

8. Individual Merges in the Universal Brahman

Swaapyayaath

“*Swa*” means “in oneself”, that is to say, “in *Brahman*”. “*Apyayaath*” means “since it merges”. The two words tell us, “since it is said that the individual soul (*jivi*) merges in *Brahman*”, during deep, dreamless sleep, the individual resumes its real nature, being (*sat*). Since the self attains the Self, which is Itself, it is then the *Atma* and nothing else. The *Atma*, which appeared as if enclosed in name and form, discards the name and form and merges in the Universal *Atma*. The wave has merged in the ocean. It had become, so now it is just being (*sat*).

Brahman: both eternal Being and total Awareness

The core of all *Vedantic* texts and teachings is the truths:

- (1) *Brahman* is both the efficient and material cause of the cosmos (*jagath*), which merges and emerges (*ga* and *ja*).
- (2) *Brahman* is one and one only, so there is nothing in the cosmos apart from *Brahman* without consciousness.

There is nothing inert (*jada*) and inactive. *Brahman* is, according to the scriptures and the *Vedanta* texts, not only Being (*sat*) but also awareness (*chit*).

The five vital airs fuel the five fires in the body

Sleep is very necessary for every living being. Without sleep, people as well as other beings cannot live. Of all the joys that the world provides, sleep is the most rewarding. All the rest are arid, dry, trivial, and wasteful. When a living being sleeps, the five vital airs —life breath, downward air, diffused air, upward breath, digestive air (*prana, apana, vyana, udana, samana*)— do function, along with the five fires in the body, conferring warmth.

During sleep, inhalation and exhalation of the breath proceed serenely and evenly. The life breath acts like the consecrated fire, perpetually burning in the household of a *Vedic* rite. It energizes us in the same steady manner.

The diffused air is as the fire lit on the southern side of the altar in the *Vedic* rite. The upward breath helps the mind reach the world of *Brahman*, which the person has earned the right to attain by their *karma*. In other words, it enables the person to experience the taste of mergence with the Supreme. For the embodied *Atma* (*jivi*) rests in sleep, is happy during sleep, is refreshed by sleep, and derives bliss while sleeping.

Body is the temple of Atma (God)

The embodied *Atma* is the deity enshrined in the body, its temple. The individual soul experiences all that is seen, heard, and contacted by the mind in the outer world, as well as the impact of all that it cannot see, hear,

or contact by the mind. Besides these, the individual soul might construct and experience in dreams and witness experiences undergone during previous lives. It depends on the activities stamped on the mind of each one. Or, it might happen sometimes that the person gives up at one stroke the association with the body and the senses and gets immersed and lost in their basic principle: the Omniself (*Paramatma*). The bliss that fills the individual soul is the manifestation of the supreme Self (*Paramatma*).

During dreamless sleep, the individual soul (*jivi*) enters and revels in the region of bliss, led thereto by the splendour of the upward breath, the vital air that elevates. The region of bliss is known also as the region of Brahma. During sleep, one effortlessly gets this splendid chance to enjoy the proximity of the supreme *Atma*, which is the prime source and substance of the five basic elements, the five senses, and the inner instrument of awareness (the five *bhuthas*, the five *indriyas*, and the *anthah-karana*). But this experience is quite temporary and doesn't last.

Unchanging Bliss means Supreme Consciousness

The person who has gained awareness through the purification of the mind and the clarification of the intellect (*buddhi*) will have the unchanging bliss of mergence in the supreme *Atma*. Only that person can become omniscient who is ever in the region of the undecaying (*akshaya*) and merged in the imperishable (*akshara*) supreme Vastness (*Parabrahma*), the highest *Atma*. When one is aware that all is He, that there is nothing without or outside, one becomes all or *Brahman*.

In deep sleep, the individual soul (*jivi*) is in dull ignorance (in the *thamoguna*). To the realised person, however, even dreams will award as much bliss as does the consciousness while awake. Even when awake, the realised person gets rid of the impact of the body-sense-reason complex and is saturated with the bliss of his authentic reality. The particularized self shares the consciousness (*chaitanya*) of the Universal, and it can merge only in that supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*), the supreme Consciousness. Therefore, this aphorism emphasizes for us the truth that the “Is-ness (*Sat*)”, which “becomes” and “subsumes” all creation, refers only to the highest *Brahman* (*Parabrahman*), the supreme Consciousness, and not to any entity derived from it and dependent on it.