

13. Remember constantly that You are not the body!

Look at the clouds that wander across the sky; note that they have no intimate lasting relationship with the sky, which they hide but for a few minutes.

Such is the relationship between your body and You, that is to say, You who are of the nature of Supreme Self (*Paramatma*). The body is only a temporary, passing phase, hiding and clouding the truth.

How can the body's behaviour —wakefulness, dream, and sleep— affect the Eternal Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) in any way?

What of your shadow? Isn't it something separate from you? Does its length or clarity or career affect you in any way? Understand that the relationship between the body and your Self is the same. If you take this bundle of flesh and bone as yourself, consider what happens to it and how long you can call it “mine”. Pondering over this problem is the beginning of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

This physical frame, built out of earth, fire, water, wind, and ether, breaks up into its components, as all built-up things do! Only ignorance will take it as real; only the uneducated will attach value to it as permanent and eternal. Did this body exist before birth? Does it persist after death? No. It appears and disappears, with an interval of existence! Therefore, it has no absolute value; it is to be treated only as the cloud or the shadow.

As a matter of fact, this physical world is like the mango tree raised by the magician's wand; it is the product of the trickster known as mind. The clay takes the form of pot and pan and plate, and after an interval, it becomes clay once again, shapeless clay. Similarly, all this is the formless existence-knowledge-bliss (*satchidananda*); the formless (*nir-aakaara*) appearing with form (*aakaara*) for some time, on account of the delusion and ignorance of the mind. Some things are useful, some are not, all because of this name and form.

All forms are He; all are He. You too are He, above and beyond the past, present, and future. You are not this body, which is tied up with time and which is caught in the toils of was, is, and will. Be ever fixed in this attitude. Dwell constantly in the thought that you are of the nature of the Universal Absolute Brahman (*Parabrahman*); then, you will grow into a realised soul (*jnani*).