

3. NON-DUALITY IN DREAMLESS SLEEP

How then do I know that 'all this is the Self'? Here, again, we start with experience, anubhava, a significant experience. It is nothing but our everyday experience of dreamless sleep, suṣupti. We hardly give a thought to the nature of this experience except to say, 'I had a very profound or pleasant sleep'. We dismiss it then and there, and take no more thought of it; but the ṛṣis of old, the seers of the Upaniṣads, considered this experience as a treasure of gold over which we pass up and down everyday of our life without ever suspecting the existence of an invaluable treasure under our feet (*Chānd. U., VIII. 3*). This unique experience is being neglected by us as something of no consequence except for the rest of the body and mind it affords. But to the ṛṣis this experience was of great philosophical significance, and on this has been grounded the saving Truth of Advaita and the reality of the non-dual Brahman.

What then is this experience? What happens to this world and my personality as Mr so-&-so in deep sleep? We say, 'I did not know anything in sleep'. I am now sure that the world of objects including my personality with body, mind and ego was not experienced. Nothing of the dṛśyaprapaṅca, the world of objects of the waking or dream states, was present in my consciousness. Why? Was it that consciousness itself was non-existent in deep sleep? That could not be; for if consciousness were absent, there could not have been now the memory that, 'all this' of the waking state was not experienced then. This is not an inference. If I did not see a lion this morning, but was reminded of this fact when I saw one in the evening, I do not say that I 'inferred' that I had not seen the lion in the morning. It was a fact of experience. But then,

I existed in the morning and I know it from memory, so that I can now vouch for the fact that I did not then see the lion, though I had not the idea then that I was not seeing the lion; (for to have such an experience, no idea is necessary). Thus then, my existence as consciousness in deep sleep could not be doubted. *na hi vijñātur vijñāter viparilopo vidyate (Br. U.)*. It is that consciousness that is now bearing witness to the fact that this world was not experienced. What could be the reason for it? Shall we suppose that a screen of ignorance, avidyā invaded my consciousness and so the world of non-Self was hidden from my consciousness? That cannot be; for, if the screen of ignorance were present, it should have been known to consciousness as present before it as a second entity other than itself. (If I do not see an object before me on account of a screen, I cannot avoid seeing the screen itself.) But this is contradicted by our experience, of which we say, 'I did not see anything'. If ignorance were present as an object, our verdict would be, 'I knew ignorance in deep sleep'; but this nobody says. And if I knew a second entity, then I must have been waking or dreaming. In these states we experience ignorance, but certainly not in deep sleep in which no object, gross or subtle, dark or white, is experienced, as different from the Self.

Where then was this world? Was it remaining in some subtle state, say, like a tree in a seed? If it were, then, it could have been witnessed by the ever-present consciousness. Whoever hath seen the world-seed in dreamless sleep? We say, 'I knew nothing in deep sleep'. Therefore, the fact that nothing other than the Self existed in *suṣupti* is an incontrovertible conclusion. 'There the seer alone existed, one without a second, like one mass of water.'¹

¹ *salila eko draṣṭā advaito bhavati (Br. U., IV. iii. 32)*.

Where then was this world? The seers of the Upaniṣads say that the world existed then as non-different from the Self. To see another, to know another, there must be that second entity. Without a second entity beside itself, how can the Self know it? If then the world was not seen by the Self, that was because the world remained as the Self. The reasoning is clear and simple. This second process is known as anvayin or the synthetic process.

Was not the world then the Self in the previous waking state? And is not the world even now, in this waking state, the Self? Is not the world always the ātman? Yes, it is so. All this is always ātman: *atmai've'dam sarvam*. All this is Brahman: *sarvam khalvidam brahma*. There are not many here: *ne'ha nānā'sti kiñcana*. There is only one without a second: *ekam evādvitīyam brahma*. The whole universe, therefore, is nothing but pure consciousness, cit, the Self that 'I am'. We have answered the second question: What is this world? This realization known as sarvātmabhāva is the supreme goal of Vedāntic investigation and attainment, the highest state of freedom, fearlessness, desirelessness and bliss. This is the realization of Brahman, brahmajñāna.