

- THE LIMITATION THAT VEIL THE ESSENCE OF BEING -

«Consisting of the five quintuplicated gross elements and determined by its [own] past actions (*karmasaṁcitam*), the gross-physical body [waking state] is considered as the seat of the experience (*bhoga*) of pleasure and pain (*sukhaduḥkha*).

Consisting of the five *prāṇa* (*pañcaprāṇa*), the empirical mind (*manas*), the *buddhi* (intellect) and the ten organs [of perception and action], and arising out of the five [subtle] non-quintuplicated elements, the subtle body is the instrument of experience [dream state].

Ignorance, beginningless (*anādi*) and indefinable, is considered as the causal limitation-body. The *ātman* must be recognized as other than these three conditioning states.

[Here Śāṅkara considers] ...those limitations that veil the essence of the being...

Three vehicle-bodies “hide” the *ātman*: the gross body (*viśva*), the subtle body (*taijasa*) and the causal body (*prājñā*). These bodies are cell aggregates at different degrees of condensation, and represent the support, the instrument of relation or windows that open on the various existential levels.

The gross or physical body (*annamaya*) is in relation with the material physical plane as we know it (*Virāt*) and through it we experience the physical and psychic duality. Those who are identified with this body interpret life in terms of matter, physicality, mass and senses. Their consciousness is limited and confined exclusively to the plane of the vital “cortex”.

The subtle body (*taijasa*) has three levels of reception: *prāṇa*, *manas*, and *buddhi*... These are made of more subtle energy, of hyperphysical substance, not visible to the human eye...

The causal body (*prājñā*) represents the germinal body, that of the first causes (*kāraṇopādhi*), from which the other bodies-sheaths are determined. It is called *ānandamaya*, body of bliss, because in it everything resolves into Unity, as Principle, or *ākāśa*, and because in it the world of names and forms goes back to latency.

The being consists of these five bodies-sheaths, but the majority of people living at the physical level are so *polarized* with the *annamaya* (sheath made of food) that they recognize themselves only as physical entities. Hence the limitation, the prison and the materialistic vision of life.

The Self is other than these three limitations (*viśva*, *taijasa*, *prājñā*).
... The *ātman* [using an analogy] as the self-shining polar sun that give life to the various receptions sheaths, simply by its presence... From the relation between the *ātman* and the sheaths emerges that compound or entity called the individual, with a well-defined qualitative configuration. Similarly [using an example], the atom-entity with its inherent qualities arises from the relation between the atomic nucleus and the electronic sheaths.

The “death” of a body-instrument-sheath does not impair the *ātman*, which being absolute, lives of its own life. The pain that the individual usually experiences, as

an example, with the loss of a physical body comes from his identification with that vehicle, from polarizing exclusively with it and seeing himself solely as body... Liberation consist precisely in taking the reflection of the *jīva* back to its everlasting *ātman*-source»¹.

«... Knowledge of [such] truth cannot be communicated in the manner of other knowledge, but, through... an affinity of life, suddenly, as light that is born from sparkle, born is from the soul, and nourishes itself thereafter»².

om tat sat om

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New York, NY - U.S.A. 2005.

Monday, January 24, 2005

Śaṅkara, *Ātmabodha, sūtra* 12, 13, 14. Published by Aurea Vidyā. New York, NY, 2003□

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¹ Śaṅkara, *Ātmabodha, sūtra* 12, 13, 14; Translation from the Sanskrit, and commentary, by Raphael. Aurea Vidyā. New York. 2003.

² Plato, *Letter VII*, 341.