

15. Self-realization is the ultimate goal of life

The snake shoves off its coil and has nothing more to do with it. Develop that attitude of non-attachment. Escape from the body delusion. The weak can never grasp this fact. By constant meditation on the *Atma* and its glory, one can come out of the tangles of the world and worldly affairs. The earnest spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*) must divert all their attention and effort from the sensory world and fix them on the eternal Brahman.

Humanity did not arise merely to wallow in casual joy and fleeting happiness. It is insane to believe so. Identifying oneself with the “I” and getting attached to “mine” —that is the root cause of sorrow and ignorance. Where there is no egotism, there will be no cognisance of the external world. When the external world is not cognised, the ego can’t exist. Therefore, wise ones will dis-identify themselves from the world and behave ever as the agent of the Lord, being in it but not of it.

Once, in the midst of conversation, Vasishta spoke to Rama; “Listen, Rama, the valiant! The individual with ego (*jiva*) is a bull reclining in the shade (delusion, *moha*) of a vastly spreading tree in the forest (the objective world (*samsara*)). It is bound by the rope of desire, so it is infected by the fleas and insects of unrest and worry and disease. It rolls in the mire of wrong, while struggling in the dark night of ignorance to slake the thirst of the senses. Then, some good people who are wise untie it and take it out of the dark recesses of the forest. Through discrimination (*viveka*) and inquiry (*vichara*), they achieve the highest intellect (*vijnana*), and through this intellect they are able to grasp the truth, to realise the *Atma*, to know the *Atma*. That is the ultimate goal of all life, the stage that is beyond the past, present, and future.”

But one point has to be clearly noted and always remembered: merely giving up external activities connected with the satisfaction of sensory desires is not enough; the internal cravings have to be uprooted. The word *thrishna* covers both of these: the internal promptings and the external proceedings. When all promptings cease, it is called free of desire (*muktha-thrishna*). Knowledge of the *Atma* and faith in the *Atma* —only these can destroy the irrelevant thirsts.

The spiritually wise person (*jnani*) who declares, “I am Brahman”, utters this truth from the sincerity of the experience. When the gross and subtle are transcended, when the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), and the life force (*prana*) are sublimated, that is to say, when the Self is no longer bound by feelings, thoughts, impulses, and instincts, only existence (*Sat*) remains, pure and unalloyed Absolute Brahman (*Parabrahman*).

Hence, the spiritually wise person feels one with the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent. But the uneducated, the uninitiated, the people who have not taught themselves the first steps of spiritual discipline —they feel that they are one with their physical frame.

16. Being-Awareness-Bliss describes the experience of Brahman

The expression being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) indicates the Eternal, without form (*nir-aakara*). What form can we posit of the All-pervasive, the All-inclusive? “*Para*”, or “*Param*”, means super, beyond, above, more glorious than all. *Parabrahman* indicates the One beyond and behind everything, grander than anything in the three worlds. It is non-dual, unique, eternal, and infinite. “Two” means difference, dissension, inevitable discord. Since Brahman is all-pervasive, It is one and only one. It is indivisible and indestructible.

Realising this fact is the highest wisdom (*jnana*).

The word Brahman is derived from the root *Brih*, meaning to expand, to increase, to enlarge, etc. *Brihath* means big, enlarged, gross, high, etc. *Purusha* has its root *pri*, meaning to fill, to complete. *Pur* means a town “full” of inhabitants, that is to say, the body, in a figurative manner of speaking. He who completes or is immanent in or who fills it is the *Purusha*.

The word *Atma* has *Aap* as its root, meaning to acquire, to earn, to conquer, to overcome etc. He who knows the *Atma* can earn all knowledge, has acquired everything, has earned the knowledge of everything because the *Atma* is omnipresent. He is then fixed in Being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*), i.e. in the embodiment of Brahman. Being is the essence of peace (*santhi*), and awareness is the essence of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*); together with bliss, they form the embodiment (*swarupa*) of Brahman.

The *Taithiriya Upanishad* has declared,

Through bliss (*ananda*), all this is born;
Through bliss, all this is living;
In bliss alone, all this is merged;
In bliss, all this rests.

The category “*Atma* within (*antar-atma*)” has the same attributes as the category Brahman: It is bliss-born, bliss-full, and bliss-merged. The more the knowledge (*jnana*), the more the awareness of bliss (*ananda*). The spiritually wise person (*jnani*) has joy as the right hand, helpful in all emergencies and always willing and able to come to their rescue.

Bhuma means “limitless”. The *Chandogya Upanishad* declares that bliss (*ananda*) inheres only in the limitless, the Eternal, the Brahman. Another word used by the spiritually wise to describe their experience of Brahman is “the One whose nature is splendour, glory, or effulgence, who is Illumination itself (*jyothi-swarupa*)”. Ten million suns cannot equal the splendour of the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*). The word *santhi-swarupa* indicates that It is peace (*santhi*) Itself. In sacred texts (*sruthi*) like *Ayam Atma Santho*, it is proclaimed that the Supreme Self is Supreme Peace (*Prasanthi*) Itself.

This is why the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) is characterised as eternally pure, eternally intelligent, eternally liberated, eternally illumined, eternally content, eternally conscious, etc. It is wisdom Itself, so it is the embodiment of all teaching. It is not attached to anything, so it is ever free. At the very moment that the Brahman is tasted, all hunger ceases and all desires come to an end, so It grants content.

The highest intellect (*vijnana*) is the name given to the actual experience of the Brahman; it is a special type of wisdom (*jnana*), unlike the common fund of information obtained from the study of books. The net result of the study of any branch of learning, the fruit of all that study, is also sometimes referred to as highest intellect. The unique wisdom of the Brahman is known by a variety of names, like experiential wisdom (*jnana*), insightful wisdom (*vijnana*), intuitive wisdom (*prajnana*), consciousness (*chit*), and pure consciousness (*chaithanya*).

The opposite of pure consciousness is the unconscious or inert (*jada*). The knowledge of Self-realisation (*Atma-jnana*) makes everything conscious, active. Brahman is eternally conscious (*nithya chaithanya*).