

38. Attachment and affection are the result of delusion

The world is a play of illusion (*maya*). Because of this play, the world seems to be subject to evolution of names and forms and involution of the same until the whole is melted in dissolution of the world (*pralaya*). The illusion disappears with the illumination of spiritual knowledge (*jnana*), just as light dispels the delusion of the snake with which the rope was covered! Then, the knowledge that the *Atma* is all fills and fulfils; one is *Atma* through and through! The sacred texts (*sruthis*) also declare this.

The *Atma* is always content and blissful. To you, one thing appears more attractive than another, so this sensual attachment and affection are the results of delusion and greed. It is like a dog that gnaws a bone; when blood oozes out of its tongue and gets mixed with the bone, it relishes the bone the more for that additional taste. When it gets another bone, it drops the first one and runs after the second. Thus, the *Atma* superimposes its inherent bliss upon the external, evanescent object and envelops that object with a certain attractiveness.

Objects are taken to be pleasure-giving, but they are not really so; they only add to the grief. This affection toward things seen through the deluded eye is ever-changing, and it is limited, not unlimited.

39. The nature of Atma is Being-Awareness-Bliss

The attachment to the *Atma* won't undergo any modifications. Even when the senses and body fall, the *Atma* will remain and infuse bliss. It is unlimited and indestructible. Everyone has attachment to the Self, or *Atma*. It is of the nature of the highest bliss (*param-ananda*). For this reason, it is also described as of the nature of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*).

Are these three the characteristics or qualities of the *Atma*? Or are they its essence, its nature? A doubt of this type may arise. Redness, heat, and splendour are the nature of fire, not its attributes. In the same way, *Atma* has being, awareness, and bliss as its very nature. Fire (*agni*) is one, and *Atma* is also one, though both may appear as different. Liquidity, coldness, and taste are of the very nature of water; yet, water everywhere is the same, with no diversity.

Atma is one; it subsumes all, and by knowing It, all is known. The *Atma* is the witness of the five sheaths (*kosas*) of the individual: the food, vital-air, mental, body, and bliss sheaths (*anna-maya*, *prana-maya*, *manomaya*, *vijnana-maya*, and *ananda-maya kosas*).

How can *Atma* be all-knowing, it may be asked? *Atma* is consciousness (*chit*), and all else is inert (*jada*). *Atma* alone can know, and nothing else is capable of knowing. And *Atma* knows that all else is *Atma*. Can the pot know the ether (*akasa*) inside it? Although it does not know, the ether is there all the same. But the *Atma* in people knows even the inert in the presence of the senses. Thus, the body, the house, the field, the village, the country are all "known". So too, the unseen items like heaven are "understood".

Though the multiplicity of body, country, etc. is non-existent, they appear so because they are formed by the tendencies of the mind; they simply appear on the screen as different and varied. In the dream, though one experiences a multiplicity, one knows that they are unreal creations of one's own mind; this is clear to the witness of the dream. Similarly, the experience of the waking stage is at most a mental picture. People also talk of heaven, though they have no experience of it.