

6. Supreme Self is the Primal Entity, not primordial matter

Gounascheth na, Atma sabdaath

Since the word (*sabda*) *Atma* is used (*Atma sabdaath*), the “thinking (*eekshathe*)” or projection mentioned in the previous aphorism has to be a function of the *Atma*. Fire or water is the product, the effect of the will. The words “projection” and “manifestation” cannot be interpreted in a secondary or figurative sense. The *Atma* alone is indicated as the Primal Entity in the revealed texts (*sruthi*) or *Veda*. The urge or resolution is a happening in the *Atma* itself, not in any other entity. The entire cognizable cosmos is just Being (*sat*) or Is. Whatever form it has assumed in the process of time and in the perimeter of space, all of it is, in reality, only Being, that is to say, *Atma*! This is the lesson of the *Veda*.

Nothing is inert, inactive (*jada*). Thus, we find the word *Atma* used once in a while to denote even primordial matter (*pradhana* or *mula-prakriti*). Primordial matter is the instrument that fulfills the will of the sovereign Consciousness, the Overself. Being operated by the supreme Self, who is the cause, nature (*pradhana* or *prakriti*) also has consciousness ascribed to it.

Atmic awareness is the key to liberation

The individual (*jivi*), believing that it is divided from the whole, the universal, is subject to desire and despair, love and hate, grief and joy. The person is attracted by the world of name and form. Such a person is characterized as “bound”. Hence the need for liberation is urgent. And to be liberated, the person must give up dependence on and attachment to the creation (*prakriti*).

The blind cannot be saved by the blind. The destitute cannot be helped out by the destitute. How can a person who is destitute and helpless remove the poverty, suffering, and pain of another? The poor must approach the affluent, the wealthy. The blind must seek the guidance of a person who can see. One who is bound and blinded by the dualities of creation has to take refuge in the inexhaustible treasure of compassion, power, and wisdom, namely, the divine *Atma*. Then, one can get rid of the destitution of grief, revel in the wealth of spiritual bliss (*ananda*), and attain the goal of human existence. This consummation is reached and *Atmic* awareness is won through the grace of *Brahman*.

Wherein is the *Atma* to be sought? Where does the *Atma* reside? How can one know the *Atma*? Adoring the apparently consciousnessless things as manifestations of the sovereign Consciousness or *Atma* helps the process. The *Atma* principle can be genuinely understood only by seekers who are grounded in the formless, attributeless *Brahman*. But even the embodiment with form has the *Atmic* reality in full measure. There are many examples to illustrate this truth. Knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*) is another name for understanding and experiencing the *Atma* as the *Brahman*, the individual as the Universal.

The four stages of cognition

Everyone has the right to knowledge of *Brahman*. And, everyone passes through four stages in the search for this knowledge every day of their life. They are, according to the *Veda*, the waking stage, the dream stage, the deep sleep stage, and the liberated stage (*thuriya*). These are demarcated as states, or even steps. In the first stage, one is awake to the objective world and is oriented outward. Objects in the universe are seen by the eye; sounds are heard; the senses are able to smell and taste and touch. Life is lived to the fullest in contact with society. The nineteen means of contact are the five sense organs of perception, the five organs of action, the five vital airs (*prana*), and the four internal instruments (*anthah-karana*):

- (1) The mind (*manas*),
- (2) The faculty of discrimination (*buddhi*),
- (3) The storehouse of memory, of consciousness (*chittha*), and
- (4) The ego-sense (*ahamkara*).

During the waking stage, these nineteen means of contact and impact provide a person with the experience of grief and joy, gain and loss, success and failure in their gross forms. Since one identifies with the gross body complex at this stage, the experiences are also gross.

The region of dream is different. There, the self is in-faced. Reactions, responses, and experiences are all self-contained. They do not belong to the area outside of oneself. There may be ten others sleeping in the same room, but each has their own dream. One's dream experience has no relation to that of anyone else. Each is disturbed or delighted only by their own dream. The dreamer is unaffected by outer circumstances. In fact, the external world is beyond one's consciousness.

During the dream stage, one creates a world out of one's mind and dwells in the experiences it provides. Though the objects perceived are imaginary, the feelings and emotions like joy and grief, love and fear are as real as in the waking stage. The nineteen instruments of contact and impact are present even during the dream. They do not act materially or physically; they operate only through the mind, for the mind has a luminosity that produces the pictures. This is why it is designated as light-filled (*taijas* —from spiritual splendour, *tejas*). The light enables one to formulate and design any form, sound, taste, etc. that one decides upon. The dream state is the second step or stage in the acquisition by the self of its own awareness.

Next, deep sleep (*sushupti*). This stage is free from even dreams. One is lost in undisturbed sleep. The person will not be conscious of their limbs, or of sounds, the smells, forms, the tastes and the sensations of touch. All activity is subsumed by the mind and is latent in it. All experience is absorbed into the higher levels of consciousness. There is no feeling of either separation or identity, the particular or the universal, the part or the whole. There is no experiencer or experience. There is only the *Atma*, in which one has temporarily merged.

Then, the fourth step (*thuriya*). Here, the individual is no more so. It has attained the basic truth of life and of creation —the all-pervading, all-inclusive *Atma*, the peace and power of the one and only *Atmic* empire. Those who have reached this step no longer have concern with the individual self. One cannot assert either that these people possess knowledge or that they don't have it, for they are ever immersed in the Highest Bliss.

All is Atma — Atma is all

The *Atma* in which they have merged is invisible to the eye. It cannot be grasped or held by the hand. One can know only that it exists and that it is Goodness and nothing else. All urges that draw one toward the objective

world have to be exterminated before faith in the *Atma* can take root.

The four steps of *Atmic* awareness are very much akin to the four steps in the recital of *Om* or *Aum*. The *Aum* and the ultimate mantra are on a par with the waking, dreaming, sleeping, and merging steps already dwelt upon. The *Atma* is evident in the mind; in deep sleep, it reposes in the heart; in the fourth stage, it is all of oneself.

To sum up, it can be laid down that the *Atma* exists in all beings in all stages of daily life, in all circumstances and conditions, and in all activities and experiences. All is *Atma*, *Atma* is All —the cosmos is manifested as One by the One. This is what the aphorism reveals. Without the awareness of this unity, there can be no joy and peace. Without joy and peace, truth is an empty concept. Therefore, one should know the cosmos as full (*purna*). It is not a void or vacuum. It is *Atma* Itself.