

10. Divine “Light” and Divine “Feet”

Jyothish charana-abhidhaanaath

The word light (*jyothi*) in the *Upanishads* does not connote the physical light of the material world. When material limits or qualifications like feet are specified, how can the immanent, all-pervasive entity be indicated? Such a limited or qualified phenomenon cannot become the object of adoration and meditation. When the word *light* is understood to mean the light having certain natural characteristics, it cannot signify *Brahman*, the Universal Absolute.

Divine light shines everywhere

The hymn in praise of the cosmic Person declares:

The entire cosmos, with all its component elements, is but one quarter of His glory.
Paadosya vishwa bhuthaani.

Therefore, the cosmic Person is beyond bounds, measures, or degrees. The divine light (*jyothi*) illumines Heaven and beyond and reveals even *Brahman*. That which makes known by its splendour the era preceding the origin of living beings and the regions beyond even the farthest and the highest, “That” is indicated by the word *jyothi*. It shines in that supremest among supreme regions.

Note also that the same divine light shines everywhere, at all times, and in all beings. It comprises existence (*asthi* or *sat*), illumination-knowledge (*bhathi* or *chit*), and joy-bliss (*priya* or *ananda*). All things seen in the universe have the unseen as their base. All things that move have the unmoving as their base. So, too, for every living being, why, for the very cosmos itself, the invisible *Brahman*, the Supra-Truth, is the basis. It is this *Para-brahman*, the Omni-Self, that causes the cosmos to shine. “Divine light (*jyothi*)” is appropriate only for this light and not the limited, inferior, physical light. Divine light has neither beginning nor end. It is the supreme Light (*Param-jyothi*), the light without a second (*A-dwaita-jyothi*), the eternal, unbroken Light (*Akhanda-jyothi*). In other words, it is the supreme *Brahman* Itself, for all this is revealed only in and through It.

Unlimited divine light versus worldly light

The divine light referred to above cannot be interpreted otherwise. The *Upanishads* do speak of *Brahman* as having “feet”, but that does not restrict or reduce Its vastness in any way.

“Divine light (*jyothi*)”, therefore, conveys “*Brahman*” as its meaning. When *Brahman* is imagined as having four “feet”, or quarters, all that is projected from *Brahman* comprises but one quarter. The *Upanishads* assert that the other three are “undying, undiminishable, changeless” in “heaven (*divi*)”.

A point to be remembered is that such immortal light cannot be equated with the common light we deal with. The *Upanishadic* light is said to “illumine”. How can this process be limited and tied down to the effect of ordinary worldly light? Divine light is embodied in *Brahman*; it operates in and through *Brahman* only. *Brahman* is

immanent in all, so divine light reveals and shines in all.

Divine light is total illumination

The base, the root, the cover of the ever-vibrating, ever-moving cosmos is *Brahman*, the stable, the fixed, the immovable, the ever-steady divine light. When *Brahman* also starts to vibrate, change, and move, total mergence, submergence (*pralaya*), happens. For example, when the train moves, if the rails on which it moves also move along, what about the fate of the passengers? When we walk, the road is stationary, so we are able to proceed safely along.

The light that shines individually is called the flame in the lamp; the light that illumines and reveals all is called divine light (*jyothi*). Divine light brings to light the fire that pervades the regions, that warms the body and resides in the stomach, the gleam in the eye. The moon is lit by the sun and thereby made bright. All these activities are prompted and promoted by *Brahman*, which is divine light itself. Divine light is the principle, the phenomenon of illumination in all its aspects.