

LESSON 03

SOUL (ATMA)

When we hear about the soul most of us wonder where it is. The soul is not seen like a chair or car, etc., and because of that many people do not believe in it. They want to believe in things they can see but the same people will believe in the wind which is not seen either but they accept it from the inference of its effects like shaking of leaves on trees, feeling cold breeze or heat waves or tornado, etc.

Where does the soul live? The souls live in the bodies of all the living creatures, like you and me and animals, birds, plants, and insect, etc., as a separate independent entity from the body itself. Many in Western world consider body and soul as the same while most Easterners accept body and soul as two separate independent entities.

More questions arise what is the soul? When was it born? Where did it come from? The soul is substance like matter which is visible substance while soul is invisible substance. All living beings are formed of two things matter and the soul. No one created the soul and it will never be destroyed. It was always there from time immortal and will be there forever. While being in association with karma, it will move on from one living being to other.

This raises question why does soul have to wander like this? The soul was always associated with karma so it was in impure state. Until soul gets free from karma it will have to wander from one body to other staying there for some time.

This raises next question to what happens to the soul at the death of living being. At the time of death, the soul leaves this body just to occupy other body. The soul immediately within the fraction of second occupies next body and is considered reborn there. But when soul frees itself of all karma it leaves last body and reaches Siddhashilla at the top part of universe, abode of pure souls where it resides forever. After this it will never be reborn or associated with any body.

What does soul do? What are its characteristics?

The soul has infinite characteristics. Some of them are infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite power, and infinite bliss. Pure soul is bodiless, free from birth and death and free from passions. All free souls are equal. As mentioned above pure soul has infinite knowledge but that knowledge is hampered by karmas so while in living being it knows but not all. It perceives but not all. It has happiness but it is not permanent and is associated with sufferings.

So as a human being or for that matter all living being when we say I know something it is not the body which knows but it is the soul which knows but it is expressed as if body knows it. Because when person dies it is same body but it ceases to know. Change happened at the time of death is that soul just left.

Because of soul we know, see, feel things, etc.