

From the Shadows to the Substance

The world of changing conditions and diverse objects is the projection of the Self through the limited medium of the mind. The joys and realities that seem to reflect in the objects are shadows of the Self. They are not the true substance.

An aspirant must deeply understand that all the joys of the world are a mere drop of the ocean of Bliss that is the Self. All the charms of the objects are but a shadow of the Beauty of the Self. All tender sentiments that are discovered towards the objects of the world are but radiations of the Love of the Self.

Direct your mind towards the Self. Promote spiritual understanding to recognize the Self as the underlying reality behind all names and forms. Do not allow yourself to be entangled into the shadows of the world process. Turn your vision towards the true substance—the Self.

When the mind is directed towards the Self, the desires of the mind begin to dissolve. Just as the shining rays of the sun dissolve the mist, fog and darkness of the night, in the same way, God-ward vision destroys ignorance, subtle desires and karmic entanglements.

When desires increase, the illusion of the world continues to grow in its immensity. When desires decrease and melt, the illusion of the world process begins to disappear.

When you hold intense desire for an object, you are creating a distance between your self and the reality behind the object. Therefore, though you try to possess an object, you are merely running after shadows. Though you feel that you have possessed an object, you have merely held a shadow in your fleeting hands.

A child becomes elated to think that it has caught the moon in a glass of water because it sees the reflection of the moon in it. Similarly, people feel that they have secured their true happiness by possessing the objects of the world.

When the mind learns to see happiness in the Self, it allows itself to follow the course of *antarmukhi vritti*—an internalized movement towards the Self. Just as a lake begins to reflect the vast sky by withdrawing its waves, this mind begins to reflect the Self by withdrawing its thought-waves.

Relax your mind. Free your unconscious of the burden of desires. The objects of the world shine by the Light of the Self, which is your essential nature. It is you who project your own luminosity and discover yourself through the perishable objects of the world. You are giving power, value and authenticity to objects by the limitations of your mind. You are running after your own shadows. Move towards your own essential nature, and your mind will sojourn through a sea of silence to reveal the infinite bliss of the Self.

By Swami Jyotirmayananda