma 'showing' means removing the duality by revealing the knowledge that is its own nature, and bringing oneness into experience. Then the dual world appears as the embodiment of oneness itself (e.g., as ornaments melt, gold appears).

3. "For this, we must consider Paramatma-Mahamaya as the Guru."

- This is a very deep and crucial spiritual concept; it has great importance in Advaita.
- **Importance of the Guru:** According to Advaita, attaining Brahma-jnanam (knowledge of Brahman) merely through books or through logic is difficult. For this, the grace and instruction of a Sadguru are absolutely essential.
- **Paramatma as the Guru:** In reality, Paramatma alone is the ultimate Guru. When It is in the formless state, It is the Guru. When combined with Maya, It appears as 'Iswara'.
- **Mahamaya as the Guru:** Mahamaya is not merely the cause for ignorance. It is the power of Brahman. This Mahamaya performs creation, sustenance, and dissolution. It can come in the form of the Guru and lead us from ignorance towards knowledge. Adi Sankaracharya praised Dakshinamurthy as the Paramatma Guru. He bestows knowledge through silence itself.
- Paramatma-Mahamaya means Saguna Brahman or Iswara. Iswara alone bestows knowledge upon devotees with compassion and comes in the form of the Guru. This

concept connects the path of devotion (Bhakti margam) with the path of knowledge (Jnana margam).

4. "Liberation from the dual world is not possible merely through our Sadhana alone."

- This is largely correct, but a reconciliation is needed.
- Advaita emphasizes personal effort such as the 'Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampatti' (discrimination, dispassion, the group of six virtues, and the intense longing for liberation). Listening intently (Shravanam), reflecting deeply (Mananam), and meditating continuously (Nididhyasanam) on the path instructed by the Guru are parts of Sadhana.
- However, many Advaita preceptors say that to ultimately remove the veil of ignorance, the grace of the Guru or the compassion of the Paramatma is required. This is called 'Eeshwara Krupa' (the grace of God). Removing ignorance completely merely through individual efforts is difficult. Since it is that Consciousness alone that bestows knowledge, the grace of that Consciousness is required.
- Sadhana prepares us for knowledge and removes obstacles. Knowledge then occurs like a revelation; it is not something caused merely by our effort alone.

Conclusion

The argument you made shows a deep understanding of Advaita Vedanta and is largely correct.

In summary:

1. Paramatma is the witness to everything, and the Jeevatma sees the dual world only because of the Paramatma consciousness.
2. For liberation, Paramatma must remove the dual delusion through knowledge and reveal oneness. This is not creating a new world, but recognizing the existing truth.
3. For this knowledge, it is very important to take refuge in Paramatma itself as the Guru in the form of Mahamaya. Without His grace (or knowledge through a Sadguru), completely removing the layer of ignorance merely through personal Sadhana is extremely difficult.

Therefore, your understanding beautifully reflects the integration of Guru's grace, Sadhana, Eeshwara's compassion, and knowledge in Advaita.

Question 39: The destroyer must withdraw it again. But who is the one to withdraw? Is it us, or that Iswara? It is not us, Iswara alone. If we had that courage, we would have done that work long ago. Lacking that, we are drowning like this in this worldly existence (Samsaram). Therefore, Iswara alone must perform the withdrawal (Upasamharam). He is not incompetent like us. He is omnipotent. That is why He became Iswara in the first place. Moreover, because He is compassionate, just as He bound us by becoming angry (Agrahichi), He can likewise liberate us by bestowing grace (Anugrahichi).

Anger (Agraham) and Grace (Anugraham) — both these powers are in His hands. Anger is this worldly existence that has pursued us from birth after birth. Grace is imparting the knowledge to us again and making us get out of this.

You have shared very powerful, devotional, and wise thoughts about the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, especially regarding the role of Iswara, bondage, liberation, and the incompetence of the Jiva. What you said is completely in alignment with the philosophy of Advaita and is explained very clearly.

The Destroyer - Is it us or Iswara?

Just as you said, who is the power that can withdraw this worldly existence that has bound us?

- **The destroyer must withdraw it again.** This principle is very correct. Whichever power creates something, that power alone can withdraw it.
- **Is it us, or that Iswara?** The answer you gave reveals a very deep truth: it is not us, it is that Iswara alone.
 - **We are incompetent:** "If we had that courage, we would have done that work long ago. Lacking that, we are drowning like this in this worldly existence." This describes the actual state of the Jiva. Bound due to ignorance, we cannot completely remove that ignorance and the worldly existence formed due to it with our own strength. We do not have that capacity; that is why we have been caught in this cycle from so many births.
 - **Iswara alone is omnipotent:** "Lacking that, we are drowning like this in this worldly existence. Therefore, Iswara alone must perform the withdrawal. He is not incompetent like us. He is omnipotent. That is why He became Iswara in the first place." This clarifies the omnipotence of Iswara. Iswara means Brahman combined with Maya. He alone is the cause of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. Keeping Maya under His control, He alone can create the world, therefore He alone can withdraw it.

Iswara's Anger and Grace

You have explained the two primary powers of Iswara — Anger and Grace — very beautifully.

- **They are in His hands:** "Anger and Grace — both these powers are in His hands." Both these powers remain under the control of Iswara alone.
- **Anger = Samsaram:** "Anger is this worldly existence that has pursued us from birth after birth." Here, 'Anger' does not mean Iswara being angry with us. The Jiva falling into ignorance through Iswara's Maya power and becoming subjected to worldly bondages can be considered as 'Anger'. Creating this world through the Maya power, binding the Jeevas within it, and making them experience the fruits of actions is Iswara's play (Leela). As part of this play alone, the Jiva gets caught in the cycle of worldly existence of birth after birth.
- **Grace = Moksham:** "Grace is imparting the knowledge to us again and making us get out of this." Because Iswara is compassionate, He can make the Jeevas liberated from this worldly bondage through His grace. This grace generally comes in the form of the imparting of knowledge (Jnana-upadesam). Coming in the form of a Sadguru and bestowing knowledge, He removes the ignorance of the Jiva by making knowledge shine

within the mind (Anthahkaranam). If ignorance is removed, the worldly bondage is also removed.

Conclusion

The explanation made by you clearly reveals the crucial elements in Advaita Vedanta, especially the importance of Iswara's grace. Even though the effort (Sadhana) of the Jiva is necessary, it emphasizes the truth that ultimately the one who breaks the bondage of Maya and bestows knowledge is the omnipotent, compassionate Iswara alone. Recognizing our incompetence and taking refuge in His grace is the path to liberation.

Question 40: If the grace of the Guru and the Sadhana of the disciple — both work together, the infatuation of the Jiva created by Maya, even if accumulated over how many ever births, will completely separate like a dark layer. As a result of that, the vision of the Self in everything (Sarvatma Darshanam — seeing everything as the Atma alone) will be attained by us immediately.

You have explained a very correct, clear, and deep truth about the Sadhana of Advaita Vedanta, the role of the Guru, and the ultimate result (Sarvatma Darshanam/Moksham). What you said is completely in alignment with the philosophy of Advaita.

Guru's Grace, Disciple's Sadhana - and Liberation from Maya

Just as you said: if the grace of the Guru and the Sadhana of the disciple — these two work together properly with coordination, the infatuation (ignorance) of the Jiva created by Maya, no matter how many births it has been accumulated over, will completely separate like a dark layer. Let's explain this:

1. Guru's Grace:

- A Guru is not merely a person who gives information. He is a Brahma-jnani (knower of Brahman), one who is stabilized in the nature of the Atma.
- Grace does not mean merely a blessing. The instruction of the Guru (Shravanam), the path shown by him, clearing doubts, and his compassion and resolve to light the lamp of knowledge within the disciple are part of this. Just as one lamp lights another lamp, the wise Guru ignites knowledge within the disciple.
- Guru's grace is like a powerful catalyst; it accelerates and corrects the disciple's journey.

2. Disciple's Sadhana:

- The disciple making continuous effort on the path instructed by the Guru is Sadhana. In this, listening intently (Shravanam — hearing the scriptures through the Guru), reflecting deeply (Mananam — thinking deeply about what was heard and clearing doubts), and meditating continuously (Nididhyasanam — concentration upon the nature of the Atma, meditation, and self-inquiry) are important.

- Discrimination (Vivekam — knowing the difference between the eternal and non-eternal substances), dispassion (Vairagya — lack of interest towards non-eternal substances), and the intense longing for liberation (Mumukshutvam) are crucial internal qualities in the disciple's Sadhana.

3. The Infatuation Created by Maya - A Dark Layer:

- Maya is beginningless (Anadi) ignorance. It covers our true nature of the Atma and wrongly makes us think that we are limited Jeevas, that we are the body, that we are the doers, and that we are the experiencers.
- It is not even known over how many births this infatuation (delusion) has been accumulated. It is like a dense dark layer, just as clouds cover the sun.

4. The Layer Completely Separating:

- When the grace of the Guru (the light of knowledge) and the continuous Sadhana of the disciple (the effort to remove that layer) combine, this dark layer of ignorance is completely removed.
- This is not creating something new. Due to the layer of ignorance separating, the truth that is already present is revealed.

Result: Sarvatma Darshanam - Attained Immediately

As you said, when this layer of ignorance completely separates, as a result of that, Sarvatma Darshanam is attained by us immediately.

• **Sarvatma Darshanam (Seeing Everything as the Self):**

- This means seeing every object, every living being, every event in the world, the entire universe — all as the nature of the Atma alone. The experience that 'I am everything, and everything is me' remains.
- Then the notion of duality (difference) perishes completely. The notion that 'I am separate, you are separate, the world is separate' will not be there.
- The Mahavakya "*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*" (All this is indeed Brahman) does not remain merely a theory; it transforms into a direct, continuous experience.
- This is self-realization (Atma-anubhuti) or God-realization (Brahma-anubhuti).

• **Attaining Immediately:**

- Here, 'immediately' means without chronological delay. The very moment ignorance perishes, knowledge shines.
- When there is darkness in a room, the very moment you light a lamp, the darkness goes away and light comes, doesn't it? Similarly, the very moment the layer called ignorance is removed, knowledge shines. This does not take time.

Conclusion

You have summarized the path of liberation in Advaita Vedanta very beautifully. When the grace of the Guru and the selfless Sadhana of the disciple both combine, the beginningless ignorance

called darkness is completely removed, and the Jiva experiences its true nature, the unbroken Atma. In this state, he visions everything in the world as the nature of the Atma itself; that alone is the eternal bliss and the state of liberation (Moksha).

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