

36. The three Aakaashas

Is the Universe real? Is it relatively unreal? This problem has been agitating man since ages in all lands. The realists and the idealists have argued on their explanations for centuries. The scientists or realists believe that the Universe is a conglomeration of atoms in varying patterns which have assumed manifold forms and names. But this is only partially true. The *vijnaana vaadhins* (the spiritually oriented) point out to the *bhowthik vaadhins* (the materially oriented), that a firm base is essential for all these transformations to happen. The Universe must have a basic force or energy or phenomenon; as basic as clay is to the pot. That fundamental principle is, according to them, the *Aathman* (divine spirit).

However, the attempt in which man is engaged today is to deny the clay and build faith in the pot! This process is doomed to fail. The cognisable universe which is dismissed as untrue, must have truth as its base, as the 'rope' on which the 'snake' is superimposed. That Basic Truth is the *Aathman* (soul).

Of course the Universe in which we exist is cognised by our senses and we take it as true and real. But it cannot be accepted as Truth, for anything that changes does not deserve to be so called. Also, it appears differently to different living beings at different levels of consciousness. Animals, birds and insects are aware of it in different ways and forms. It is shaped and moulded according to the desires and perceptions of each. How are these created?

The *Aathman* awakens man's thoughts

The *Aathman* enters the body as the Inner Motivator and awakens the thoughts and feelings. In the absence of the *Aathman*, the body is inert; in the absence of the body, thoughts do not arise and in the absence of thought, the universe is not apparent; it is non-existent to the individual. The three are inextricably interdependent---the body (with all the powers of consciousness enclosed in it), the universe and the *Aathman*, either individualised or universally immanent.

Both materialism and spiritualism seek the fundamental Universal base; one discovers it in matter, the other in the Spirit. The *Aathman* (Spirit) takes on a form and body to experience and cognise the *Jagath* (Universe), just as cotton takes on the form of yarn to be cognised and experienced as cloth. The cloth is both, the yarn and the cotton. Cotton is the fundamental base, the *Aathman*. It assumes name and form and becomes yarn (the body), and is finally known as cloth, (the *Jagath*), the product of the thoughts emanating from the body.

Five characteristics of the Universe

There is another way of understanding and interpreting this process. In the *Upanishaths* and the *Vedhaantha* (Vedhic philosophy), five characteristics of the Universe are mentioned---*Asthi* (Being), *bhaathi* (awareness), *priyam* (bliss), *naama* (name) and *ruupa* (form). Of these, the last two are temporary, and therefore, trivial. The first three are the three facets of the everlasting truth, the *Aathman*. The categories of *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* are also co-related in *Vedhaantha* with *bhootha aakaasha*, *chiththa aakaasha* and *chith aakaasha* respectively. *Aakaasha* is the name for sphere of consciousness. *Bhootha aakaasha* is outer Cosmic consciousness; *chiththa aakaasha* is the inner consciousness of the *chiththa* (seat of intellect), the centre of discrimination in living beings, while *chith aakaasha* is the pure, unalloyed consciousness that flows from the *Aathman*. The *bhootha aakaasha* is the vast limitless space in which the Sun and planets are but tiny knots of energy. It is so extensive that the light from some of its stars,

millions of light years away, has not yet reached the earth. Light travels, they say, at 1,86,000 miles per second (in fact the speed is 1,88,000 miles per second). So you can imagine the enormous size of the *bhootha aakaasha* which includes all these stars and much more.

The *chiththa aakaasha* subsumes such an immeasurable *bhootha aakaasha*, for the consciousness illumines and becomes aware of all that exists. The *chiththa aakaasha* is prompted into activity by the *chith aakaasha*, the *chith of Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (different from the inner instrument of discrimination named *chiththa*). An infinitesimal fraction of the *Aathman* is enough to activate the *chiththa* so that it can draw into Itself the cosmos, the entire objective Universe.

Therefore, every one must be firm in the belief that he is the *Aathman* and not the body with its senses of perception and action, its inner equipment of mind, intellect, reasoning faculty and the ego. He must know that he undergoes no change, that he cannot die or be destroyed. Being immersed in *bhootha aakaasha*, man feels it wrong to understand himself as the perishable body with its appurtenances. He often brings up to his memory this truth. That is to say, he is aware of the *Sath*, his existence that is Eternal.

Soil-food-man completes the cycle

While the *chiththa aakaasha* is contemplated, he is aware that he is the vehicle of consciousness, the *Chith*. While he is saturated with the awareness of the *chith aakaasha*---the effulgence of the *Aathman*---he is the embodiment of *Aanandha*, the third facet of the *Aathman*. When the consciousness is turned inwards, the ultimate state of *Aathma aanandha* (Soulful Bliss) is attained.

The human body is composed of cells which draw strength and life from food; food draws its value from the soil. Soil- food- man---when that cycle is completed, man returns to the soil. The soil is *bhootha aakaasha*---the food grown out of the soil becomes consciousness, the *chiththa aakaasha*---and the *chiththa* merges into the *Aathman* consciousness or *chith aakaasha*. A seed germinates within the soil and rises above ground as a sapling. It then puts forth leaves and branches and blossoms. The flowers give place to fruits which ripen and contain seeds which can repeat the process of germination and growth.

The soil is the basis of all transformations and developments; if you keep the seeds on your palm and water them, they will not grow. Soil and seed bring about the third entity, the plant. The cells in both have an affinity that is strange. The cells in the soil are its *Aathman*; the cells in the seeds are its *Aathman*. Soil is the substance of the food out of which man is born, through which man is sustained and nourished. But the body is the temple of the *Aathman* (divinity). Therefore one should not desecrate the body with any evil thought, word or deed.

The splendour of the *Aathman* reveals all things, illumines all things. The *Aathman*, however, is Self-Revealing, Self-illumining. It shines everywhere, in all things. In spite of any number of changes, the individual persists. Within the child, which unfolds into the boy, the youth and the middle-aged man, old age is ever dormant. So, too, it is the *chith aakaasha* which unfolds into the *chiththa aakaasha* and finally into *bhootha aakaasha* (the objective Universe).

For example, when some one photographs Me, I appear as a very small Sai Baba in the negative. But we can enlarge it to the size we desire to have. The Sai Baba in the big photo and the Sai Baba in the small one are the same. Can you assert that this five-foot three inches body, alone, is

Sai Baba and that the figure in that tiny picture is not? The *anu* (lightest) and *ghana* (heaviest) are both true. They are the same, but looked at from different angles.

Therefore, O Embodiments of *Prema*, turn your vision from the outer universe into the Inner Glow, the *Aathmic* Splendour, which you really are.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 28-9-1979