

## Chapter VIII. The Meaning of Superimposition

**S**wami: Oh! How is this? You came so early this time!

**Devotee:** You made me come, so I have come! Is there anything I can call mine?

**Swami:** That is true; but will even a scrap of paper move without some cause? So too, there must be a reason for you to come so early.

**Devotee:** Nothing else, Swami! Hearing that You are proceeding to Trivandrum on the 16th, at the invitation of Sri Ramakrishna Rao, the Governor of Kerala, I felt that I might not get much chance to speak to you if I came only on that day. So, I came now, excuse me!

**Swami:** Well done! But why do you ask Me to pardon you? Really speaking, one should not ask for pardon even when one commits wrong! Then, what is the fun of asking for it, when you have done the right thing?

**Devotee:** Why, Swami? Why should we not ask for pardon when we do wrong?

**Swami:** No, you mustn't ask either for pardon when wrong is done or for reward when right is done! Doing right is but man's duty; it is its own reward. What other reward can there be? The joy of having done one's duty is your reward! Doing wrong is against one's duty. So, one should pray repentingly for the intelligence and discrimination necessary for not repeating the wrong already committed. Beyond this, it depends on His grace, whether He punishes and protects or pardons and corrects.

**Devotee:** That is very fine. Henceforward, I shall do so, Swami.

**Swami:** Let that be. Are you treasuring the gems given before the Birthday and making good use of them?

**Devotee:** As far as possible! With my maximum effort, using the quality of intellect (*buddhi*) granted by You, I am putting them into action.

**Swami:** What do you mean by "as far as possible"? For devotees like you, what other task is greater than this? Why is it not possible? You need only faith and will. With them, it should not be difficult at all to carry out the duty.

**Devotee:** Swami, You Yourself have said that even when there is faith and even when one has the will, putting things into practice may be difficult for want of favourable circumstances and also because the meaning of things may not be grasped clearly.

**Swami:** Oh! That means that want of both favourable circumstances and understanding are bothering you! Well if you have not understood, ask, and if you have no favourable atmosphere, tell me what the obstacle is.

**Devotee:** Doubt is the biggest obstacle; what can be bigger than that? Even after hearing so much, the demon catches hold of me on and off. I don't know why.

**Swami:** The first reason for that is lack of faith in yourself, faith born out of the conviction that you are really the embodiment of the *Atma* (*Atma-swarupa*). The second reason? Taking the divinity in humanity as only humanity and getting lost in the pursuit of sense enjoyment. These demons pounce on you for just these two reasons. Instead, if you establish yourself in God, understanding the divinity in people as divinity itself, this demon of doubt will not attack you. You simply must give up this superimposition (*adhyasa*), which makes you mix things up.

**Devotee:** There! Now and then you use unintelligible words! That makes me even more confused, Swami!

**Swami:** I will never tell you unintelligible words. You have no power to understand, so you feel worried. I use them, really, in order to make you understand their meaning! Now, in what I told you, which is the difficult word?

**Devotee:** You used the word superimposition (*adhyasa*). What does it mean, Swami?

**Swami:** What? You don't know its meaning! "Seeing one form and taking it to be another, super-imposing one thing upon another."

**Devotee:** How is that? On which object do we super-impose another? Tell me.

**Swami:** Well, seeing a rope and imagining it to be a snake; seeing waves of hot air in the sun and imagining them to be horses; seeing a mirror shining in the sun and taking it to be a lamp, ....

**Devotee:** But what do I see and what do I take it to be?

**Swami:** You see the Supreme *Atma* (*Param-atma*) in this form of nature (*prakriti*) and take it to be the mere world (*prapancha*), and you are afraid. It is on account of this delusion that you have become the victim of all these varieties of weakness and are declining through doubt and illusion. If you see it right, the delusion will vanish; the fear will disappear. The faith that it is the Supreme *Atma* will be firmly and boldly established in you. To get that firmness, the lamp of discrimination (*viveka*) is necessary. How much a person suffers as long as the rope is seen as a snake! How much is the fear! The delusion! Can it be realised how all that vanished as soon as it was seen in the light? Similarly, these doubts and delusions will also vanish unawares, as soon as you know that nature is Supreme *Atma*. Imposing a delusion on a delusion, imagining one object to be another, this is called superimposition (*adhyasa*), my boy!

**Devotee:** But, Swami, how can nature (*prakriti*) be said to be Supreme *Atma* (*Param-atma*)? When you ask me to discern this cosmos, which appears as the world (*prapancha*) to the eye, as the Supreme *Atma*, doubt is sure to arise.

**Swami:** That is true. Still, if the reality is reasoned out, even what you now see will appear as the Supreme *Atma*. Cloth cannot be formed without yarn, right? Yarn is essential for cloth. In fact, it is all yarn. In spite of this, yarn is not spoken of as cloth, and cloth is not called yarn. This is exactly the relationship, between nature (*prakriti*) and Supreme *Atma* (*Param-atma*). Supreme *Atma* is the yarn of which the cloth, nature, is formed. Have the yarn and the cloth become separate? No. The yarn is used in one way, the cloth in another. But for just this reason, it would be wrong to consider yarn and cloth as different.

**Devotee:** Yes, Swami. Since nature is formed of Supreme *Atma*, it is clear that they are not separate. Now, if both these are the same, which among these is the individual soul (*jiva*)?

**Swami:** That is exactly the doubt that is tormenting you, my boy. The individual soul (*jiva*) is the "I" consciousness! It is associated with the limitations of body and the senses. But it is the *Atma*, true Self (*jivatma*), the inner "I" (*pratyagatma*), supreme-consciousness *Atma* (*chidatma*), doer, enjoyer, everything.

**Devotee:** Again another word, *jada*, is used to mean inert matter etc. What is it, this it? How does it operate?

**Swami:** From intellect (*buddhi*) to body, all transformations of nature (*prakriti*) are inert matter (*jada*). This is the unreal, the unconscious, the false (*a-sat*), the non-intelligent (*a-chetana*). You must take everything that is not being (*sat*) and awareness (*chit*) as inert matter. In essence the world is really inert matter and nothing else. But inert matter is inseparable from consciousness (*chaithanya*), or awareness and being, just as air is inseparable from the

atmosphere. Why, it was said in the *Gita* that all movable and immovable creation is due to the union of nature and the Supreme Spirit (*Purusha*), don't you know?

**Devotee:** Then what is the relationship between the intellect (*buddhi*) and mind (*manas*) on the one hand and *Atma* on the other?

**Swami:** Well, really, there is no special relationship between them and the *Atma*. *Atma* is pure and without blemish; the intellect is also pure and without blemish. And, just as the Sun is reflected in a mirror, the splendour of the *Atma* is reflected in the intellect. Then the shining intelligence (*chaitanya*) of the intellect is reflected in the mind, the shining of the mind falls upon the senses, and the light from the senses falls upon the body.

Now, what is the connection between all these? The relationship of all is the splendour of the *Atma*, isn't it? The activity of every other thing is caused by the fact that there is an intellect, which can reflect that splendour, right? So, note how the intellect is related on one side with the *Atma* and with the mind and senses (*indriyas*) on the other!

**Devotee:** Then what is the relation between the individual soul (*jiva*), which says "I", and the senses and the body?

**Swami:** There is no relation at all! The "I" is separate from the body, mind, etc. The "I" simply superimposes on the soul—that is, on Itself, the body consciousness and the internal behaviours of the mind, etc. "I am fair", says the soul, superimposing upon itself something with which it has no connection. "I am dumb", it says, making the same mistake about the senses. It says it has this desire and that and imposes on itself the activities of the mind, etc.

All this is mere superimposition. The basic truth is only One. The Supreme Self (*Param-atma*), the Supreme Light (*Param-jyothi*), The Eternal, the True, is only One! Understand this well.

**Devotee:** Ah, what superb teaching, Swami. If only this teaching of the principle of the *Atma*, which even children can grasp, would spread over the whole world, the world would emerge from darkness to light.

**Swami:** That is the why I converse with you about every point and allow all to partake in it. The sun's light falls upon the mirror, the light from the mirror falls upon the bungalow, the light upon the bungalow falls upon the eye. Similarly, this "Dissolving Doubts (*Sandeha Nivarini*)" has been decided so that the illumination of My teaching may fall upon the mirror of the devotee and then onto the bungalow "Ancient Charioteer (*Sanathana Sarathi*)", so that from there its effulgence may shed light on the peace and harmony of the world.