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More about the Atman

Verse 134

abhivadan yadAste (PuruSa Sukta); and with the Brahma Sutra: avasthiteriti kasakrtsnah: "(The initial statement is made) because (the highest self) exists in the condition (of the individual soul): so kAshakrsna thinks", the ParamAtman alone abides in the form of the jIva indicated by analysis of the meaning of tvam, the meaning of tat indicated by the shruti anashnannanyo abhicAashIti:(Mund.): 'The other (bird) shines without eating, is explained. In accordance with the sruti: sarvAni rUpANi vicitya dhirAh nAmANi krtvA

atraiva sattvAtmani dhIguhAyAm
 avyAkrtAkAshA uruprakAshah|
 AkAshA uccaihravivat prakAshate
 svatejasA vishvamidam prakAshayan||

In this body itself, in the secret cave of buddhi which is of the nature of sattva, in the Akasha spoken of as the unmanifested, the resplendent Atman shines like the sun in the sky illumining this entire universe by its native effulgence.

atraiva: here itself: in the body of the aspirant.

sattvatmani: in the innermost cave of the buddhi, buddhi which is predominantly sattva is itself the cave. The word guhA comes from the root guh: guhU samvarane: which means covering or concealment. The Atman is covered by the vijnAnamayakosa, the sheath of the knowledge. avyakrtAkAse: the avyakrtAkAshA which is continuous as the material in it.

UruprakAshah: uru: adhika: abundant, extremely effulgent, illumining everything by its cognitive luminosity. Vide: taddevA jyotiSAm jyotih. (Brh.).

akAshah: The ParamAtman by His own effulgence is the illuminator of all lights beginning with the sun by shedding the light of knowledge on everything. Vide the Shruti: yena sUryastapati tejaseddhah. (taitt.)

idam vishvam: this entire universe which is drshya, what is seen.

PrakAshayan: shining (illumining) like the sun.

uccaih prakAshate- shines in the most radiant (resplendent) manner. Or, like the sun high up in the sky (uccaih).

In the previous shloka, where it was said: eso'ntarAtmA puruSah. The Atman was referred to as puruSah i.e., puri (in the body) shete (abides). This is further explained in this shloka as follows:

atra: here, i.e in the gross body; dhi-guhAyAm: in the cave of the buddhi, i.e., in the subtle body and, avyAkrtAkAse: in the unmanifested akasa: in the causal body.

It is well known that the sun in the sky is the illuminator of all things in all directions. So, too the Atman, which is the inmost core of everything, is the illuminator of all objects.

Verse 135

JnAtA mano'hamkrti-vikriyANAm dehendriya-prANakrta- kriyAnAm|
 ayo'gnivat tAnanu vartamAno na ceSTate no vikaroti kincana||

The Atman is the knower of the modifications of the mind, the ahamkAra and the activities of the body, indriyas and the breath. Accompanying them all, like fire in an iron, it neither acts nor effects

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changes in anything.

mano'hamkrti-vikriyAnAm jnAtA: The knower of the changes of the mind and the ahamkAra. The changes of the mind are kAma and samkalpa: desire and purpose.

samkalpo: desire and purpose. The changes of ahamkAra are pride, arrogance, etc. The atman is the knower at all these changes which take place internally. Similarly also of the external changes wrought in the body, the sense-organs, the breath etc. By the word 'deha' the karmendriyas (organs of action) are indicated. Of these and of the activities of the eye and those of the jnanendriyas connected with seeing, hearing, etc., and of the activities of the prana like inhaling and exhaling, the atman is the knower. The atman is the piece of iron may undergo change of form as round, long, etc., but the fire in the iron which now appears long and now round as such by itself unchanging at any time and in any manner though diversely spoken of by their respective functions. The Atman is like the sun in whose presence the inanimate world undergoes change, but the sun remains unchanging. So is the atman.

Verse 136

The same idea is explained here with reason therefor.

na jAyate na mriyate na vardhate na kSIyate na vikaroti nityah|
VilIyamAne'pi vapuSyamuSmin na lIyate kumbha ivAmbaram svayam||

It (the Atman) is not born; it does not die; it does not grow or decline; it does not change. It is eternal. Even if this body is destroyed, it does not become extinct even as space does not become extinct on the destruction of the pot which enclosed it.

Birth, being (existence), change, growth, decline, and extinction are the six transformations seen in the body etc. This Paramatman eternal, is bereft of origination and extinction. Therefore, He is not born, he is not originated. He does not die, He does not become non-existent. As he has neither origination nor death, neither beginning nor end, he does not grow. He does not decline. As there is no origination there is no being or existence as a state after that. As He is eternal and partless He does not undergo any change. It is only what is itself subject to change that can effect change in another thing. That is why in the previous shloka it was said: na vikaroti. Why it does not effect change is explained in this sloka. Though this particular body is destroyed, even as space does not disappear when the pot is destroyed, so too the Atman is not destroyed on the destruction of the body, i.e., it does not become extinct by itself nor is it made so by another.

Verse 137

Prakrti-vikrti-bhinnah shuddhabodhasvabhAvah
sadasadidamasheSa.m bhAsayannirvishesah|
Vilasati paramAtmA jAgradAdiSvevasthanAsu
ahamahamiti sAKsAt sAKsirupeNa buddheh||

Different from prakrti (avidya) and its Transformations, of the nature of pure intelligence, and being quality-less, illuminating all this material world with all that has form and **is** formless, the atman shines through the waking and other states as their witness and is referred to as the 'I'.

Commentary: prakrtih: avidyA: vikrtayah: AkAshA etc., its transformations.

Tadbhinnah: different from all causes and effects.

suddhabodhasvabhAvah shuddhah: nirviSayah: of the nature of pure knowledge without an object of knowledge , i.e., the seer by itself.

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Idam: whatever is known by the instruments of sense-perception etc.

sat: whatever has form like space, wind etc. asheSam: everything.
AsheSam: everything.

BhAsayan: illumining.

nirvisheSah: without any quality.

JAgradAdiSu avasthASu..buddheh: The paramAtman abides for ever as the witness n the jAgrat, svapna and suSupti states and as the buddhi in latent (seed) form even in suSupti.

Ahamahamiti: by reference to oneself as 'I', He shines through them directly inside.

Verse 138

The Guru teaches the shiSya the meaning of the shruti: brahmasamsthõ'mrtatvameti (Chand.): "One who is established as Brahman attains immortality" This he teaches by speaking of the control of the mind and through it the clarity of the intellect for the realisation of the ParamAtman as non-different from oneself.

niyamitamanasAmum tvam svamAtmAnamAtmA
nyayamahamiti sAKSAd viddhi buddhiprasAdAt|
janimaraNatarangApArasamsArasindhum
pratara bhava krthArtho brahmarUpena samsthah||

By means of a controlled mind and the clear perception of the intellect, directly realise your atman as the 'I'. By that means cross this ocean of samsara with its waves of birth and death. Thus established as Brahman, be a person of fulfilled purpose.

Atmani niyamitamanasA: concentrating your mind by shravana, manana and nididhyAsana on the Atman which is distinguished from the five sheaths: vide shruti: manasaivedamAptavyam: "this ought to be obtained only by the (pure) mind."

BuddhiprasAdAt: prasAdAt: anugrahAt: by the grace of the buddhi which is devoid of all kinds of defects like asambhAvanA, a sense of improbability, viparItabhAvanA, wrong comprehension and samshaya, doubt. Vide the shrutis: drsyate tvagryayA buddhya sUkSmayA (Katha): " This is seen (comprehended) by the single-pointed subtle intellect"; jnAnaprasAdena vishuddhasattvah tatastu tam pashyate niSkalam dhyAyamAnah (shvet.): " Becoming compacted of the pure sattva by the lear nature of jnAnA, one then sees Him meditating on him". He realises the ParamAtman which is his own nature. Vide the shruti: sa AtmA tattvamasi (ChAnd.): "That is the atman; That thou art". Also by shruti: asanneva sa bhavati asad brahmeti veda cet (Taitt.): "He himself becomes non-existent if he thinks that Brahman is not". All these show that the ParamAtman alone is important.

Ayamahamiti sAKSAt viddhi: Until now you were thinking: " He (Brahman) is one, and I am another! Giving that up, realise your non-difference from Brahman. This (Brahman) is I."

The fruit of this realisation is conveyed in the second half of the verse.

JanimaraNa-tarangApArAsamsArasindhum pratara: the samsAra sindhu: the samsArik ocean has for its waves the alternation of birth and death. This succession is continuous so long as

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BrahmajñAna is not obtained. It is apAra: shoreless, because the only shore is Brahman. So long as that is not realised, this ocean is shoreless.

Pratara: cross that ocean. The proposition pra in pratara is intended to convey the idea of crossing the completely and significantly here and now; prakarSena tara: i.e., attain immediate release (sadyomukti).

Being for ever established (samsthah) as Brahman, be a krtArtha, i.e., one who has nothing else to accomplish, one who has accomplished everything. Vide the shloka: jñAnAmrtena trptasya krtakrtyasya yoginah| naivAsti kincit kartavyam asti cenna sa tattvavit|| "There is nothing else to be done by the yogi who has realised his oneness with Brahman having drunk of the nectar of jñAna. If there remains anything to be done, that means he has not realised the truth."