

Chapter X. Reflections on Manifesting and Merging

Swami: Well! You look so full of joy today!

Devotee: You yourself said that people are the embodiment of joy, right?

Swami: Then you must always be in this mood; do you remain so?

Devotee: I am trying as far as possible.

Swami: Why do you say “trying”? Doesn’t sorrow flee the instant reality is known?

Devotee: But what is the reality, Swami?

Swami: All that “is” is unreal! The efforts you undertake, the words you utter, are all unreal; when you know this, the reality will be evident. Remove all the unreal ideas, opinions, and acts and the truth that is hidden can be seen. Piling up all this on top, if you ask what Reality is, how can it be seen?

Devotee: How is it possible to take all that is done, spoken, seen, felt, and listened to as unreal?

Swami: First, understand who is experiencing all these. You refer to the body as “I”, don’t you? That is unreal. When the experiencing “I” is itself unreal, how can the experiences be real? All have the same *Atma*. The person who experienced is not “you”, the person who listened is not “you”. You only witnessed all this.

Devotee: Swami, You said that in everything there is *Atma*. Is there *Atma* in a dead man?

Swami: Oh! a good question indeed! Is it more to solve your doubt or the doubt of a dead person?

Devotee: Mine.

Swami: Well it is only when you have awakened from deep sleep (*sushupti*) that you are aware there is an “I”, right? In the same manner, there is the *Atma* in the corpse also.

Devotee: Then how can it be called dead, how can death happen, when there is *Atma*?

Swami: If you discriminate properly, there is no dying and no living. A moving body is called living and a still one dead. In dreams, any number of living bodies and corpses are seen. On waking they do not exist. Similarly, this world, both moving and still, is non-existent. Death means the fading out of the “I” consciousness. Rebirth happens when the “I” consciousness comes again. This is what is called birth and death, my boy! Ego (*ahamkara*) is born, ego dies, that is all.

Devotee: So, I exist always, right?

Swami: Of course you do! When the “I” consciousness is there, you exist. When it is not there you also exist. You are only the base for the awareness; you are not the awareness.

Devotee: But they say, “attained liberation (*mukthi*)”, etc. What is that?

Swami: Understanding the root of death and birth, one must destroy completely the awareness of the separate “I”; that condition is “liberation (*mukthi*)”.

Devotee: So, when I die, I and You are One, right?

Swami: Who said “No”? That feeling of One when you are firmly established in it, there is nothing separate at all.

Devotee: Until then, in order to identify the real “I” in the unreal “I”, they say that the support of a *guru* is wanted. How far is that true, Swami?

Swami: It is only when you have so many “I”s that you need someone’s support, is it not? When all is One, why seek another? Still, until that “I” (*aham*) fades out, this speaking “I” and this listening “You” have to be there. When that “I” is gone, whom is there to speak to? Who listens? All are one. The reflection of *Atma*, conditioned by awareness (*chit*) is God; God conditioned by the inner fourfold instruments (*anthah-karana*) is the soul (*jiva*), is it not?

Devotee: But what exactly is this *chidabhasa*?

Swami: *Chidabhasa* means the “I” awareness conditioned by the consciousness (*chit*) that One became three, the three became five, the five became many. The “I” awareness (purity, *sathwa*) became three on account of contact with passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*thamas*); in these three, the five elements (*bhuthas*) arose; and through those five, the manifold happened. This is what causes the illusion that the “I” is the body. Speaking in terms of ether (*akasa*), there are three: *chidakasa*, *chitthakasa*, and *bhuthakasa*.

Devotee: What is *chidakasa*?

Swami: That is the *Atma*.

Devotee: *Chitthakasa*?

Swami: Its deflection. That is to say, the mind stuff (*chittha*). When this mind stuff changes into mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), and ego (*aham-kara*), it is called *anthah-karana*, a word that means the internal senses (*indriyas*). The “I” awareness conditioned by consciousness (*chidabhasa*) having the mind stuff (*anthah-karana*) is the individual soul (*jiva*).

Devotee: And *bhuthakasa*?

Swami: *Atma* (*Chidakasa*) conditioned by mind stuff (*chitthakasa*). When it sees the elemental ether (*akasa*), it is mind-ether; when it sees the object, the real, it is pure consciousness (*chinmaya*). That is why, my dear fellow, it is said, “The mind (*manas*) alone is the cause of both bondage and liberation.” The mind manufactures any amount of delusion.

Devotee: How can that delusion disappear, Swami?

Swami: When you grasp its secret through inquiry, the many merge in five, the three in one, and the I exists as I. You get headache, you apply ointment, it disappears, you are as you were. The delusion that “I am the Body” is similar to this. It will disappear if you apply the ointment of inquiry (*vichara*).

Devotee: Can everyone adopt this path of inquiry?

Swami: No, my boy. It is only for those whose mind stuff (*chittha*) has become ripe.

Devotee: Then what should we do to reach that ripe stage?

Swami: Now we have come to the place from which we started! Don’t you have things like soft prayer (*japa*), meditation (*dhyana*), worship, and breath control (*pranayama*) for this? Steadily, through these, you become ripe and become capable of understanding the “I” by inquiry into reality. For ripe people, the *Atma* is not something different from themselves or yourself. All is *Atma*!

Devotee: But Swami, You mentioned only soft prayer, meditation, worship, and breath control. Some advanced persons adopt the vow of silence (*mouna*). Of what use is it? What exactly is silence?

Swami: The illumination of the soul is silence! How can there be silence without the *Atma* being illuminated? Without that, merely keeping the mouth shut is not silence. Some adopt the vow of silence, but they communicate by writing on paper or a slate or they point successively to the letters of the alphabet on a chart! All this is pseudo-silence! It is only another way of talking without interruption! There is no need to attain silence. Silence is ever with you. You have only to remove all things that disturb it!

Devotee: But many people don't open their mouth to speak. You mean that this is useless?

Swami: Who said so? If you don't use your tongue, if you are silent in order to keep out the external obstacles to spiritual exercise, you certainly can develop your thoughts, you can desist from disturbing others, you can escape criticism and worry from others, you will get concentration. Your brain will be saved from unnecessary burdens, and it can improve much. With such a brain, you carry on remembrance (*smarana*) of the Lord's name better. You will realise all these advantages when you do spiritual exercises.

Devotee: Then for the fully wise person (*jnani*) all this is unnecessary?

Swami: There is no fully wise person in the world! Such a person is in no need of the world itself, so why would they need all this?

Devotee: If that is so, who are those people called wise people?

Swami: The silent men I spoke about just now. "Spiritually wise one (*jnani*) is a term applied by courtesy; a full *jnani* is non-existent in the world. The *jnani* must know "All as one"! Your *janis* are all either experts in logic or experts in knowledge of world; they haven't known the Reality.

Devotee: Who are the real spiritually wise (*janis*)?

Swami: One who knows the *Atma* as *Atma* will know himself as milk added to milk, oil to oil, or water to water. When the physical body dies, they likewise merge in the *Atma*. But some may have some traits still persisting. They continue to have some resolutions and desires. Until these are exhausted, they will wander in the world, with body. Such men are called "bits of divinity born as men (*daivamsa-sambuthas*)." This is also as per the Lord's will.

Devotee: Why should this difference arise, Swami?

Swami: It arises out of each one's spiritual exercises (*sadhana*) and resolve (*sankalpa*). Eat a mango, and you belch its smell. How can you prevent it? The belch brings the perfume of the thing eaten.

Devotee: Will such people also have limitations?

Swami: Without limitations, how can work get on? They also have it. But only in a subtle form, until they attain transcorporeal liberation (*videha-mukthi*).

Devotee: What is that, Swami?

Swami: Their acts are like the line drawn on water, seen while the line is being drawn but absent as soon as it is finished. While being done, you notice it; in an instant it is not noticeable anymore.

Devotee: Swami, you said that spiritually wise people (*jnani*) have renunciation as their hallmark. How does this agree with that?

Swami: That is true! Renunciation is the hallmark. If out of the traits of previous birth one gets attached, one must know that it is only for the body and not for oneself. This attachment damages the bliss of liberation-while-alive (*jivan-mukthi*). Spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is most important for transcorporeal liberation.

Devotee: Even if one has no spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), can one attain liberation (*mukthi*) by mere renunciation (*vairagya*)?

Swami: What a foolish question! How can the fruit be sweet without ripening? Renunciation cannot arise except from spiritual wisdom. There is no liberation (*moksha*) without renunciation. Be sure of that!

Devotee: Then where does devotion (*bhakti*) come in?

Swami: We have come to the very beginning again! Before spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) comes devotion. Before devotion, affection. But all these are one. Affection is the flower, devotion the fruit, which ripens into wisdom; renunciation (*vairagya*) is the sweet juicy final stage. Without one, you cannot have the next. In order to tend the fruit until the juice and taste are developed, you must practise daily prayer, etc., as mentioned above. But, from the first, have in view the Oneness of all. Understand that there is no “other”.

Devotee: At least, to keep up appearances in the world one has sometime to say “this is mine.” What is one to do then?

Swami: Of course, you may have to say so. But simply because you say so, what need is there for you to feel separateness between I and You? When you travel in a carriage, do you take the carriage as “I”? Look at the Sun. He gets reflected in a small pot filled with water, in a broad river, in a mirror, or on a polished pot. For this reason, does the Sun feel that all these things are “He”? Does He get sad when the pot breaks or the river gets dry? This is exactly like that. If you take “I” to be the body, then it is all bother! If you don’t take it so, you will shine like the Sun, independent of anything else. Besides, You will be immanent everywhere.

Devotee: That is as much as to say that each one must first discover for oneself who one is.

Swami: Exactly. Inquire into that first. Of course, for those who are not competent, this will be too hard. So, those experienced in this line say that such people should not be told these things. If you say, “You are Yourself *Brahman*, You have attained liberation (*moksha*), You are in that stage,” to those not competent, they won’t do any spiritual exercises. They will act without any rule or order, and they will pay no regard to right and wrong. This must be revealed only by a *guru* or by the Lord’s command! Of course, those who have the thirst and determination to undergo the discipline can ask about it! But it must be practised; there is no use simply hearing it and repeating, “All is One.” That is meaningless.

Devotee: Swami, Sankara has already said,

If you really penetrate into its inner meaning, the world is like a city seen through a
mirror.

viswam-darpana drsyamaanaganagaree thulyam hi anthargatham.

This vision—that the world (*jagath*) is unreal, that it is all illusion (*maya*)—is this for common people or for the spiritually wise (*jnanis*) also?

Swami: The eye of the spiritually wise sees all things as *Brahman*! The ignorant person (*a-jnani*), the person without wisdom, cannot understand whatever is said! So, all spiritual texts (*sastras*) are intended to benefit the middlings.

Devotee: This means that all spiritual exercises are included in the path of inquiry (*vichara-marga*)?

Swami: Yes. The teaching of *Vedanta* is about “Who am I?” Only those equipped with the four instruments are competent to make this inquiry. The purpose of the four is to realise that the *Atma* is real and that all else is unreal

and to discriminate between *Atma* and all else.

Devotee: How is that to be realised, Swami?

Swami: By inquiring into the nature of the *Atma*! First they do all varieties of spiritual exercises and finally enter upon this. While a child, they teach you A, B, C, right? Even M.A. and B.A. curricula consist of the A, B, C, D and their permutations and combinations! But to realise this fact, one has to complete one's studies! The spiritual texts (*sastras*) are based on *a-kshara*; meaning both letter and the Imperishable. All paths are based on the path of inquiry (*vichara-marga*).

Devotee: But there are some who attain *samadhi*. Will they have all this enquiry, etc. in *samadhi*?

Swami: Wonderful fellow! How can there be inquiry in *samadhi*? When you sleep soundly, do you have any thoughts about the world around you? *Samadhi* is like that.

Devotee: There will be no mind in *samadhi*, will there?

Swami: The mind that persists in sleep will be there also.

Devotee: They talk of a “beyond stage (*thuriya*)” in *samadhi*. What is that, Swami?

Swami: Beyond the waking, dreaming, and deep-sleep stages.

Devotee: Why are those stages absent there? What are the characteristics of that stage?

Swami: Those three stages are the characteristics of I-ness. Ego (*ahamkara*), the person with mind (*manas*), who does all acts. That will not be present in the “beyond” stage. It would have disappeared long ago. For them, it is all the same, with eyes open or with eyes closed. It is all One.

Devotee: Swami, without that “I (*aham*)”, how can they talk?

Swami: What was “I” in the beginning is transformed into the true entity (*swarupa*) when the reality is grasped; this is referred to as the destruction of the mind (*mano-nasanam*).

Devotee: So, this undifferentiated deep communion (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*) is all destruction (*naasam*)?

Swami: Well, my boy, all *samadhis* are merging (*laya*), not destruction. The spiritual-aspirant stage is when you have both construction and destruction.

Devotee: This subject is very interesting, Swami.

Swami: Don't sit quietly, merely appreciating it. Practise it in daily life. All right, you can take leave.

Devotee: Very good Swami. Please bless me in that practice. I shall be back soon.