

ANTARYAMIN: THE INNER SPIRIT

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1. Introduction

Upanisadic literature [800-300 BCE] is very often characterized as a powerful expression of revolt against and a refusal of Brahmanic ritualism. It, in no uncertain terms, condemned the stereotyped, and very often meaningless, rituals and sacrifices, and loudly proclaimed that the ultimate liberation from embodied existence cannot be realized through these external expressions of religiosity and spirituality. Instead, it championed the intuitive, experiential and mystical knowledge of Brahman, which is the ultimate cause of everything, the unifying force of the universe and the supreme goal of all lives, as the only and sure means to break the inexorable cycle of births, deaths and rebirths. The Upanisads thus introduced a new world-view and a new vision of Reality in the philosophical-religious milieu of India. The greatest contribution of the Upanisads thus is the discovery and introduction of the concept of Brahman-Atman. This new trend of thought marked a shift from the external sacrificial ritualism of the Brahmanas to a search for the internal knowledge of one supreme Reality of the Upanisads, from *karma-kanda* to *jnana-kanda*, from Brahmanism to a kind of Sramanism, from a polytheistic idea of godhead to a monotheistic or monistic concept of the absolute ultimate Being. Man who was the sacrificer (*yajamana*) in the Brahmanic period, becomes the seeker of knowledge of Brahman (*brahma-jijnasu*) in the Upanisads.

The Upanisads designated this supreme, ultimate Reality as Brahman, the big One, the large Being. These texts, however, use other names for the supreme Being, namely, *Atman*, (Self or the

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Life-spirit), *Sat* (Existence), *Cit* (Consciousness), *Ananda* (Bliss), *Akasa* (Space/ether), *Om*, *Antaryamin* (the inner Spirit or the inner-Controller), etc. All these appellations point to the different essential characteristics and nature of Brahman¹.

2. *Atman*

Since our concern here is the Spirit, a word about *Atman*, which is the parallel concept in Indian philosophy, is in place here. The word 'Atman' is derived from the root 'an', (*aniti*), meaning to breathe, to live, to vivify. Therefore, *Atman* is breath, life, life-principle, spirit, the vivifier, etc. There is also the opinion among grammarians that this word is derived from the verbal root 'at' (*atati*), meaning to go, to walk, to wander. In this case, *Atman* may mean that which moves, the wind, the moving-spirit. In any case, the word 'Atman' is normally translated as self, soul, spirit, individual self, etc. In the Upanisads, sometimes this word is used to designate also the Brahman².

In the Brahman-Atman identity relation, mainly advocated by the older Upanisads and the Advaita of Sankara, Brahman means the supreme Reality, the ultimate Being the absolute godhead, the cosmic Self. And *Atman* is the same supreme Reality confined and circumscribed in the mind-stuff (*antahkarana*) of the individuals. The same Brahman is individualized and personalized in particular bodily structures. This apparent and unreal bondage of the Self in body is due to *karma* and ignorance. In reality, the Self is never bound. It is like taking the same Ganges water in different containers, and claiming 'it is my water', 'it is your water', etc. The adjuncts make this differentiation. In the same way, the one Brahman is falsely understood to be many due to ignorance.

¹ We do not forget here the fact that Advaita Vedanta would never accept any qualities or attributes in Brahman. For it, Brahman is pure consciousness, without any qualifications.

² The word 'Atman' is used to denote both Brahman and the individual self. We need to make out the meaning from the context. The word 'Paramatman' is used only for supreme Brahman; and the word 'Jivatman' is used only for the individual self.

But the theistic Vedantins would say that Brahman and *Atman* are different. Individual selves (*Atman*) are also real and independent beings, and not creations of illusion or ignorance. Brahman and individual selves are not identical.

What is the essential nature of *Atman*? Here again the Advaita, who champions the Brahman-*Atman* identity, would say *Atman* is pure consciousness, without any attributes or qualities. Samkhya-Yoga also teaches that *Purusa* (self) is pure consciousness. The philosophical systems of Nyaya and Vaisesika go to other extreme and say that consciousness is only an adventitious quality or attribute of the individual selves. Philosophers like Ramanuja stand between these two extremes, and say that consciousness is both the essence and an attribute of *Atman* and also of Brahman. *Atman* is consciousness and has consciousness as its attribute or quality.

In relation to Brahman, this spiritual reality is called *Atman*. It is called soul or self in contrast to body, and it is designated as spirit in opposition to matter.

3. *Antaryamin*

My intention here is to explain the concept of *Antaryamin*. The word 'antar-yamin' means one who checks or controls (the root *yam* means to restrain, to check to hold back, etc.) from within (*antar*). In the *Çhandogya Upanisad*, there is beautiful description of God's indwelling presence. It depicts the body of a human person as the city of God (*brahma-pura*); the palace of this capital city is the heart; within the heart there is a lotus flower, which might be considered as the inner chamber of the supreme Brahman; and within this lotus flower, there is a small space (*dahara akasa*). This small space is God himself³. The text is as follows: "Now here in this city of Brahman, there is a small abode in the form of a small lotus flower; within it is a small space, what is within it, That should be sought,

³ It is to be noted that in the Christian tradition, the body of a person is very often designated as the temple of the Holy Spirit, temple of God. God's indwelling-presence, namely, the presence of the Spirit in a holy soul, is a powerful object of prayer and meditation.

because That verily is what one should desire to know" (*ChUp. VIII.1.1*). It is clear here that the small space in the heart is identified with Brahman itself. That is to be known. Besides this, what exist within It, should also be known. And what exist within It are the auspicious qualities of God. The auspicious qualities of God are explained later in the Upanisad. "This supreme Atman is devoid of sin, without old age, is immortal, is free from sorrow, hunger and thirst, and It has the power to realize Its desires and thoughts instantly" (*ChUp. VIII.1.5*). The philosopher-saint Ramanuja explains this passage in his *Sribhasya* in detail:

After having pointed out the body of the devotee as the city of Brahman, and that which is present in the body as an object of meditation; and after having designated the heart as the palace of Brahman, which exists in the middle part of the body, and which is an organ of it and is in the shape of a lotus flower and is small in size; and after having pointed out that with the word 'small space' the omniscient, omnipotent Brahman, whose tender love towards his devotees is like an ocean, and who is to be meditated upon as the one very minutely present in that abode for the benefit of the devotee, the text, 'that is to be sought' exhorts that, the connatural, boundless and auspicious qualities like the power to realize the wishes, etc., exist in It (Brahman), and are to be meditated upon. Here by the word 'tat' of the text '*tad anvestavyam*', the small space and the many qualities in it are indicated⁴.

The *Brahma-sutra* of Badarayana too deals with this issue in the *sutra* I.2.13 which states: "The small space (is Brahman), because the following passages (demonstrate it thus)".

One thing that may strike our mind is the fact that the supreme Atman is identified with the space within the heart. Brahman is in fact, very often identified with the immense outer Akasa in the Upanisads. *Chandogya Upanisad* VII.12.1-2 say:

⁴ Ramanuja's *Sribhasya* I.3.13.

Akasa is verily greater than fire. In Akasa, indeed, exist both the sun and moon, lightning, stars and fire. Through Akasa one calls, through Akasa one hears, through Akasa one hears the response. ... In Akasa beings are born, and towards Akasa they grow. Worship this Akasa.

He who worships Akasa as Brahman, he indeed, attains vast worlds, full of light, unconfined and spacious ...

The characteristics of subtlety, immensity, all-pervasiveness, incorporeality, oneness (uniqueness), eternality, etc. are common to Akasa and Brahman. All objects of this universe exist in the Akasa, it provides the matrix for all beings to take birth, grow and perish. In the same way all beings originate from, exist and move in and ultimately enter into the supreme Spirit, Brahman.

Akasa is one of the five elements, the other four being the earth, water, fire and air. But unlike the other elements, Akasa is always subtle, unchangeable, all-pervasive, one and eternal. The other four elements have a subtle form, which is eternal, and gross forms, which are impermanent. The subtle form is the cause of the gross forms. There is always a cause-effect nexus in the transformations of the four material elements. The evolution of the subtle form into gross forms is called creation⁵; and the involution of the gross forms back into the subtle form is called annihilation (*pralaya*). But Akasa, as has already been mentioned earlier, is different. It does not cause anything, nor is it caused by something else. It, in fact, provides the locus for the other elements for their processes of evolutions and involutions. It is these particular and unusual characteristics of the Akasa that prompted the Upanisadic seers to propose it to the seekers of the supreme Spirit as a powerful symbol of Brahman. It is in this light that we should read and understand the first verse of the first Upanisad, namely, *Isavasya Upanisad*. It says: "Whatever exists in this entire universe, all that is pervaded by the governing Spirit" *Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kinca jagatyam jagat* (*IsaUp. 1*).

⁵ Evidently, there is no idea of creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) in Hinduism.

The text, which we are now analyzing, actually identifies the supreme Atman not with the external Akasa, but with the Akasa in the heart (*daharakasa*). The lotus of the heart, namely, the inner space, is the place where God manifests himself as the inner Self and inner Controller. Residing in this small space, or to be precise, being identified with this small space, which the Upanisad elsewhere says, is of the size of the thumb, God may seem to be small and limited; but in reality this inner space contains the immense outer space. The Upanisad continues to quote the disciple's question concerning this, and the teacher's answer to it:

If the disciples should say to him (the teacher): 'In this city of Brahman, there is the small mansion in the shape of a lotus and within that there is the small inner Akasa. What is it that lies there which should be sought, and which one should desire to know?' To them (the teacher) should say: 'As large indeed as is this Akasa (outside), so large is that Akasa in the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained, both heaven and earth, both fire and air, both sun and moon, lightning and stars. Whatever there is of him in this world and whatever is not, all that is contained within it' *ChUp. VIII.1.2-3*).

Therefore, the inner Spirit is in no way limited or rendered finite. It is for the sake of the seeker that God assumes the form of the inner Spirit and dwells within him as his/her innermost Self.

The disciples may ask further: Heart is a part of the body, and body is the result of the past *karma*, and it will perish and vanish when the force of the karmic law is loosened and destroyed. Will not the imperfections, mutability, finiteness and limitations of the body affect also the inner Spirit?

If the students say to him: 'If in this city of Brahman is contained all this, all beings and all desires, then what is left of it when old age overtakes it or when it perishes?' To them the teacher should say: 'The supreme Spirit in the inner Akasa does not age with the aging of the body, it is not killed by the killing of this body. This Akasa is the real abode of Brahman, in it are contained the desires. This is the supreme Atman, free from

evil, free from old age, free from death, free from sorrow, free from hunger, free from thirst, and whose desire is of the truth, whose resolve is of the truth' (*ChUp.VIII.1.4-5*).

Thus the inner Spirit or Atman, though it resides in an imperfect and finite human heart, is perfect, infinite, eternal, ageless, deathless and free from all human infirmities and exigencies. This Spirit vivifies and controls the body.

4. *Dahara-vidya*: The Meditation on Brahman as the Inner Akasa

The older Upanisads contain certain forms of meditations. Traditionally the number of these meditations is said to be thirty-two. They are technically known as *vidyas*⁶ or *upasanas*. Meditating on God as the inner Spirit is one among them. It is known by the name 'dahara-vidya' or 'daharakasa-vidya'. Here the word 'dahara' means small, little, subtle, etc. It evidently denotes the small space (Akasa) within the lotus heart. Thus the seekers of liberation are asked to meditate on God as present and active in their own inner being. God is the inner Being of all beings, and therefore they have to see in every being God's presence.

This meditation is a so-called *pratika* meditation, namely, meditation on a symbol of God, the symbol here being the small space within the heart. There are three types of Upanisadic meditations: (i) *Nirguna Brahma* meditations. Meditation on the attributeless Brahman. This form of meditation is not easily accessible to ordinary people. (ii) *Saguna Brahma* meditations. Meditation on God with auspicious attributes and qualities. Here God is a person. (iii) *Pratika* meditations. Meditations on images or symbols of God. Two words are used to denote the meditations of images and symbols: *pratima* and *pratika*. In the case of the former, the objects of meditations are ordinary material images, or idols; and in the case of the latter, the objects of meditations are symbolic images. Meditation on God as the inner Space (Akasa) is a *pratika* meditation. This type of meditation is very common and varied in

⁶ Derived from the verbal root 'vid', the word 'vidya' actually means knowledge or wisdom. But here it is used to designate the Upanisadic forms of meditation.

the Upanisads. In fact the *Brahma-sutra* IV.1.4-5 says precisely this. "Meditation on Brahman (is to be directed also on to the symbols of Brahman), because of the greatness (attributed to symbols by this kind of meditations)". Commenting on this *sutra* K. Narayanasami Aiyer says: "We have not to degrade God to symbols, but to exalt symbols to God. The ideas in the *Sutra-bhasya* may be put thus: In worldly matters, if we should regard a master as a servant, we degrade him. On the contrary, we elevate the servant by applying to him the name of the master for whom he works"⁷. This meditation helps the seekers to see and worship God in their own inner self, and gives them the awareness that this supreme cosmic Spirit pervades the entire universe, and governs it through his power and presence.

What are the results of this type of meditations? The ultimate aim of all forms of Upanisadic meditations is the final liberation from the cycle of repetitive existences. But there can be intermediary effects. Usually three types of results are mentioned. (i) The destruction of sorrows and miseries (*durita-ksaya*). (ii) The obtainment of material and spiritual prosperity (*aisvarya-prapti*). There are people who believe that the proper practice of Upanisadic meditations (*vidyas*) would eventually lead the practitioner to extraordinary and occult powers and esoteric knowledge. (iii) The gradual liberation from the exigencies of the embodied existence (*karma-mukti*).

5. The *Antaryami-brahmana* of *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*

Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, Chapter two Section seven is known as *Antaryami-brahmana*, meaning, the section that deals with the inner Spirit. In a debate at the court of king Janaka, Uddalaka Aruni, who, according to his own claims, was a knower of Brahman, asked Yajnavalkya, the greatest philosopher of the Upanisadic period: "Yajnavalkya, speak about the inner Controller"⁸. Yajnavalkya then

⁷ K.Narayana Aiyer, *The thirty-two Vidyas*, Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1975, p.4.

⁸ *BrUp.* III.7.2: *yajnavalkya antaryaminam bruhi /*

enumerates a long list of beings, sentient and non-sentient, and says that Brahman resides in all the entities of the universe as their inner Spirit and life force, but these beings do not know this, and this same Brahman is the innermost Self of the human person. He starts with the earth: "He who dwells in the earth, yet is different from the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, who controls the earth from within, He is your Self, the inner Controller, the Immortal"⁹.

Yajnavalkya then repeats this description, using the same words, with regard to water, fire, mid-space, air, heaven, sun, the quarters of the universe, moon, stars, space, darkness, light, all beings, vital airs, speech, eye, ear, mind, skin, intellect and semen. At the end of each description, the philosopher adds the same sentence, namely, 'this supreme cosmic Spirit is your inner Controller'.

Yajnavalkya concludes this long litany with a beautiful explanation of the nature of the supreme Spirit:

He is not seen, but is the Seer; He is not heard, but is the Hearer; He is not thought of, but is the Thinker; He is not known, but is the Knower. There is no seer other than He, there is no hearer other than He, there is no thinker other than He; there is no knower other than He. He is your Self, the inner Controller, the Immortal. Everything else besides Him is grief-stricken¹⁰.

The Upanisad here states in unambiguous terms that God is the inner Self and inner Controller also of inanimate objects of the cosmos. All the entities endowed with life and life-functions are included in the all-inclusive sweeping statement "all beings". This is followed by the enumeration of the faculties, organs, etc. of the sentient beings like vital breaths, sense organs, mind, etc. One thing is very clear here: the supreme Spirit is present not only in sentient

⁹ *BrUp. III.7.3: yah prthivyam tisthan prthivyah antarah yam prthivi na veda yasya prthivi sariram yah prthivim antaro yamayati esa ta atma antaryamy amrtah //*

¹⁰ *BrUp. III.7.23.*

or animate beings, but also in insentient or inanimate entities. The supreme Spirit is present in the inanimate objects of the world, not only through Its power and knowledge, but also through real presence. This elevates the value and merit of the world of matter. According to this view, there are 'sparks of divinity' also in material objects of the world. Consequently, we need to deal with matter and material elements with care and love. The Jains, the greatest advocates of *ahimsa*, even speak about 'earth souls', 'water souls', 'fire souls', etc. Therefore, in our embodied sojourn and spiritual pilgrimage on earth, our relation with and attitude towards the elemental world and material objects have to be one of respect, love and concern. In Semitic traditions, the spiritual life of a person is two-dimensional: the correct and flawless relation of man with his Maker. In the oriental religions, it is always three-dimensional, namely, man, God and all lives. But in our paradigm here, it is even four-dimensional: man, God, all lives and the world of matter. Evidently, this vision of cosmos, and God as its *Antaryamin*, can inspire positive and creative ecological sensitivity.

6. The Inner Spirit of the Macrocosm and Microcosm as *Ananda* (Pure Bliss)

The *Taittiriya Upanisad* chapters two and three explain this four-dimensional paradigm in a beautiful metaphoric model. The cosmos, which is the attributive body of God, has four concentric sheaths (*kosas*). The outermost sheath is that of inert, imperfect, changeable and non-conscious matter (*anna-maya*). The second sheath is that of life (*prana-maya*). All that has life starting from the vegetation are included in this. These two sheaths are composed of two elements, namely, earth and air. The third sheath is that of senses and mind (*manomaya*). All that has animal life belongs to this sheath. The next sheath is that of consciousness and intelligence (*vijnana-maya*). Human beings, the apex of creation, belong to this category. God the supreme Being is in the centre of all these as their inner Spirit, who is identified here as the supreme pure Bliss (*ananda-maya*). He is the vivifying Spirit and the inspiring force of all these levels of realities. A spiritual aspirant has, by force, to use these sheaths in his bodily existence, but for the sake of the total

liberation, he has to transcend the four sheaths and realize the absolute *Atman* as pure Bliss (*ananda*). We may call it an inclusive transcendence. The cosmos, which is made up of matter, life, senses and intelligence is the macrocosm.

The human person is the microcosm, an harmonious combination of all these sheaths. A person's karmic existence, is composed of matter, life, senses, mind and consciousness and self. And in the centre of, in the innermost self of a person, resides God as inner Controller (*Antaryamin*). Therefore, the structure of the human person, the microcosm, corresponds exactly to the structure of the cosmos, the macrocosm. Indian thinkers went further and said that each part and each member of human body has a corresponding entity or reality in the cosmos. Thus, human breath corresponds to the element wind; the flesh, bone and marrow corresponds to the element earth; the blood corresponds to the element water; the eyes to sun and moon; the ears to the ether; the blood vessels to rivers; the hairs on the body to herbs and trees, etc. As far as I know Indian medicine (*ayurveda*) and astrology take these facts very much into consideration.

The spiritual life of a person consists in this pilgrimage from materiality to pure bliss, which is identified as the supreme Spirit, Brahman. Using, but at the same time transcending the lower sheaths of existence, is the dynamic of this spiritual journey. The pilgrimage of the individual self back to God is involutory movement. The soul by spiritual *sadhanas* sheds all the results of *karma*, and consequently its contacts with matter and material world. A spiritually mature soul transcends its name and bodily form and unites itself with the divine.

7. The Body-Soul Paradigm: Cosmos as the Attributive Body of the Supreme Atman

The concept that cosmos is the attributive body of God is developed and philosophically established, by the Visistadvaita school, the founder of which is Sri Ramanuja. Ramanuja's greatest contribution to Indian thought is his specific conception and vision of the world as God's attributive body and God as the inner Self of the

universe, and that this awareness and confession and a life suited to this awareness is the means for spiritual perfection and final liberation. Like the Advaita of Sankara, Ramanuja also proposed that Reality is one without a second, the Brahman. But unlike Advaita and against the philosophy of Sankara, Ramanuja declared that this one Reality is qualified. Brahman or God possesses auspicious qualities like omniscience, omnipotence, love, mercy, etc. Further, this school of thought taught that the other two eternal realities, namely, individual selves (*cit*) and matter (*acit*) are modes (*prakara*) of Brahman. These inseparable modes of Brahman are together conceived as the body of Brahman. Although the individual selves and matter are true realities, and not illusory as Advaita advocates, they are absolutely dependent on God for their existence and functions and are constantly controlled by God for his own purposes. These two realities may be conceived logically as independent and separate, but existentially and ontologically they are totally dependent on and inseparable from the ultimate Being God. It is like the relation between the human body and soul. The body is totally dependent on the soul for its existence as body and for the bodily functions. Without the soul or self, the body is dead and valueless. In the same way, Brahman is the Self and inner Controller of the individual selves and of the world of matter, both of which together form the attributive body of Brahman. This relationship between cosmos and God is known as the 'body-soul relationship' (*sarira-sariri-bhava*). It would be useful here to recall Ramanuja's definition of body: "Any substance which a conscious self is capable of controlling and supporting for its own purpose, and which stands to the conscious self in an entirely subordinate relation, is the body of that conscious self". (*Sribhasya II.1.9*).

Could the imperfections, impurities, permutations, limitations and finiteness of this attributive body affect the Supreme Atman, who is the inner Soul, and who is all perfection, unchangeable, supreme and infinite? They cannot, because the individual selves and matter form only the attributive body of Brahman and not his real body. The real glorified body of Brahman as well as of the liberated selves are made up of *suddha-sattva*, the eternal, changeless, pure and luminous *sattva* substance constituted of infinite consciousness (knowledge) and

bliss. This real body or form of God is to be explained in terms of transcendence and self-sufficiency. It is this body or divine form that inspires love, admiration and adoration in the hearts of the devotees. It is this form that Arjuna sees in Krsna in Gita chapter XI, which is a symbolic description of the Lord's body. Ramanuja and other theistic Vaisnava saints are never tired of describing the beauty and splendour of this divine form. The changes, impurities, etc. of the attributive body never affect or influence the nature and essence of God, just like the changes of the human body in childhood, youth, old age, etc., and the qualities of the body like colour, health, height, etc., never affect the human self. "In the heart of all beings who constitute My body, I am seated as their Self. To be the Self means that I am entirely their supporter, controller and master"¹¹. Thus, this doctrine of body-soul relation provides a theological structure, which integrates both the non-dualism of Sankara and the Vedanta of difference.

This attributive body of Brahman has two forms, namely, a subtle form and a gross form. In its gross form, this body of Brahman is the effect, that is the cosmos and every entity in the cosmos that we see and experience. The attributive body of God in its subtle form is the cause. In this causal form, the elements of the universe exist in Brahman in their indivisible atomic size as his subtle body. The evolution of Brahman's subtle body into his gross body, that is, the cause becoming effect into different names and forms, is called creation. The dissolution of cosmos is the movement in the reverse order; namely, the gross body of Brahman assumes its subtle state. Therefore, the cosmos, which comprises inanimate matter, animate and conscious beings, in all its states forms the body of God.

God is the creator, sustainer and saviour of the cosmos, which is his own attributive body. As far as the individual conscious selves are concerned, who also form part of the attributive or cosmic body of God, there are two types of movements: one is the evolutionary movement, which is the process of creation. The other is an involutionary movement, which is the return of selves to God in the final and total liberation, which is called the salvation.

¹¹ Ramanuja's commentary on the *Gita* (*Gita-bhasya*), X.20.

It is at the will of God that his subtle body, the causal elements, evolves into different beings and objects of the world. The *Chandogya Upanisad* uses a beautiful simile to explain this creation process. From one and the same lump of clay the potter can make innumerable forms like plates, vases, pitchers, jugs, jars, pots, etc. But the clay, the essence and material cause of all these objects, is the same. Differences are only in names and forms. In the like manner God's attributive body assumes in creation numerous names and forms. But the body is the same. God then allows the individual selves to enter into these objects and animate them. Finally God himself enters into the animated beings as their innermost Self and inner Controller (*Antaryamin*). Thus He is the Self of selves and the Self of all material objects. One should not forget here the vital role the doctrine *karma* plays. The nature, shape and characteristics of the body of an individual self are determined by his past *karmas*.

It is to be stated here that the conception of God as the inner Self of the universe is not Ramanuja's invention. *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad*, as we have already mentioned earlier, very powerfully proclaimed that God is the inner *Atman* of all animate and inanimate beings of the cosmos.

I am tempted to quote a beautiful passage from *Mahabharata* the great Epic poem of India:

The father of all creatures, God, made the sky. From the sky he made water and from water he made fire and air. From fire and air, earth came into existence. Mountains are his bones, earth is the flesh, sea is the blood, the sky is his abdomen. Air is his breath, fire is his splendour, rivers are nerves. The sun and moon, which are called *Agni* and *Soma*, are the eyes of God. The upper part of the sky is his head. *Prithvi* is his feet and directions (*disa*) are the hands¹².

¹² *Mahabharata, Moksadharmaparva*, 182.14-19 in O.P.Dwivedi & B.N.Tiwari, *Environmental Crisis and Hindu Religion*, New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1987, p.126.

Therefore, the teaching that God is the *Antaryamin* of the world of matter, all lives and of the individual selves is part of a very ancient religious tradition and philosophical tenet of India. But Ramanuja went further and said that the fundamental awareness that God is one's inner Self is the beginning of real spiritual life. It is the key to the doors of total liberation. His philosophy and spiritual theology of explaining the cosmos-God relationship with the body-soul paradigm is not just a philosophical or metaphysical or ontological way of understanding the structure of the cosmos. It is a *sadhana*, a spiritual means for liberation. Body-soul doctrine is far more than a mere cosmological metaphor. Rather, Ramanuja sees it as a fundamental model for understanding reality. It is a key, he says, for unlocking the mystery of our existence: As psycho-somatic beings, we are eternally related to the supreme *Atman* in an inseparable bond; we are his body, and he is our inner Self.

8. Further Textual Testimony of the Upanisads

Let me cite some texts from the principal Upanisads, which very clearly proclaim the indwelling presence of God in individual realities.

Verily, He is the indwelling Spirit within all. Fire is His head; the sun and moon are His eyes; the quarters, His ears; the Vedic word is His voice; the wind, His breath; the universe is His heart. The earth originated from His feet (*MuUp.II.1.4*).

Indeed the omnipresent Reality is all this: sacrificial works, ascetical practices, knowledge. O my dear, he who knows this supreme, immortal Being as seated in the cavity of the heart, destroys the knot of ignorance here in this life itself *MuUp. II.1.10*).

In the sky of the heart, which is the luminous city of Brahman, He is established, being clothed in the mind-stuff, and He guides life and body. With his seat in the heart, He lives in the whole body of man. By perfect knowledge of Him, the wise men realize that final state of blissful immortality (*MuUp. II.2.7*).

A wise man renounces both joy and sorrow. By means of contemplation, he realizes the inner Self, that ancient effulgent

Being, hard to be seen, very subtle, immanent, seated in the heart and residing within material body (*KathaUp. II.120*).

The *Atman*, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, dwells in the hearts of creatures. A desireless person, who is free from grief, realizes the glory of *Atman* through purification of his being (senses and mind) (*KathaUp.II.20*).

The self-existent God has created the senses in such a way that they go only outward, and hence man sees only external objects, and not the internal Spirit. But the wise men, who desire to attain immortality, turn their eyes inwards and perceive the inner *Atman* (*KathaUp. IV.1*).

The Self of the size of a thumb dwells within the body. He is the lord of the past and future, and therefore one never needs to fear anything. This verily is that.

This Self of the size of a thumb, the lord of the past and the future, is like a light without smoke. He is indeed, the same today and tomorrow. This is verily that. (*KathaUp. IV.12-13*).

That one supreme Ruler, who is also the inner Self of all beings, who makes His form manifold, those wise men who perceive Him as existing in their own selves, to them belongs the eternal happiness, and to none else (*KathaUp. V.12*).

... he who realizes Him (the supreme Being) as existing in the cave, that is, in the highest space (of the lotus heart), he enjoys all the desires, as the omniscient Brahman. ...(*TaitUp.*) II.1).

This is the lord of all, who is their knower, their inner Controller, their source, their origin and their dissolution (*ManUp. 6*).

Whoever knows that *Sutra* and that inner Controller as above, he is a knower of Brahman, knower of worlds, knower of gods, knower of the Vedas, knower of beings, knower of self and knower of all (*BrUp. III.7.1*).

It is evident, all these, and similar texts, depict the ultimate Reality, the Brahman, who is the cause of all existences, who is the

unifying force and energizing principle of the universe, who is the preserver of all lives and who is the supreme goal of all, as the inner Spirit, the indwelling spiritual power, who inspires and controls the individual selves.

9. God's Descent to His Devotees

Pancaratra Agama is a sacred text of the Vaisnavites. It deals mainly with Visnu and Krsna cults. It, among other things, describes God's approach and relation to his devotees in descending scale.

On the top of the scale is the so-called *Para-Vasudeva*, who is conceived and identified as the Brahman of the Upanisads. But this highest Reality, "who has his abode in the highest heaven, which shines with the splendour of thousand rising suns, whose nature consists of pure consciousness and bliss, who is endowed with the six attributes like omniscience, etc., who is the Lord of the eternal sages ... and who is seated on the body of the divine serpent *Ananta*"¹³, is not an easy object of meditation. This form and this mode of existence of God are not easily accessible and approachable to a devotee. The absolute transcendence of the godhead creates an unbridgeable chasm between God and his worshippers.

The second level of the descent of God is technically called *Vyuha* (group). It has a trinitarian dimension. The same supreme Lord is conceived in three names, namely, Samgharsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha¹⁴. These three personal aspects of the divinity reside in the three worlds called *Amoda*, *Pramoda* and *Sammoda*, and they are responsible for creation, sustenance and destruction. For a devotee, meditation on these forms of God is easier, because these divine persons are more directly involved in the destiny of individual selves and in the modes of existence of the cosmos, and are easily accessible to devotees.

¹³ Sri Varadaguru, *Pratahpathaniya Pancaslōki*, verse 1.

¹⁴ In the Puranic and Epic literature, these three persons are mentioned as close relatives of Krsna. Sangharsana is another name of his brother Balarama, Pradyumna is his son and Aniruddha is his grandson.

Third phase of God's descent consists of his different incarnations, the *avataras* (technically this level of God's manifestation is known as *vibhava*). 'Whenever there is a decline of dharma and an increase of evil in the world, God assumes particular forms and dwells among the people. For the sake of protecting virtuous people, for the sake of destroying the wicked, and for the sake of resuscitating dharma, the Lord takes births again and again'¹⁵. God in his different incarnations is more immanent and closer to humanity and the world. In his mercy and love, God may assume innumerable manifestations. However, only ten incarnations are considered to be of cosmic dimension and of universal importance.

In the fourth level of descent, God is conceived as the inner Spirit and Controller (*Antaryamin*) of all beings. This is the most intimate and immanent form of God's presence in time and place. God dwells in the small space of the lotus heart of devotees. He becomes the Being of their being.

And finally God is present in material objects like idols, images and symbols (*arcavatara*). God takes the form and shape of existence, which human beings want. At their desire and command, God dwells in objects made from metal, stone, wood or any other element, and he remains in the place humans want him, and is always accessible to his devotees irrespective of season, weather and time. God empties himself for the sake of human beings.

A seeker of spiritual perfection and eternal liberation can approach God and meditate on him in any of these manifestations. And, as has already been mentioned, the fourth stage of God's descent is his indwelling presence in individuals. It seems to me that this five-tier conception of the same God for the sake of facilitating meditation on and devotion to him, provides a sound theological

¹⁵ Cf. The *Gita* IV.7-8.

structure for God's involvement in the world, and for our relation to God¹⁶

10. Conclusion

Religion and philosophy in India are, in the final analysis, a spiritual search for the ultimate Truth, eternal Bliss and pure Consciousness. It is an inner quest to experience the true Reality and enjoy permanent bliss in this Reality. It is, therefore, often said, that the starting point of Indian philosophy or spirituality is contemplation of the inner self, and not wonder at the external universe. It is also often stated that Indian philosophy is a search, rather than a research, it is experiential, rather than experimental, it has a synthetic character rather than analytical, it is intuitive, rather than logical, it is also a spiritual act, rather than a mere intellectual exercise, and finally, philosophizing should lead the philosopher to the ultimate goal of human existence, rather than simply to a limited and transient intellectual satisfaction. The underlying dynamic in all these forms of religiosity and spirituality is that the supreme Lord is intimately immanent in a person as inner Self.

¹⁶ In Christian faith and theology too, there are striking parallels to these five levels of God's manifestations. You may conceive God as the eminently transcendent, absolute Reality; God as residing in his eternal abode; God who is not an easy object of meditation. In the second level of descent God is conceived and believed as trinitarian in form: there is only one nature in God, but there are three persons in the same God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. According to Christianity, it might be theologically incorrect to make this distinction between the first and second levels in the conception of God. God, for Christianity is always trinitarian. Still we may logically think of such a possibility. The Father does the work of creation, the Son does the work of redemption and the Holy Spirit does the work of sanctification. At the third level we have the incarnation of God the Son, Jesus Christ. But unlike Hinduism, which believes in the plurality of incarnations of God, Christianity dogmatically believes and categorically teaches that Jesus Christ is the only and unique incarnation. In the fourth level, the same God is also conceived as the indwelling presence. The human body is the temple of God, and God is present in every soul. The Hindu concept of God's last phase of manifestation in a descending scale, is his presence in material objects like, images, idols and symbols. Christianity will never admit such a possibility. However, in the holy Eucharist, God, Jesus Christ, is really present. God takes the form of bread for the sake of his devotees.

TOWARDS THE NEW AGE OF THE SPIRIT

The Old Testament Vision of Society as a Spirit-Energized Movement.

Paul Kalluveetil[♦]

1. Introduction

The Hebrew term *ruah*, which occurs 389 times in the Old Testament (O.T), basically means wind, moving air and breath¹. As breath is the vital element in a living being, it stands for life, dynamism and basic activity of a person. Hence, when we speak of the spirit of God, *ruah* denotes the most important characteristic of the deity. Although the OT speaks of the spirits of humans, animals and supernatural beings, our focus in the study will be on the spirit of God. God has a plan for this cosmos. In that vision this *ruah* plays a vital role. This world, especially human society, in God's design, is intended to become a spirit-energized movement, the orientation of which finds its destination in union with the deity. This article tries to shed light on various phases of the dynamic acts of the divine spirit from creation to new creation².

2. The Spirit Dynamism in God's Vision of Creation

The creation account as narrated in Gen. 1: 1 - 2: 4a was written with the background of the Babylonian epic *enuma elish*³. The Priestly author wanted to provide to the exile people of Israel in Babylon a creation story, matching that of the Babylonians in

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¹ R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "Aruah Geist" in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch Zum Alten Testament*, Vol. II, Col 726-753. The Greek for spirit is *pneuma* see Sjöberg in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VI, pp. 282-289.

² K.D. Schunck, *Wesen and Wirken des Geistes nach dem Alten Testament*, SLAG 18 (1979) pp. 7-30.

³ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, Minneapolis, 1984, pp.74-177.