

Satasloki

Sloka 26

चत्वारोऽस्याः कपर्दा युवतिरथ भवेन्नूतना नित्यमेषा
माया वा पेशला स्यादघटनघटनापाटवं याति यस्मात्।
स्यादारम्भे घृतास्या श्रुतिभववयुनान्येवमाच्छादयन्ती
तस्यामेतौ सुपर्णाविव परपुरुषौ तिष्ठतोऽर्थप्रतीत्या॥२६

26. This Maya has four great qualities. It is ever youthful and ever new. It has the capacity to make what is impossible happen. Every action undertaken as a result of this Maya is sweet in the beginning. Maya conceals the knowledge about Brahman contained in the Srutis. Isvara and Jiva both dwell in this Maya like two birds on a tree. The Jiva experiences external objects through the sense organs and feels happiness or misery, while Isvara is not affected by them.

This verse is based on the Rigveda, 8.6.16.3. There Maya is described as a girl having the above four qualities. Maya has two powers, the veiling power (Avarana sakti) and the projecting power (Vikshepa sakti). Maya veils Brahman and projects the universe. It thus makes the impossible happen. Brahman reflected in pure (Sattvic) Maya is Isvara (God). The Jiva or individual is Brahman reflected in Avidya, which is impure Maya because of the admixture of Rajoguna and Tamoguna. It is therefore stated in this verse that both Isvara and Jiva dwell in Maya. The comparison with two birds on the same tree is based on Mundakopnishad, III.i.1, which says:--"Two birds that are ever associated with each other reside on the same tree (standing for the body). One of them, (the Jiva), eats the fruits (i.e. experiences the results, good and bad, of its karma) because of identification with the body. The other, Isvara, looks on without eating. Isvara has no karma to be experienced and no identification with the body. Isvara controls Maya, while the Jiva is under the control of Maya.

All actions undertaken are sweet in the beginning-- The Jiva undertakes various actions with the object of attaining happiness, prompted by Maya or ignorance of the truth that he is Brahman. He feels happy when he starts such action, only to realize ultimately that all such actions ultimately lead only to sorrow, because nothing obtained by action can give everlasting happiness. Only the realization that one is in reality Brahman will give eternal happiness unmixed with the slightest trace of misery. This knowledge, which is contained in the Upanishads, is concealed by ignorance and so the Jiva looks upon himself as a limited individual. See Gita, 5.16.

Maya makes the impossible happen-- Sri Sankara gives, in Mayapanchakam, some instances of this. It imposes on Brahman, which

is eternal and devoid of parts and which is pure Consciousness, the false distinctions as the world, individual souls and God. It makes even those who have mastered all the scriptures no different from animals by tempting them with wealth and the like. It makes Brahman which is infinite bliss, pure consciousness and non-dual, struggle in the ocean of *samsaara* by associating it with the body made up of the five elements. It imposes on Brahman which is devoid of qualities, the distinctions of colour, caste, etc, and attachment to wife, son, possessions and the like. It creates even in non-dual Brahman distinctions such as Brahmaa, Vishnu and Siva and deludes even the learned into thinking that they are different from one another.

Satasloki 27

एकस्तत्रास्त्यसङ्गस्तदनु तदपरोऽज्ञानसिन्धुं प्रविष्टो
विस्मृत्यात्मस्वरूपं स विविधजगदाकारमाभासमैक्षत्।
बुद्ध्यन्तर्यावदैक्षद्विसृजति तमजा सोऽपि तामेवमेक-
स्तावद्विप्रास्तमेकं कथमपि बहुधा कल्पयन्ति स्ववाग्भिः॥२७

27. Isvara is totally unattached. The Jiva, being immersed in the ocean of nescience, forgets his own real nature (as Brahman) and sees the world of multifarious names and forms as real, though they are only appearances and have no reality apart from the Self (or Brahman). But when, his intellect having become purified and free from desires and their consequences such as anger, greed, etc, he withdraws his sense organs from external objects and concentrates his mind on the Self within, he realizes his nature as Brahman. Then Maya gives up her control over him and he too frees himself from Maya. This one Self is described by the sages as having taken the form of various gods, but this is only for the purposes of the ritualistic portion of the Vedas. In reality the Self (Brahman) is only one, without a second.

Rigveda, I.164.46 says:-

"They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna. Agni and the Divine, winged Suparna,

The One Being the wise call by many names as Agni, Yama, Matarisvan".

See also Kathopanishad, 2.1.1-- A rare discriminating individual turns his eyes (i.e. all his sense organs) away from external objects and then sees the indwelling Self.

नायाति प्रत्यगात्मा प्रजननसमये नैव यात्यन्तकाले
यत्सोऽखण्डोऽस्ति लैङ्गं मन इह विशति प्रव्रजत्यूर्ध्वमर्वाक्।
तत्काश्यं स्थूलतां वा न भजति वपुषः किन्तु संस्कारजातैः
तेजोमात्रा गृहीत्वा व्रजति पुनरिहायाति तैस्तैस्सहैवा॥२८

28. The indwelling self, being non-different from the Supreme Self (Brahman), is infinite and so all-pervading. It cannot therefore be said that the indwelling self enters the womb when a child is conceived. Nor can it be said that it leaves the body when a person dies. It is the subtle body, constituted of the mind and the sense organs, that enters the physical body when a child is conceived and leaves the physical body when a person dies. Birth is the entry of the subtle body into the physical or gross body and death is the departure of the subtle body from the gross body. On death the subtle body goes to the higher or lower worlds according to the karma of the person. The self does not take on the characteristics of the gross body such as leanness, stoutness, etc. The subtle body, along with the sense organs (which form part of it) and the samskaras, departs from the gross body on death. After sojourn in higher or lower worlds, it comes back to this world to take on another gross body.

The subtle body consists of the five organs of perception (jnanendriyas), the five organs of action (karmendriyas), the five vital airs (prana, apana, vyana, samana and udana), the mind (manas) and the intellect (buddhi). It is the subtle body which transmigrates from one physical body to another. The physical body perishes on death, but the subtle body continues until ignorance is destroyed by the realization of Brahman (Brahma-sakshatkara). When the subtle body leaves the physical body it carries with it the knowledge acquired by the person, the effects of his karma (punya and papa) and the impressions of past actions (samskaras) (See Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV.iv.2). The pure Atma, being eternal and all-pervading, has neither birth nor death, nor can there be any question of its going from one place to another. See also Bhagavad gita, 15.8.

How the *jiva* takes a new body

Br.Up.4.4.3, Sri Sankara's Bhashya says :--
Now the question is, when the self loaded with knowledge, etc, is about to take up another body, does it leave the old body and go to another, like a bird going to another tree? Or is it carried by another body serving as a vehicle to the place where, according to its past work, it is to be born? Or does it stay here, while its organs become all-pervading and

function as such? Or do the organs remain contracted within the limits of the body as long as the *jiva* remains in that particular body, but when the *jiva* departs, do the organs become all-pervading, like the light of a lamp when its enclosure is removed and contract again when a new body is taken up? (These are the views, respectively, of the Jains, the Devataavaadins, the Saankhyas and Vedanta). The answer is: Though the organs are by nature all-pervading and infinite (in their form as the presiding deities), since the new body is made in accordance with the person's work, knowledge and past impressions, the functions of the organs also contract or expand accordingly. Therefore the impressions called past experience, under the control of the person's knowledge and work, stretch out, like a leach, from the body, retaining their seat in the heart, as in the dream state, and build another body in accordance with his past work; they leave their seat, the old body, when a new body is made ready. An illustration on this point is given in 4.4.3.

Br.up.4.4.3. Bhashya---

The following example illustrates how the *jiva* passes from one gross body to another. Just as a leach, which wants to go from one leaf to another, stretches the front part of its body and takes hold of the new leaf and then draws the hind portion of the body away from the old leaf and onto the new leaf, so also, the *jiva* takes hold of the new body and only thereafter leaves the old body. This is similar to what happens when going from the waking to the dream state. In the dream state the person identifies himself with his dream body and completely dissociates himself from his waking state body. The presiding deities of all the organs also take their places in the new body. The nature of the new body, whether it is that of a human being or of a god, or of an animal or other creature, depends on the past karma, knowledge and impressions (*vasanas*) of the particular individual. The Mundaka Up. says--"He who longs for objects of desire, thinking highly of them, is born along with those desires in a situation in which he will be able to realize those desires"(3.2.2). Desire is therefore the cause of repeated births and deaths. Total elimination of desire is the means to liberation.

Regarding how a new body is formed, the example of a goldsmith taking an old ornament and converting it into a new one is given in Br.up.4.4.4.

Br.up.3.2.13. Bhashya---

Karma is the cause of repeated births.

Katha up. 2.2.7—The *jiva* is born according to his karma and knowledge as a human being, animal, bird, tree, etc.

Proof of existence of past births

Ch.up.6.11.3. Bhashya--- When separated from the *jiva* (soul), the (gross) body dies, but the soul does not die. From the fact that as soon as a creature is born, it hankers after breast-feeding and experiences fear, etc, it is clear that it has memory of similar experiences in past lives.

Moreover, since rites like *agnihotra* have some purpose to serve, it follows that the soul does not die.

The next verse is based on a story in Rigveda (8.1.20 & 8.1.21).

आसीत्पूर्वं सुबन्धुर्भृशमवनिसुरो यः पुरोधस्सनातेः

ब्राह्म्यात् कूटाभिचारात् स खलु मृतिमितस्तन्मनोऽगात् कृतान्तम्।

तद्भ्राता श्रौतमन्त्रैः पुनरनयदिति प्राह सूक्तेन वेद-

स्तस्मादात्माभियुक्तं व्रजति ननु मनः कर्हिचिन्नान्तरात्मा॥२९

29. Long ago a king named Sanathi had a learned and capable priest by name Subandhu. This priest died as a result of imprecatory rites performed against him by some Brahmanas. His subtle body went to Yama's abode. His brother chanted some Vedic mantras and brought the subtle body back to the earth. This story is narrated in a sukta in the Rigveda. From this it is clear that it is the subtle body that leaves the physical body on death and transmigrates and not the indwelling self. (This story from the karma kanda of the Veda further supports what has been said in verse 28).

एको निष्कम्प आत्मा प्रचलति मनसा धावमानेन तस्मिन्

तिष्ठन्नग्रेऽथ पश्चान्न हि तमनुगतं जानते चक्षुराद्याः।

यद्वत्पाथस्तरङ्गैः प्रचलति परितो धावमानैस्तदन्तः

प्राक् पश्चादस्ति तेषां पवनसमुदितैस्तैः प्रशान्तैर्यथावत्॥३०

30. The one non-dual Self, which is in reality devoid of any movement or action of any kind, appears to move when the mind moves. Though the Self is within the mind and also all around it, being all-pervasive, the eye and other sense organs cannot know it. Just as the water in the ocean appears to be agitated because of the waves caused by the wind and attains its natural calm state when the wind ceases, the Self also attains its natural calm motionless state when the mind becomes calm.

