

MAYA

Q. What is Maya? What is its meaning?

A. Maya means delusion. That is verily Maya which has no real existence but yet appears to exist. In this sense Maya means error or unreality. This is the correct interpretation. Maya is a mere super-imposition on Brahman, like bubbles on the sea, the shadow of a body and the mirage in a desert. There is no answer to such questions as 'whence did Maya come?' or 'why did Maya come about?' Just as a tipsy man sees a multitude of objects under the influence of wine, but sees none of these when the fit passes off, likewise the *Jiva*, on account of ignorance, becomes enchanted with hopes, and, being made restless, sees this mirage in the form of the world. Along with Maya the feeling that it existed before also vanishes. So there is no answer to the question how it came about; still, Maya is seen, in illusion. In Maya—myriads of unreal things exist. In Maya alone is the presence of happiness and misery felt. In reality neither exists. The *Jiva* is wandering in quest of happiness. The thirst for expectation is never quenched. As the will-o-the-wisp seen at night cannot be caught, the effort only proves futile; so in the kingdom of Maya the *Jivas* are wondering about in expectation of happiness but they find no peace because Maya is unreal and imaginary. Peace can be had only when Maya is no more.

Let us understand the mystery of Maya still more elaborately. Each and every *Jiva* is born from Brahman—in fact every *Jiva* is Brahman; but owing to the illusion of Maya there exists the lingering conception that he is a *Jiva*. This is Maya, The *Jiva* always falls a victim to death, but still every man remains effortless as if he would never die

—this is Maya. Man's body, limbs and parts of limbs always undergo change and after death the body vanishes into space, still there exists the conception that the body is real and that it is the fountain of happiness—such a notion is verily Maya. Similarly the visible world in all its varieties is Maya, because that is Maya which has no existence in substance (reality) and is the creation of the mind. This world is the outcome of imagination, whatever is seen, heard or enjoyed has its existence in the imagination of the mind. In the absence of the mind all these have no existence. At the time of (deep) sleep these do not exist (for the sleeper), so all these are unreal Maya. All varieties of objects, except *Atma*, which cause the belief that they exist, but do not continue to exist, are (creations of) Maya. The body is but an inert mass, so it cannot yield happiness to a man. The *Atma*, full of consciousness, alone is absolute peace. To think that the body gives happiness is Maya. Every sense-organ of a man's body is (inert) like bricks and stones, still man thinks they give happiness. In oblivion of one's own identity with *Atma*, with mind turned outwards, to form such an idea because of inherited and innate habits (tendencies) is Maya. Not a single *Jiva* is body, but the embodiment of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, still to have such an erroneous idea as "I am the body" due to congenital tendencies is Maya. Whatever is imagined by the mind is Maya. What cannot give, but holds out the promise of happiness to man is Maya. As the form reflected in a mirror, though not real, appears to be so, so the entire universe of five elements, and the happiness derived from them, are not real and do not give real peace, nevertheless in the mind of the *jiva* over-powered by desires, they seem to be real and conducive to happiness as the mirage to the thirsty deer in a desert;—this is Maya. That pacified person alone can get peace, conquer death and become Brahman who by dint of discrimination and reasoning can penetrate into the mystery of

Maya and cut asunder the meshes of Maya by realizing the existence of the *Atman* as the sole ever-present reality.

In spite of the presence of the body and objects of enjoyment pertaining to it, as the possessor of the body is not aware of them while asleep, remains under the sway of sleep in the same way forgetting his own nature under the influence of the ignorance of Maya, it is Brahman himself who considers himself to be the possessor of the body, owing to delusive association with the body and feels the bondage though really not in bond. When consciousness dawns it is realised that 'I' am identical with Brahma, the creation of the world emanates from 'me', the world is 'my' imagination, as the bubbles on the sea are not distinct from the sea.

As everything, residence, house, men and trees appear to be revolving and their forms seem distorted to a person who spins round and round in the courtyard of a house, so the *Atma* witnesses the world of five elements as a result of unsteadiness due to imagination. In reality it grows from Maya, is created by the mind and is the offspring of the delusion of the mind, rendered unsteady by cravings. When cravings disappear through means of insight caused by discrimination the mind becomes steady and the *Atma* in its infinite vastness is realized. Then all illusions vanish and *Atma* alone in the form of Wisdom and Bliss persists. *Atma* is real—Its revolving and waving state in the form of the world of five elements is distortion caused by Maya. The material body is the creation of the mind. *Atma* alone shines to the inward sight when the mental and physical vision is abandoned.

Q. Who am I and wherefrom have I come and whereto shall I go? What is in the beginning, end or middle? What is the body and the mind?

A. You are neither the body nor the organs of the body, because all these are inert. You are different from all these, for you are the infinitely vast *Atma*, the abyss of pure Consciousness. In illusion (you consider that)

you are confined in the body, in illusion caused by ignorance and Maya you have entered the chamber of the body and wander about there, thinking that there is happiness in it; you have created the body by the modifications of your cravings and remain there (content), with the idea that you are the *jiva*. But (in reality) different from the body, akin to the sky and brimful of consciousness you are the *Atma*, the only embodiment of Bliss. Just as a dog makes its mouth bleed by biting the dry bone of a cow and licks the blood thinking that the bone is very tasty, so are you yourself in truth the only embodiment of Bliss, who, enjoying sense pleasures, like the dog ascribe it to the senses and their objects, though, all the time you really derive them from your own self. Getting rid of this illusion and abiding in yourself alone you will realize that you are the *Atma*, the embodiment of Bliss. You are neither the body nor the mind, engaged in deriving pleasures from the senses, but you are yourself Brahman.

You have not come from anywhere, nor will you go somewhere else. You are motionless and all-pervading but in illusion because of body-consciousness you experience coming and going. When the body-idea is got rid of you will remain in your own real nature.

In the middle state alone do you consider yourself as a *jiva* and witness the world of creation. The middle state is seen differentiated, though you have really neither beginning nor end, and so no middle. As you did not previously experience the existence of the world of material objects, nor will it be in existence afterwards, so its existence at present is only an illusion. Why worry over an object which neither existed before nor will exist afterwards? What you were before, you are even now and will be later on as well—you are the embodiment of Brahman, beyond the limitation of time.

Your body is only an inert mass, insentient matter, created by the delusion of the mind. Owing to the vibrations of the mind some ideas take shape in a subtle form and they are then transformed into gross bodies. As a rope is taken for a snake because at the sight of it the snake is remembered, so, if some qualities arise in the mind, the material object is seen accordingly. The idea of a piece of wood is formed if length breadth, hardness and such other qualities are in the mind. Similarly when the qualities of the body occur to the mind and get condensed, they are seen as the body. Being deluded by Sexual and other pleasures of the body, the mind remembers the qualities of the body and the body assumes form, like the bubble on the water. It is the mind that has created the body. Mind is the unsteady state of *Atma* when engaged in external corporeal happiness. When this hypnotism of the body disappears and mind turns inward and thus becomes steady the Self is realized. You are the embodiment of that *Atma*. You are the *Atma* but in illusion consider yourself to be the mind, body, etc. This is *mohamaya* (the magic of maya).

Q. What is *Moha* (delusion) and what is the sleep of delusion?

A. To feel the existence of what does not exist is *maya*. *Moha* or delusion is to be unaware of the truth of the Self due to oblivion brought about by the influence of *Maya*. Not to understand that the world of the five elements, the body and the pleasures derived from it are but creations of the mind, and to take them as real—is called *Maya*. The illusory idea that unreal objects are real is called *Maya*. *Moha* is to be attached to them and *moha*, when intensified, is termed the sleep of delusion (*mohanindra*).

Q. What is the cause of 'I' becoming mind and body? What is it to be awake? What is the nature of the Self?

A. You are neither the body nor the mind; you have no mind or body. In illusion you feel their existence. This has come about only because you identify yourself with the body and mind. If you give up the idea not a trace of them will be left. You are the embodiment of Brahman, Being-Wisdom-Bliss Absolute. You are the 'I' feeling, full of bliss. The ego and the 'my' and 'mine' feeling have come into existence as forms of limited consciousness owing to the perversion of the "I" feeling; by perversion out of the essence of your Bliss have grown the sex impulse and other distortions. Thirsting for sexual pleasures, etc. and thinking yourself to be the body, by imposing a limit to yourself you are wandering about in illusion, forgetting your own Self (true nature), like a thirsty deer in a desert. By gaining discrimination and dispassion to be established in the belief that you are the embodiment of Brahman, beyond all delusion, is termed 'awakening'.

When awakened the bodily cravings die out by (one's) immersion in the Bliss of the Self subsequent to the realization by religious practices that the Self is distinct from the body; and when by the continuous, undivided 'I' feeling the idea of separateness vanishes the ego disappears. Thereupon you shine by yourself as Absolute Bliss.