

« The supreme truth is this: there is neither birth nor dissolution, nor aspirant to liberation nor liberated nor anyone in bondage»¹

“Breath”

«There are three types [conceptions] of *jīva*: the limited, the falsely presented and that imagined in dreams.

This aphorism mentions the three theories about the *jīva*. What is *jīva*? What is its nature? What is the difference between *Brahman*, *ātman* and *jīva*?

The first conception referred to in this *sūtra* is this: the *jīva* can be compared to the *ākāśa* in a jar, which jar is the *upādhi*, that is the vehicle or the limiting body. This *ākāśa*, although surrounded by the structure of the jar-form, is of the same nature as the free and unbound *ākāśa* outside the jar.

The second conception can be compared to a ray of sun dancing on the water. The movement is caused by the water and not by the ray, but at first glance it is the ray that appears to be moving. Thus the ray of pure consciousness reflects upon the *buddhi* which moves as *jīva*.

The third conception of *jīva* may be compared to the experimenting subject of dreaming. The nocturnal *jīva*, or reflection of the individualized consciousness, experiences the various phenomena and qualifications inherent to its state: pleasure-pain, knowledge-ignorance, various types of desire, etc.

The first *jīva* is the result of limitations (*avacchedavāda*), the second and third are the outcome of objectivated reflections (*ābhāsavāda* and *pratibimbavāda*).

[«... *ātman* is considered as existent, in the form of individual souls, like the *ākāśa* exists in jars; *ātman*, thus, exists in the form of composite things just as the *ākāśa* exists inside jars, etc.

Just as the *ākāśa* confined within jars, etc., merges fully (into boundless *ākāśa*) when the jars, etc., disintegrate, so too the *jīva* merge into *ātman*.

Although forms, actions and names differ here and there, nonetheless no difference occurs within *ākāśa* (that remains one). The same is true of *jīva*.

Just as *ākāśa* enclosed in a jar is neither a transformation nor a part of the (universal) *ākāśa*, so too the *jīva* is neither a transformation nor a part of the supreme *ātman*»]²

The *jīva* is, therefore, a projection of *ātman*, just as the molecule of a chemical element is a combinatorial, vibrating, electronic projection. And just as the hydrogen molecule is after all only an elementary or electronic particle, so too is *jīva* simply *ātman*.

¹ Gauḍapāda, *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, II, 32. Aurea Vidyā, New York.

² Ibid. III, 3, 4, 6, 7. (Square brackets are ours)

The *jīva* exists as long as *māyā-avidyā* lasts, which *māyā-avidyā* supplies the driving power that allows the *jīva* to survive. Thus the nocturnal *jīva* exists as long as the veiling *māyā*-dream lasts.

The *jīva* can move through endless possible experiences: negative and positive, harmonic or disharmonic, just as it can dissolve back into its source as *ātman*. ...What comes and goes, what takes or does not take form is the *jīva*-individuality, not the *ātman*. From the point of view of *ātman*, if one may say so, the *jīva* does not exist nor does it come or go.

[«Indeed, there is nothing at all that is or will be apart of Being, because Fate has bound It together so as to be whole and immovable. For It all of those things which the mortals have established, convinced that they are true, will be names: to be born and perish, being and non-being, changing place and altering shades of color»]³

From the point of view of the *ātman* every phenomenon, including the *jīva*, is simply ‘apparent motion’, and *māyā*, from the point of view of *ātman*, represents this apparent motion.

Realization consists in dissolving not only the ego of the moment but the *jīva*-individuality itself, the semipermanent ‘atomic nucleus’ which is much more persistent and long-lasting than the momentary ego-actor. When the cause is removed at the source, the effect disappears as a result.

[«...The tendency to imagine sensory objects represents the true cause of bondage (*bhavabandha*) and of differentiation (*bheda*).

When the effects [objects of desire] flourish, their causes-seeds [desires] also grow proportionately; whereas, when the effects are resolved, so do the causes. Therefore it is necessary to resolve the effects.

When the *vāsanā* [seeds or subconscious tendencies] flourish, the effects multiply, and when the effects intensify, the *vāsanā* expand. So [through this mechanism] the *saṁsāra* self-perpetuates.

To break the chain of *saṁsāra* two things must be burnt to ashes: desire and object [of desire]. They are the makers of *vāsanā*»]⁴

Limitation is illusory, but what appears to be limited is real. The jīva condition is due to superimpositions of attributes upon ātman, but This is of the same nature as Brahman.

Reality *appears* limited due to *māyā*. The metaphysical Unity *appears* manifold on account of *māyā*. Just as in a dream, the mind appears multiple (the varied universe of dream) due to the *māyā*-sleep veil.

[“*idam dvaitam manodṛśyam*: This duality perceived by the mind is the mind itself”]⁵.

³ Parmenides, *On Nature*, Frg. 8: 36-41.

⁴ Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, sūtra* 311, 312, 313, 314. Aurea Vidyā, New York.

Superimpositions make data appear different from what they are. When, for example, we project the image-form of a snake where there is simply a rope, it is obvious that the snake with all its qualifications superimposes itself upon an underlying reality, hiding it completely. This apparent image-form takes on a dimension and consistency and can only be removed when one becomes aware of the rope.

[«There is an evident, intense desire for false objects, but multiplicity does not exist. By realizing the non-existence of multiplicity one frees himself from intense desire for non-real things, so that one is not subject to birth»]⁶

When, due to the intrinsic power of the *ātman*, the *jīva*-shadow takes on consistency with all its sheaths, the reflection of consciousness attributes to *ātman* the characteristics of the sheaths so that, apparently, the nature of *ātman* is perverted and eluded⁷.

«It is by virtue of *māyā*, with the exclusion of every other possibility, that this Non-born (*Brahman* without a second) can be differentiated. If differentiation were real, then the immortal would become mortal.

The dualists affirm the birth of what is non-born. But how can what is non-born and immortal become mortal?

The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal become immortal because there can be no change of nature.

As it is affirmed that «Here there is no multiplicity», «It is by virtue of *māyā* that Indra...», «*ātman* without being born appears multiple», it follows that It (*ātman*) was born through *māyā*.

Given the elusive nature (of *Brahman*), this passage from the *Śruti*, «This *ātman* who has been described as *neti neti* (not this, not this)» negates all the (dualistic) ideas that attempt to describe (*Brahman*). Therefore *ātman* is without birth and self-unveils Itself⁸

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⁵ Śaṅkara, Commentary to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣd*, III, *kārika* 31. (Italian Edition)

⁶ Gauḍapāda, *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, VI, *kārikā* 75. Op.cit.

⁷ Śaṅkara, *Dr̥gdr̥śyaviveka*, *sūtra* 32, 33, and Commentary, by Raphael. Aurea Vidya. New York.

⁸ Gauḍapāda, *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, III, *kārikā* 19, 20, 24, 26. Op.cit.