

Chapter IX. One with the One

The cosmos (*jagath*) was created by God out of Himself, so He is the originator as well as the material of the cosmos. As a result, He is full (*paripurna*). Creation is also full, as is the individual *Atma*. Therefore, many full entities are postulated. God made the cosmos manifest from Himself. When this declaration is made, the doubt may naturally arise: How could God become these walls, these tables? Here is another doubt that comes uppermost to some: God is supremely pure, so how could He become these impure things?

Humanity is fundamentally divine

Let us seek the answers. People are fundamentally *Atma* but they have the encasement of a body, right? From one point of view, a person is not distinct from the body, yes? In spite of this, however, one feels that one is not this body, that one's reality is distinct from it, that one is not the baby one was or the old man one is, that one is neither male nor female, and that one persists through babyhood, boyhood, middle age, and old age, masculinity and femininity, and all the other stages and changes. So too, the cosmos and all creation are but the billion bodies of God. He is all this and in all this, but He is changeless and eternal.

Nature is amenable to change. The *Atma* can also contract or expand, blossom or fade, shine or be befogged. Bad deeds will diminish its splendour by clouding its brilliance. Its innate and genuine truth and wisdom may be hidden by evil thoughts and deeds. Acts and practices that can disclose the native splendour and glory of the *Atma* are termed “good”.

Three schools of Vedanta

The *Atma* is “unbound” at first; but later it is seen as limited and restricted. Through good deeds and activities, it resumes its vastness and boundlessness. Everyone, without any difference, has the opportunity to achieve this transformation. When the time gets ripe, everyone can succeed in this and liberate themselves from the bonds and bondage. But the cosmos (*jagath*) will not end. It is eternal, incapable of being destroyed. This is the explanation of the second school of philosophy in India.

The first school of philosophy is dualism (*dwaitha*). The dualists posit that the cosmos is a vast machine designed and operated by God. The second school is qualified nondualism (*visishta-adwaitha*). This second, higher, stage in spiritual enquiry and experience posits three entities —God, the *Atma*, and nature— and speaks of an integration of the three. The qualified nondualists declare that the cosmos is a phenomenon that is interpenetrated and imbued with the Divine. The third school, nondualism (*a-dwaitha*), asserts that God is not outside the cosmos, that He became the cosmos, and that He is all that is. There is nothing except God, no other, no second. This truth has to be accepted by all. This is the highest truth.

To say that God is the *Atma* and the cosmos is like the body in which He operates and lives is not correct. To assert that the *Atma* (God) is eternal and changeless but the cosmos that is His body can be subject to change and transformation is also not satisfying.

What does it signify when it is said, “God is the proximate cause (*upadana-karana*) of the cosmos”? Proximate cause means the cause that produced the effect. The “effect” is the “cause” in another form. It cannot be

separate from the cause. Every effect that we notice is but the cause that has assumed a new form. The cosmos is the effect, God is the cause —these statements stress only the fact that the cosmos is but God in another form. To the argument that the body is limited and subtle and that it leads one to the cause (God), or it was from God that it evolved and took shape, the nondualists would reply that it was God Himself who manifested in the form of the cosmos.

Integral unity of God, nature, and humans

It may be doubted that all this multiplicity of things and beings are really God. Yes —it is the truth. All these that the senses cognize, that come into the awareness, are God. There is nothing else but He. Our bodies, minds, intellects, consciousness —all are God.

Here, another doubt may arise. Why should God be so many individualized beings? Why should He be so many souls (*jivatmas*)? Will God, who is of one Form, manifest Himself as so many? How did this happen? If God had transformed Himself into the cosmos, He should have subjected Himself to change; all things in nature that are by their very composition subject to change suffer both birth and death. And, if God has come within the precincts of change, does it mean that He too has to die some day? Does he have to undergo change and ultimately end? Keep in mind this point also. Then, there is another point to be considered. How much of God, what portion of God becomes the cosmos?

The nondualists say the following. Whatever portion you may allot, or guess, remember this: The cosmos does not exist. It is an illusion. It never is, has been, or will be. The creation of the cosmos, the dissolution of the cosmos, these billions of individuals emerging and merging, all this is but a dream. There is no individualised soul (*Atma*) at all, no separated *Atma*. How can there be billions of souls? There is only ONE indivisible complete Absolute. Like the one sun reflected as a billion suns in a billion lakes, ponds, and drops of water, the souls are but reflections of the One in the minds on which it shines. This is what Indian (*Bharathiya*) thought emphasizes most clearly through the nondualist thinkers. Those who cannot grasp this truth are under the influence of delusion (*maya*), it can be said.

Cosmos, the dream of God

Dreams also have to be based on reality. Without a basic reality, the “dependent idea or fact” cannot exist. Without a basic thing, subsequent things cannot emanate. Without a basic being, subsequent beings cannot manifest. That base is God (Iswara). He is full; He is the mind, the body, the *Atma*. You are only as real as a dream. For the eye that can see reality, the cosmos is not this multiplicity of name and form, but mere being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*). Just think of your dream. It does not arise from somewhere outside you, nor do the varied images and activities disappear into some place outside you. They arise in you and disappear into you. While dreaming, you consider the events and persons as real, and you experience, as really as in the waking stage, the feelings of grief, delight, fear, anxiety, and joy. You don’t dismiss them at the time as illusory.

The cosmos is the dream of God; it arises in Him and merges in Him. It is the product of His mind. These lives and repeated arrivals are all fanciful weavings of delusion (*maya*), unreal fantasies, illusory agitations, unreal appearances. You are the Full, you are God. God is you. Those who have experienced this highest wisdom can attain oneness with the ONE, here and now.