

## 5. Brahman is perceived when all traces of “intention” disappear

The one who is liberated while alive (the *jivan-muktha*) is established firmly in the knowledge of the *Atma*. That one achieved it by dwelling on the false-true nature (*mithya*) of the world and contemplating its failings and faults. By this means, that one developed insight into the nature of pleasure and pain and an equanimity in both. That one knows that wealth, worldly joy, and pleasure are all worthless and even poisonous. That one takes praise, blame, and even blows with a calm assurance and is unaffected by both honour and dishonour.

Of course, those who are liberated while alive reached that stage only after long years of systematic discipline and unflagging zeal when distress and doubt assailed them. Defeat only made them more rigorous in self-examination and more earnest about following the prescribed discipline. They have no trace of the “will to live”; they are ever ready to drop into the lap of death.

The direct perception of Brahman (*a-paroksha-brahma-jnana*) is the name given to the stage in which the aspirant is free from all doubt regarding improbability or impossibility and is certain that the two entities, the individual Self or spirit (*jiva*) and Brahman, were one, are one, and will ever be one. When this state is attained, aspirants will no longer suffer confusion. They won’t mistake one thing for another or superimpose one thing on another. They won’t mistake the rope for the snake; they will know that all along there was only one thing, the rope.

Also, they won’t suffer from superimposing the boundaries of individuality on the Universal (*abhasa-avarana*). That is, they won’t declare—as they were wont to do previously—that the effulgence of Brahman is not in them. In the heart and centre of every individual (*jivi*) exists the Supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*), minuter than the minutest molecule, huger than the hugest conceivable object, smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest. Therefore, spiritually wise people (*jnanis*) who have had a vision of the *Atma* in them will never suffer sorrow. The *Atma* is there, in all living things, in the ant as well as the elephant. The whole world is enveloped and sustained by this subtle *Atma*.

Spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*) have to direct their attention away from the external world and become insighted; they have to turn their vision toward the *Atma*. They must analyse the processes of the mind and discover for themselves the origin of all the modifications and agitations of the mind. By this means, every trace of “intention” and “will” has to disappear. Afterward, the only idea that will get fixed in the mind will be the idea of Brahman. The only feeling that will occupy the mind will be the feeling of bliss, which arises out of its establishment in the stage of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*).

Such spiritually wise people (*jnanis*) will be unaffected by joy or grief, for they will be fully immersed in the ocean of *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*), above and beyond the reach of worldly things. The constant contemplation of the *Atma* and its glory is what is connoted by the phrases “practice of Brahman (*Brahma-abhyasa*)” and “cultivation of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-abhyasa*)”.