

The Atma is the Reality

The nature of light is to reveal objects, by illuminating them. But real illumination is the property only of the *Atma*. The sun and fire can only “penetrate” darkness; they do not destroy it completely, because darkness and light are opposed to each other. But the effulgence of the *Atma* has no opposition at all; all objects, all natures are favourable to it. It illumines all. Hence the statement, “The gods acclaim It as the light of lights (*Tham devaa jyothishaam jyothih*).”

Its form is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) —not things, like the physical body. The body is ever-changing; it is not eternal. The *Atma* shines equally everywhere and illumines everything, without any distinction. It is of the nature of bliss and of consciousness (*chaitanya*). So, it automatically becomes *Brahman*! This conviction is the essence of wisdom.

One who sees a pot can know that it is a pot clearly, by oneself, right? But how is it that one identifies oneself with the body simply because attachment makes one feel that it is one’s own body? This is ignorance (*a-jnana*); the my-ness, the I-consciousness. Spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), which is of the nature of the *Atma*, is indestructible; ignorance, of the nature of the body, is destructible.

The *Atma* is formless; hence, the threefold affliction of the qualities (*gunas*) [pure (*sathwic*), dull (*thamasic*), and passionate (*rajasic*)] does not afflict It. The six-fold mutation will not affect It, for It is always being (*sat*), always It and It alone. It is a guest, distinct from the body that It inhabits. The body is subject to illness, growth, and decay. The *Atma* is free from all mutations. The *Atma* has no desires, impulses, or intentions. It is above and beyond the pure, dull, and passionate qualities. “The world is the doer; God is as the lotus on the water, unaffected, unattached (*prakritih karthaa Purushasthu pushkara palaasavannirlepah*).”

The *Atma* is misleadingly denoted by the word “I” (*aham*). How can the seen be the seer, the eternal? How can the body be the real I? When this mistake is made, there can be no peace and no joy. It is only when this truth is understood and experienced that one can have peace.

The *Atma* has to be realized as distinct from this seen (*drisya*) world, from all that is “seen”. This is possible only when one has the discrimination (*viveka*) to be freed from bondage to the world (*prakriti*) and to release oneself from the ignorance that tells one that the “seen” is indeed the real. Such discrimination has to be acquired by the practice of the eightfold discipline, which cleanses the ignorance that darkens the intellect. Then, the intellect becomes pure and sharp and gets directed toward the *Atma*. Ignorant people, to whom the understanding of the *Atma* is beyond reach, delude themselves by the belief that they can derive joy from the objective world, which their senses can experience. If only one reflects a little, even the little joy thus derived will be found to be only the same *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*) and not something separate! For, everything, everywhere, is bliss, is nectar (*amritha*). All bliss is *Atmic* bliss.

But when one can rest in the endless coolness of the actual full moon sailing in the sky, who will be content with the painted moon and its painted light on a piece of canvas? Who will care even to cast a glance at it? As the saying goes, will a honey-sucking bee ever drink bitter juice? So too, the aspirant who has tasted the nectar of self knowledge, the knowledge of the *Atma*, can never relish the sensory objective world.

The person engrossed in a painted moon can never know the real moon. So too, people deluded by the attraction of the world grope about in their ignorance of the *Atma* and wallow in the unreal manifold world shaped

by the three qualities (*gunas*).

On the other hand, the learned one who seeks the reality gives up glittering falsehood and revels in the *Atma*, deriving peace therefrom.

So, never mistake the “seen (*drisya*)” to be permanent or true! You cannot exult in anything else except the ocean of the bliss of the indivisible undivided *Atma*, or *Brahman*. You can get real and full contentment only in the significant, sweet, meaningful experience of the highest *Brahman*, Supreme Reality Itself; only that can give solace from this cycle of birth and death. These unreal things can never afford contentment; the present is without existence and significance. Nothing other than the *Atma* can ever, at any time or in any manner, confer any benefit or bring about any peace. Nothing else can put an end to sorrow and shower bliss.

Everything other than the *Atma* is nonexistent (*a-sat*), like silver in the mother of pearl; a delusion, like water in the mirage; a mistake, with no real silver that one can take or real water to slake one’s thirst. So too, when you base your life on the sensory objective world, which is non-*Atma* and produced by ignorance, you can never derive happiness or joy. Such pictorial products of fancy can’t appease hunger, slake thirst, or satisfy desire. Only the Real can produce those results.

So too, the removal of the recurring sorrow of existence (*samsara*) can be effected only by the attainment of *Brahman*. Genuine peace cannot be earned by means of desires and intentions, study and scholarship, pomp and publicity. It can come only by experiencing the *Atma*, to however small an extent.

By mere force of intention, one can imagine in an instant a scene in America, but can it also be experienced in actuality at that very instant? No. There is no use imagining and framing in the fancy; it must be experienced, in mind, word, and body. Only then can one claim to have genuine peace. Therefore, merely knowing about *Brahman*, peace, truth, or self-realization leads nowhere; you may even know that there is bliss in these, but all that is of no use. You have to dedicate your life to win that bliss and experience it and enter upon the discipline needed to acquire it. Only then do you deserve the grace of the Lord and the attainment of *Brahman*; only then can you get the true bliss.

It is this subject that the *Viveka Chudamani* (Crest Jewel of Wisdom) also teaches in many ways. One who follows its teaching, without deviation, can taste the nectar of *Atmic* bliss, can attain the goal of life. Devoid of the sorrow that is inevitable in dealing with sensory objects, having no intentions and desires, one should be immersed in the bliss of one’s own real reality. Humanity alone, of all creation, has the qualification to achieve this supreme joy. What a sad tragedy that people should neglect their right and wander about, seeking petty pleasures and empty tinsel! Like children playing with dolls and sticks, calling them elephants and horses, people play; but that does not make them real elephants and horses. Ignorant people play in all seriousness, imagining the objects of the world to be real, and they laugh and weep in joy and sorrow, they blossom and droop while up and down. But that does not make the illusory world (*maya jagath*) less unreal!

When you are immersed in deep sleep, what happens to your joy and sorrow, your profits and losses? They have no reality then and no reality later. At both times, they are but the creations of your fancy. One who knows this secret will always exult in the joy of companionship with one’s own self, the contemplation of their own inner reality. That is real permanent joy.

Therefore, listen, all aspirants! You, whose real nature is *Atmic*! Seek to discover your true Self, your genuine Reality; attain the knowledge that you are the *Atma* itself; exult in the *Atma* alone; taste the undiluted incom-

parable unlimited bliss of the awareness of the real self. Let time merge in Him whose form is time; that is the legitimate task of humanity, as taught in a philosophical composition of Sankaracharya.

With the amulet of spiritual wisdom around the arm,
One can escape the evil influence of the vile stars called sensual attractions.

*Jnana rakshaam samaadrthyaa Jnanee sudrdhavaan bhaveth,
Sa eva niratham svasmin svanandam anu-bhunjathe.*

One should not, out of the boldness born of the consciousness of wisdom, give free vent to the senses. One should be always vigilant regarding the external world and immersed in the contemplation of one's own inner reality. That is the sign of the knower of the higher truth. When one is ever in that stage, the self-illuminating truth will ever be before the mind's eye and the objective world will melt away.

If the seen or the objective world is superimposed on that undivided indivisible *Brahman*, it will be only as real as the turrets and bastions of a city among the clouds. Can anyone build castles on the air and live in them? The ether (*akasa*), of course, is your basic form; but for that reason, you cannot erect a city thereon. The turrets and bastions you seem to see in the clouds are unreal, baseless creations of your own fancy. So too, in the ether-like, formless highest *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), all this superimposed world is false, baseless. Everything is but the consciousness (*chaithanya*) of the non-dual unequalled bliss-pervaded highest *Brahman*.