

श्रीगुरुभुजंगस्तोत्रम् ॥
A Stotra on Adi Sankaracharya
Commentary by P. R. Kannan

Introduction

This Stotra is composed on Sri Adi Sankaracharya; its author is not known. It is unique in that it has been made as an erudite summary of all the essential principles of Advaita Vedanta. Puja Sri Kumbakonam Swamiji (Sri Atmabodhatirtha Swamiji) discovered this text, published in 1925, together with a brief Tamil translation by Sri Brahmananda Swamigal of Thanjavur.

Advaita Vedanta was established by Adi Sankaracharya as the ultimate Truth, which a human being should realize in his lifetime. He wrote authoritative commentaries of Prasthanatrayi – the three fundamental canonical texts of Sanatana Dharma – Upanishads, Brahma Sutra of Veda Vyasa and Bhagavad Gita. He thus put Advaita Vedanta on an unassailable pedestal. Advaita has since then come to be accepted by all seekers in all parts of the world as the summum bonum of human pursuit.

Adi Sankara proved by logic derived on Vedic authority that Brahman is unitary and the only Truth; all else is false appearance. He made a telling statement summarizing the essence of Advaita:

श्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि किमर्थं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ।

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥

“Let me bring out the Truth in half a verse; where is the need for crores of texts. Brahman is Truth; Jagat (the created universe) is a false appearance; Jiva (the embodied soul) is none other than Brahman.” Sri Gurubhujanga Stotram covers all the theory of Advaita in a very crisp and concise manner – Maya, Vivartavada, examples of rope appearing as snake etc., Gnana alone (and not Karma) being efficient in attaining Liberation, Gnanamarga consisting of Sravana (listening to Mahavakyas of Upanishads from Guru), Manana (cogitation of the teachings, clearing of doubts with Guru and being sure of the purport) and Nididhyasana (deep contemplation of the teaching resulting in complete assimilation), status of Jiva and Jagat, and Jivanmukti (Liberation while in this body).

The unique Stotra format, in which the teachings are brought out, holds the reader's interest in an unparalleled intensity. The Stotra praises Adi Sankaracharya as none other than the Brahman of Advaita Vedanta, having assumed human form out of compassion in order to pull people out of the morass of Samsara. Viewed that way, this Stotra is a beautiful elaboration of the well known verse on Adi Sankaracharya:

अज्ञानान्तर्गहन-पतितान्-आत्मविद्योपदेशैः
त्रातुं लोकान् भवदवशिखा-तापपापच्यमानान् ।
त्यक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनो मूलतो निस्सरन्ती
शम्भोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा ॥

“The very form of Siva (Dakshinamurthy) emerged from the foot of the banyan tree, abandoning silence, in order to save the worlds, fallen into the deep forests of Agnana (ignorance) and being roasted in the terrible fire of Samsara, through the teachings of Atman. That form is moving about in the world in the form of Sankaracharya.”

Let us remember the well laid path of Adi Sankaracharya for humans to attain Atmagnana. The path consists of performing one's Svadharma (duties of varna and asrama) properly with the constant attitude of surrender of fruits of karma to Iswara with no sense of doership; this will develop devotion and love for Iswara and corresponding distaste and dispassion for Samsara; this will lead to Grace of Guru and Iswara and dawn of Atmagnana and Liberation.

श्रीगुरुभुजंगस्तोत्रम् ॥

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सदेकं परं केवलं निर्विकारं निराकारमानन्दमात्रं पवित्रम् ।

स्वयंज्योतिरव्यक्तमाकाशकल्पं श्रुतिर्ब्रह्म यत्प्राह तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १ ॥

Sruti (Veda) describes Brahman as ever-existent, unique, the highest, alone, changeless, formless, only bliss, pure, self-luminescent, indescribable and like space (omnipresent). Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (1)

Mundaka Upanishad says:

यत्तद्-अद्वैतं-अग्राह्यं-अगोत्रं-अवर्णं- अचक्षुःश्रोत्रं- तद्-अपाणिपादम् ।

नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तद्-अव्ययं तद्-भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ (१.१.६)

“The wise realize everywhere that which cannot be perceived and grasped; which is without source, features, eyes and ears; which has no hands nor feet; which is eternal, multiformed, all-pervasive, extremely subtle, and undiminishing; and which is the source of all.” (1.1.6). Sruti also describes Brahman as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) in many places.

य एकोऽपि मायावशात्सर्वहेतुः स्वसृष्टेषु विश्वेषु विष्वक्प्रवेशात् ।

श्रुतौ जीव इत्युच्यते केवलात्मा तुरीयाय शुद्धाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २ ॥

Though that Atman is alone and unique, it is the cause of all objects because of Maya; as it enters all objects uniformly in creation, it is called Jiva in Sruti (Veda). Obeisance to you, who are that Turiya and pure Atman. (2)

Maya is the inseparable Power of Atman. This Power of Great Delusion projects a false world of objects and experiences. Atman enters, as it were, all objects in the created world. There is no Time or Space where Atman is not present. But Maya being Trigunatmika - consisting of Satva (virtuousness), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (lethargy), there is unending variety in created objects, depending on the proportion of the three Gunas or attributes. Jiva

is the living entity with consciousness in this creation. Jiva is the reflection of Atman in the Malina (stained- with Rajas and Tamas) aspect of Maya. Reflected image appears stained. But in essence Jiva is no different from Atman. Turiya means the fourth. It refers to the fourth state of Brahman, the state of Pure Awareness, beyond the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, the three states common to all Jivas. Taittiriya Upanishad says:

सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति । स तपोऽतप्यत । स तपस्तस्वा । इदं सर्वमसृजत ।
यदिदं किञ्च । तत्सृष्ट्वा । तदेवानुप्राविशत् । तदनुप्रविश्य । सच्च त्यच्चाभवत् । निरुक्तं
चानिरुक्तं च । निलयनं चानिलयनं च । विज्ञानं चाविज्ञानं च । सत्यं चानृतं च
सत्यमभवत् । यदिदं किञ्च । (२.६.१)

“He (Brahman) wished: ‘Let me be many, let me be born. He undertook a deliberation. Having deliberated, he created all this that exists. Having created, Brahman entered into that very thing. And having entered there, he became the formed and the formless, the defined and the undefined, the sustaining and the non-sustaining, the sentient and the insentient, the true and the untrue. Truth became all this that there is.” (2.6.1)

न यस्मादिह द्रष्टृ विज्ञातृ चान्यत्क्वचित्स्यात्परं द्रष्टृ विज्ञातृ वा यत् ।

समस्तासु बुद्धिष्वनुस्यूतमेकं नमो ब्रह्मणे जीवरूपाय तस्मै ॥ ३ ॥

Brahman is indeed non-different from the seer and the knower anywhere; or, it is the highest seer and knower. It has pervaded all intellects (of all creatures) in the form of Jiva. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (3)

In the previous verse it was taught that Brahman has entered and pervaded all individual Jivas. Here it is clarified that it is Brahman who is the real power behind various organs in the human body, which makes them function. Brahman is the power of the intellect, mind, sense-organs and organs of action in the body. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states:

अदृष्टो द्रष्टा, अश्रुतः श्रोता, अमतो मन्ता, अविज्ञातो विज्ञाता; नान्योऽतोऽस्ति द्रष्टा,
नान्योऽतोऽस्ति श्रोता, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति मन्ता, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति विज्ञाता, एष त
आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः, अतोऽन्यदार्तम् ॥ (३.७.२३)

“He is never seen; but is the Seer. He is never heard; but is the Hearer. He is never thought of; but is the Thinker. He is never known; but is the Knower. There is no other Seer than He; there is no other Hearer than He; there is no other Thinker than he; there is no other Knower than he. He is the inner controller- your own Atman and immortal. All else but he is perishable.” (3.7.23)

मुखाद्दर्पणे दृश्यमानो न भिन्नो मुखाभास एवं चिदाभास ईशः ।

चितो नैव भिन्नोऽस्ति मायास्थितो यः परेशाय तस्मै नमः केवलाय ॥ ४ ॥

The reflected image of the face seen in the mirror is not different from the face itself. Similarly Iswara, who is the reflected image of Chit, the unique Awareness in the mirror of Maya, is no different from Brahman. Obeisance to you, who are that supreme Iswara. (4)

Here the subject of Iswara is introduced. Iswara is the reflected image of Brahman in Maya. Maya is the indivisible power of Brahman, the power of delusion; it has three constituents - Satva (tranquility and harmony), Rajas (action, desire, anger etc.) and Tamas (lethargy, violence etc.). Iswara is the reflected image of Brahman in Suddha Satva (purest Satva) aspect of Maya. Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Sadachara’:

कार्यकारणवाच्यांशौ जीवेशौ यौ जहच्च तौ ।

अजहच्च तयोर्लक्ष्यौ चिदंशावेकरूपिणौ ॥ (२६)

“The cause-and-effect relationship between Iswara and the Jiva, which is indicated according to the direct word meaning, should be discarded, and the implied meaning of the two, i.e. that both are of the nature of Consciousness, should be retained (in arriving at the identity between the Jiva and Iswara).” (26)

Brahman is Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence-Awareness-Bliss. Brahman alone exists at all places and times; Brahman is all Awareness, Gnana; Brahman is all Bliss, Ananda. Whenever Chit (Awareness) is mentioned here, the reference is to Brahman alone. Chit is mentioned only to invite our attention to the Awareness aspect.

यथा सूर्य एकः स्थितस्तोयपात्रेष्वनेकेषु यो निर्विकारस्तथात्मा ।

स्थितः स्वीयबुद्धिष्वनेकासु नित्यश्चिदेकस्वरूपाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ५ ॥

Surya is one; though his reflected images in many reservoirs of water are many, he is changeless. Similarly, Atman, who is the Pure Awareness, though present in many intellects created by himself, is eternal. To you, who are that Atman of Pure Awareness, my obeisance. (5)

Atman guides the intellect and mind and other organs, himself remaining in the body as pure and changeless. Surya appears to be clean, dirty, wavy, flowing etc. in different waters, depending on the condition of water; but the original Surya in the sky as well as the image are unaffected by the condition of water. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

केनापि मृद्भिन्नतया स्वरूपं घटस्य संदर्शयितुं न शक्यते ।

अतो घटः कल्पित एव मोहान्मृदेव सत्यं परमार्थभूतम् ॥ (२३१)

“No one can show by demonstration that the essence of a mud-pot is other than the mud. Therefore the pot is merely imagined through delusion, and the mud-aspect alone is the enduring Reality in the mud- pot.” (231)

स्थितोऽनेकबुद्धिष्वयं जीव एको विभुः कारणैकत्वतो नात्र नाना ।

इति त्यक्तसर्वैषणापीह यस्य प्रसादाद्विजानन्ति तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ६ ॥

This Jiva, existing in many intellects, is indeed one and omnipresent. As the cause is one, there is no (real) multiplicity here (in creation). Those, who have got rid of all desires (Eshanas), realize this truth owing to your grace. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (6)

Strong Eshanas (yearnings) are threefold as per Sastras – Putraishana (desire for son), Vittaishana (desire for wealth) and Lokaishana (desire for Svarga after death) (vide Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.5.1). These Eshanas bind the jiva to samsara; hence they have to be given up.

The experience of difference among various jivas and consequent multiplicity of jivas arises owing to the mind's attachment to various mundane objects. One, who has overcome these

attachments in entirety through viveka, discrimination, does not find different jivas, but experiences all jivas as the manifestation of one Brahman. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states:

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुत इति ॥

तद्यथाहिनिर्ल्यवनी वल्मीके मृता प्रत्यस्ता शयीत, एवमेवेदं शरीरं शेते,

अथायमशरीरोऽमृतः प्राणो ब्रह्मैव तेज एव ॥ (४.४.७)

“When all the desires that abide in the intellect of a man have totally left, then the mortal man becomes immortal and realizes Brahman in this very body. Just as the lifeless slough of a snake lies cast off in the ant-hill (etc.), even so lies this body. Then the Atman becomes disembodied and immortal, the Paramatman, Brahman, the Light of Pure Awareness.”

(4.4.7)

मुखैः पञ्चभिर्भोग्यवस्तूनि भुङ्क्ते ह्यभोक्तापि बुद्धिस्थितो बुद्धितुल्यः ।

करोतीव कर्माण्यकर्मापि यो वै विचित्राय तस्मै नमस्तेऽस्तु नित्यम् ॥ ७ ॥

You are strangely wonderful in that though you are not an enjoyer, you enjoy objects of enjoyment through the five sense-organs; and though you are not a doer, you act, seated in intellect and being equal to intellect. To you, my constant obeisance. (7)

Though Jivatma, being non-different from Brahman, has no role to play in sense experiences, he appears to be active enjoyer and doer, because of the mind not cognizing the truth of Jivatma, but getting deluded that Jivatma is indeed the mind. In truth Jivatma is only Witness of mind, intellect and sense organs.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

देहेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धि-प्रकृतिभ्यो विलक्षणम् ।

तद्वृत्तिसाक्षिणं विद्यादात्मानं राजवत्सदा ॥ (१८)

"One should understand that Atman is always like the king, distinct from the body, sense organs, mind and intellect, all of which constitute Prakriti (insentient matter); and is the Witness of their functions." (18)

He gives several examples for the common misunderstanding of Atman being doer or enjoyer, like the moon appearing to be moving when the clouds move in the sky; the sky appearing blue etc.

चिदाभास एवात्र कर्तेव भाति स्वरूपापरिज्ञानतो यस्य नूनम् ।

स्वबुद्धेरियं कर्तृभोक्तृत्वरूपा मृषा संसृतिर्वै नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ८ ॥

By non-cognisance of your real form, the reflected image of Chit (Awareness) shines here as if he is doer. Through your intellect, this false Samsara (ever changing world of births and deaths) of the form of doer and enjoyer has emerged. Obeisance to you. (8)

When there is only One without a second, there cannot be a doer and enjoyer. Hence this Samsara is totally false; it has no real existence. It was created in the intellect of Atman. It exists in the mind of living beings.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

ज्ञाता मनोऽहङ्कृति-विक्रियाणां देहेन्द्रिय-प्राणकृत-क्रियाणाम् ।

अयोऽग्निवत्-तान्-अनुवर्तमानो न चेष्टते नो विकरोति किञ्चन ॥ (१३५)

"The knower of the modifications of the mind and the ego, and the activities of the body, the sense-organs and vital breath, is Atman, which apparently takes their forms like the fire in a ball of iron, and which neither acts nor changes in the least." (135)

चिदाभासचैतन्यबुद्धीर्विविच्यात्र विज्ञाय संसारबन्धाद्विमुक्तः ।

य एतद्विवेकावधिं स्वस्य मेने समस्तं च संसारमस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ९ ॥

You are rid of the bondage of Samsara by analyzing and knowing the intellects of the reflected image of Awareness, and applying the intelligence to act. You define the entire Samsara as the limit of your own discriminating power. Obeisance to you. (9)

The discriminating intellect finds that Samsara does not exist in truth, but it is only a figment of imagination of the mind. Samsara is indeed the ultimate test of one's discriminating power. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

एवं निरन्तराभ्यस्ता ब्रह्मैवास्मीति वासना ।
हरत्यविद्या-विक्षेपान् रोगानिव रसायनम् ॥ (३७)

"The impression 'I am Brahman' thus created by constant practice destroys ignorance, and the agitation caused by it, just as medicine destroys disease." (37)

न कस्यापि संसारलेशोऽस्ति कश्चित्स कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वरूपो हि मिथ्या ।
समस्तोऽप्ययं यत्स्वरूपाविवेकान्नमस्ते सदा नित्यमुक्ताय तस्मै ॥ १० ॥

To you there is no trace of Samsara, and the form of doership and enjoyership is false. This entire world exists only because of non-discriminating ignorance of your true form. Obeisance to you, who are ever liberated. (10)

Sri Ramana Maharishi taught repeatedly that this Samsara exists only in the mind. As it vanishes entirely in deep sleep state, it has no real existence. By Atma- Vichara, Self-Enquiry, by continuous Enquiry of 'Who am I', one has to preclude extraneous thoughts of Samsara and go to the root of all thoughts and experience the Atman.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

तदात्मानात्मनोः सम्यग्विवेकेनैव सिध्यति ।
ततो विवेकः कर्तव्यः प्रत्यगात्मासदात्मनोः ॥ (२०५)

"This realization comes only through right discrimination made between Atman and Anatman (non-Atman). That is why one must try to discriminate between the indwelling Atman and false Atman (mind appearing as Atman)." (205)

जडा बुद्धिरात्मा परो निर्विकारश्चिदाभास एकोऽपि मिथ्यैव जीवः ।

य एतद्विवेकी स्वतो नित्यमुक्तः सदा निर्विकाराय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ११ ॥

The intellect is insentient; Atman is different from it (it is Awareness) and changeless. Though the reflected image of Awareness is only one (in all bodies), Jiva is indeed false. One, who realizes this through discrimination, is ever liberated by nature. Obeisance to you, who are ever changeless. (11)

Vedanta takes the disciple gradually through ascending steps of knowledge to higher and higher truths. The ultimate Truth is that Brahman alone is true; Jivas and Samsara are all false. One, who has experienced this, stands ever liberated from the clutches of Samsara. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

जगद्विलक्षणं ब्रह्म ब्रह्मणोऽन्यन्न किञ्चन ।

ब्रह्मान्यद्भाति चेन्मिथ्या यथा मरुमरीचिका ॥ (६३)

“Brahman is other than the universe. There exists nothing that is not Brahman. If any object other than Brahman appears to exist, it is unreal like the mirage.” (63)

चिदाभास एकोऽव्ययः कारणस्थो य ईशः स एवेह कार्यस्थितः सन् ।

अभूज्जीवसंज्ञः स एको हि जीवः स भिन्नो न यस्मान्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ १२ ॥

The reflected image of Awareness is indeed unique and undiminishing; he is Iswara, the cause. He alone is known by the name of Jiva and is associated with actions. He is not different from you. Obeisance to you, who are that Iswara. (12)

Here it is emphasized that Brahman, Iswara and Jivatma are one and the same. Iswara and Jiva are just reflected images of Brahman in varying types of Maya. Iswara is the reflection in Sudha Satva aspect of Maya, whereas Jiva is the reflection in Malina (impure) Satva. Atman is also another name of Brahman.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

स्वयं-अन्तर्बहिर्-व्याप्य भासयन्नखिलं जगत् ।

ब्रह्म प्रकाशते वह्नि-प्रतप्तायस-पिण्डवत् ॥ (६२)

"Pervading the entire universe outwardly and inwardly, Brahman shines like a red-hot iron ball heated in fire." (62)

यदज्ञानतो जीवनात्त्वमाहुर्महामायया मोहिता वाददक्षाः ।

विवेकी वदत्येकमेवात्र जीवं परित्यक्तवादो नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ १३ ॥

Through ignorance of Atman, those proficient in debate maintain the multiplicity of jivas, being deluded by Mahamaya. One, who is discriminate and has abandoned debate, accepts only one Jiva here. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (13)

Mere intellectual debate does not lead one to Truth. Debate, guided by humility, and enjoying the grace of Iswara and Guru, will alone reveal the Truth. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

अहमोऽत्यन्त-निवृत्त्या तत्कृत-नानाविकल्प-संहृत्या ।

प्रत्यक्-तत्त्व-विवेकाद्-अयं-अहमस्मीति विन्दते तत्त्वम् ॥ (३०४)

"By the complete cessation of the ego-sense, gained by restraining the diverse mental waves, created by the ego itself, and through discrimination of the indwelling Reality, one experiences Reality as 'I am this'. (304)

चिदाभास एकोऽथवा नेति सर्वे विमुह्यन्ति वेदान्तिनोऽप्यन्यभक्ताः ।

तथाप्येक एवेति धीदार्यदाता य आत्मा स्वभक्तस्य तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १४ ॥

Even Vedantis, who are devoted to other ideas, get deluded as to whether the reflected image of Awareness is only one or not. It is Atman who bestows firmness of intellect on his devotee that Atman is only one. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (14)

Here the necessity of Grace of Atman is brought out. Atman's grace is secured only through constant efforts at discrimination and the blessings of Guru. One has to concentrate on the Truth without getting distracted by a host of contradictory elucidations of principles. Kathopanishad states:

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तन्नूस्वाम् ॥ (१.२.२३)

“Atman is not attained through discourses, or through intellectuality, or through much learning. It is gained only by him who longs for it with the whole heart. For, to such a one, Atman reveals its own nature.” (I.2.23)

मुखादर्शयोरेक एवैकतायां मुखाभास एवं चिदाभास एकः ।

स्वचिद्ब्रह्मबिम्बैक्यमायैक्यतोऽयं यदंशोऽखिलेशो नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ १५ ॥

Like the reflected image of the same face in many mirrors being the same, the image of Brahman of Awareness in many projections of the same Maya (equivalent to mirror) is the same. The image of Awareness, who is also the Iswara of all worlds, is only one. Obeisance to you, who are that Awareness. (15)

Brahman and Maya (which is the inherent power of Brahman), and Iswara, who is the reflected image of Brahman in Maya are one and the same; this is the intent.

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Tatvabodha’:

एवं उपाधिभेदात् जीवेश्वर-भेद-दृष्टिः यावत्पर्यन्तं तिष्ठति

तावत्पर्यन्तं जन्म-मरणादिरूप-संसारो न निवर्तते ।

तस्मात्-कारणान्न जीवेश्वरयोर्-भेदबुद्धिः स्वीकार्या ।

“So long as the notion, which arises due to difference in the conditionings, that Jiva and Iswara are different, remains, until such time, there is no redemption from Samsara, which is of the form of repeated birth, death etc. Hence the notion that Jiva is different from Iswara should not be accepted.”

श्रुतिर्होक्तां ब्रह्मणो वक्ति नूनं सजातीयभेदादिशून्यं ततोऽत्र ।

स्वमायैकतास्य युक्त्यापि सिद्धा नमस्ते सदैकस्वरूपाय तस्मै ॥ १६ ॥

Sruti (Veda) declares the unitary nature of Brahman, devoid of differences like Sajatiya. Hence it is established even through logic that the Maya of Brahman is also only one. Obeisance to you, who are that eternal unitary form. (16)

Even while considering a single tree, there are differences between its various parts like roots, trunk, branch, leaves etc. This type of difference is known in Vedanta as Sajatiya bheda. In a garden, there are different types of trees like bilva, mango etc. This difference is known as Vijatiya bheda. Here it is brought out that such Sajatiya or Vijatiya bhedas do not exist in Brahman. Hence there are again no real differences in Maya also, Maya being the inherent, inseparable power of Brahman.

Adi Sankaracharya exclaims in 'Viveka Chudamami':

भानुनेव जगत्सर्वं भासते यस्य तेजसा ।

अनात्मकं-असत्-तुच्छं किं नु तस्यावभासकम् ॥ (५३४)

“What indeed can manifest That, whose effulgence, like Surya, causes the entire fallacious, unreal and unimportant universe to appear at all?” (534)

न मायाबहुत्वं तदा तत्प्रतिष्ठा अनेकेश्वराः सम्भवेयुर्हि नैतत् ।

क्वचिद्युज्यते यस्य मायाप्यनेका नमस्ते जगद्धेतुभूताय तस्मै ॥ १७ ॥

Maya is not manifold; if it were so, many Iswaras will result; this is not the case. It is also not proper to consider many Mayas. Obeisance to you, who are that cause of the created universe. (17)

Sruti declares in many places that there is only one Iswara. Hence Maya is also only one.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

अव्यक्तनाम्नी परमेशशक्तिर्-अनाद्यविद्या त्रिगुणात्मिका परा ।

कार्यानुमेया सुधियैव माया यया जगत्-सर्वमिदं प्रसूयते ॥ (१०८)

“Maya is Nescience (Avidya), also called the Unmanifest (Avyakta); it is the power of the Supreme Iswara. It is beginningless; it comprises the three attributes (Satva, Rajas and Tamas) and is superior to their effects. It is to be inferred only by one, who has a clear intellect, from the effects it produces. It is this Avidya, which projects the entire universe.” (108)

न मायां विना यस्य कर्तृत्वमस्ति प्रवेशोऽपि तस्मात्समस्तं मृषैव ।

महामायिने निर्विकाराय तस्मै नमो ब्रह्मरूपाय शुद्धाय तुभ्यम् ॥ १८ ॥

Without Maya, there is no doership and entry (and pervasiveness) for Brahman. Therefore all (that is seen and experienced) is only unreal. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, wielder of that Mahamaya, free from modification, and ever pure. (18)

As Brahman does not act, the universe is the exclusive creation of Maya in the presence of Brahman. Hence all that is seen and experienced in the universe is nothing but unreal superimposition on the real Brahman.

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

शुद्धाद्वय-ब्रह्म-विबोधनाश्या सर्प-भ्रमो रज्जु-विवेकतो यथा ।

रजस्तमःसत्त्वमिति प्रसिद्धा गुणास्तदीयाः प्रथितैः स्वकार्यैः ॥ (११०)

“By realization of the pure, non-dual Brahman, Maya can be destroyed, just as the illusion of the snake is removed by the discriminative knowledge of the rope. Its attributes are Rajas, Tamas and Satva, distinguished by their respective functions.” (110)

य आत्मा दृगेवाऽऽस दृश्यं त्वनात्मा विवेकाहूयोरात्मदृष्टिः सदृश्ये ।

विनष्टो भवेस्सा दृशि स्वस्वरूपे नमस्ते दृगात्मस्वरूपाय तस्मै ॥ १९ ॥

Atman has always been the seer; that which is seen is Anatman (non-Atma). By use of discrimination, the experience of Atman is obtained. Anatman is destroyed in (the

experience of) the true form of the seer, Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the seer. (19)

Drig-Drisyā Viveka (discrimination of Seer and the Seen) is a common subject of interest in Vedānta. The very first verse in the book “Drik-Drisyā-Viveka” states:

रूपं दृश्यं लोचनं दृक् तद्दृश्यं दृक्तु मानसम् ।

दृश्या धीवृत्तयस्साक्षी दृगेव न तु दृश्यते ॥ (१)

“The form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. The eye is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness (Atman) is verily the perceiver. But the Witness is not perceived (by any other).” (1)

स दृग्निर्विकारः स्वमाया जडेयं दृगाभास एको मृषैवेति यस्य ।

जगत्कर्तृता तात्त्विकी नास्ति तस्मै नमः केवलाकर्तृरूपाय तुभ्यम् ॥ २० ॥

That seer is changeless; his Maya, which is this (world) is insentient. For the seer, the reflected image of seer is indeed false. For the seer, the act of creation of the universe is not true at all. Obeisance to you, who are that unitary non-acting seer. (20)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।

हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥ (९.१०)

“Under my supervision, Prakriti (Maya, nature) produces the moving and the non-moving objects; because of this, O Kaunteya, the universe keeps revolving.” (9.10)

अमाय्येव मायी विभुः शुद्ध आत्मा सृजत्यत्यवत्येतदानन्दपूरः ।

न मायां विना स्रष्टृता साक्षिता वा विशुद्धात्मनो यस्य तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २१ ॥

This omnipresent pure Atman, who is full of Bliss, wields Maya, does creation, protection and destruction (of the world) as if he were not using Maya. Without Maya, there is no act of

creation or being witness (to the acts of created beings). Obeisance to you, who are that ever pure Atman. (21)

Maya is the indefinable power by which Brahman, while remaining himself changeless, appears as the changing universe. Svetasvatara Upanishad declares:

अस्मान् मायी सृजते विश्वमेतत्-
तस्मिंश्चान्यो मायया सन्निरुद्धः ॥ (४.९)

“The ruler of Maya projects this universe. And because of Maya he (Atman) becomes bound in it as a separate entity, as it were.” (4.9)

चिदाभास एवाखिलोपाधिनिष्ठः समस्तैकसाक्षी स जीवेशसंज्ञः ।

चिदंशोऽखिलात्मा न भिन्नोऽस्ति यस्मान्नमस्ते विशुद्धात्मरूपाय तस्मै ॥ २२ ॥

The reflected image of Awareness possesses all attributes and is the only witness to all acts. He is known by the names of Jiva and Iswara. He is indeed part of Awareness and the Atman in all beings. Obeisance to you, who are that ever pure Atman, non-different from Jiva or Iswara. (22)

The ever pure Atman is attributeless and actionless. With the help of his innate power of Maya, he assumes attributes (like compassion) and performs actions. Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

सर्वोपाधिविनिर्मुक्तं सच्चिदानन्दमद्वयम् ।

भावयात्मानमात्मस्थं न भूयः कल्पसेऽध्वने ॥ (४१३)

“Meditate in your own Self the Atman, free from all conditionings, non-dual, of the form of Bliss; you will not again get caught in the wheel of Samsara.” (413)

अहं सच्चिदानन्द आत्मैव शुद्धो विमुक्तोऽस्मि वेदान्तवाक्यार्थबोधात् ।

इति स्वस्वरूपं विजानाति विद्वान्परं यत्परेभ्योऽपि तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २३ ॥

The wise man knows his true form by knowledge of the true intent of the statements of Vedanta and realizes that he is indeed Atman, Existence-Awareness-Bliss, ever pure and ever liberated. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, higher than the highest. (23)

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

बाह्यानित्यसुखासक्तिं हित्वाऽत्मसुखनिर्वृतः ।
घटस्थदीपवत्स्वस्थः स्वान्तरेव प्रकाशते ॥ (५१)

“The self-abiding Liberated person, relinquishing all his attachments to the illusory external happiness, and satisfied with the Bliss derived from Atman, shines inwardly like a lamp placed inside a jar.” (51)

स्वमायापरिभ्रान्तचित्ता अजस्रं पराग्वस्तु पश्यन्ति न प्रत्यगर्थम् ।

मुमुक्षुस्तु यं पश्यति प्रत्यगर्थं परब्रह्मरूपाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २४ ॥

Those, whose minds are deluded by their own innate Maya, constantly see outside objects; not the inner latent Power. One, who is intent on Liberation, sees that inner latent Power. Obeisance to you, who are that Supreme Brahman. (24).

Kathopanishad declares:

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्-पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्वीरः प्रत्यगात्मानं-ऐक्षदावृत्तचक्षुर्-अमृतत्वं-इच्छन् ॥

“The self-existent Brahman has rendered the senses defective such that they go outward, and hence man sees the external and not the internal Atman. Only, perchance some wise man desirous of immortality turns his eyes inward and beholds the inner Atman.”(II.1.1)

उपास्योऽन्य ईशोऽस्त्यहं त्वन्य ईशात्पशुर्वेद नैनं भजत्यत्र योऽस्मात् ।

विवेकी स एवाहमस्मीत्युपास्ते यमात्मानमीशं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ २५ ॥

One, who is bound, identifies Iswara, whom he worships, and himself as different entities. The discriminating person does not think of Iswara in this manner; he worships Iswara with the realization that he, the Atman, is indeed Iswara. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (25).

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Sadachara':

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तो देही देवो निरञ्जनः ।

अर्चितः सर्वभावेन स्वानुभूत्या विराजते ॥ (१३)

“The body is said to be the temple of Iswara; the pure embodied Atman is Iswara. When Atman is experienced as pervading everything that exists, that is worship.” (13)

भयं भेददृष्टेर्भवत्युल्बणं वै महान्तो न भेदं प्रपश्यन्ति तस्मात् ।

यदज्ञानतो दृश्यते भेद एवं भिदामोहहन्त्रे नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ २६ ॥

Strong fear is generated by the vision of difference. Hence great men do not see difference. Obeisance to you, who are that destroyer of delusion arising out of difference, whose ignorance leads to the vision of difference. (26)

Gnanis see the entire creation as the manifestation of the one Atman; as they do not see 'the other', they have no fear. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states 'द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति'

(1.4.2). Isa Upanishad says:

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ (७)

“When, to the man of Self-Realisation, all beings become the very Atman, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?” (7)

विरिञ्चेन्द्रसूर्याग्निरुद्रेन्दुविष्णुन्प्रकल्प्यैक एवाद्वयः सर्वसाक्षी ।

जगच्चक्रविभ्रान्तिकर्ता य आत्मा न दृश्येत केनापि तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २७ ॥

Atman creates Brahma, Indra, Surya, Agni, Rudra, Chandra, Vishnu and others; but remains non-dual and witness of all, and rotates the wheel of Jagat, the created universe. But he is not seen by anyone. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (27)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥ (१८.६१)

“Arjuna! Iswara is seated in the hearts of all beings. Through Maya he causes them all to revolve, as though they are mounted on a machine.” (18.61)

जगज्जाग्रति स्थूलमेतत्समानं मनोवासितं स्वप्न आनन्दनिद्राम् ।

सुषुप्तौ स्वमेवाभिपश्यन्मुदास्ते तुरीयो य आत्मा नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ २८ ॥

Atman witnesses the gross world in waking state; the world equal to this, created out of mental tendencies, while in dream state; enjoyable sleep during the state of deep sleep. Atman is ever blissful and is itself Turiya, the fourth (beyond the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep). Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (28)

Vedanta states that the gross body is active while awake, the subtle body in dream state and the causal body in deep sleep. Atman is beyond these three ‘Upadhis’ (conditionings) and is Turiya, the fourth, to be attained. Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तिषु स्फुटतरं योऽसौ समुज्जृम्भते

प्रत्यग्रूपतया सदाहमहमित्यन्तः स्फुरन्नैकधा ।

नानाकारविकारभागिन इमान् पश्यन्नहंधीमुखान्

नित्यानन्दचिदात्मना स्फुरति तं विद्धि स्वमेतं हृदि ॥ (२१९)

“That which clearly manifests itself in the waking, dream and deep sleep states, that which shines always inwardly in the root form of 'I', that which witnesses the ego, the intellect etc.

which are of different forms and modifications; that which is felt as Existence- Awareness- Bliss Absolute; know this Atman within your heart as your own Self.” (219)

समस्तादपि स्थूलसूक्ष्माच्छरीरात्परः कारणाच्चान्य आत्मा समीपे ।

य एको विदूरेऽपि तिष्ठन् जनानां महिम्नि स्वकीये च तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ २९ ॥

Atman is different from all gross and subtle bodies and is also different from the causal body; it is near and yet far from people. It exists in its own glory. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (29)

Kathopanishad says:

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।

तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।

तं विद्याच्छुक्रमृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रमृतमिति ॥ (१७)

“The Purusha, the indwelling Atman, of the size of a thumb, is ever seated in the hearts of men. One should unerringly separate him from one’s body like a stalk from the Munja grass Him one should know as pure and immortal. Him one should know as pure and immortal.” (17)

यमाश्रित्य नास्तीति चास्तीति वेदे प्रवृत्तो विरुद्धोऽपि वादोऽखिलात्मा ।

नमस्तेऽङ्घ्रिपाण्यादिहीनाय नित्यं समस्ताङ्घ्रिपाण्यादियुक्ताय तस्मै ॥ ३० ॥

While dealing with Atman, Veda enters upon contrary arguments saying that Atman in all beings exists, and does not exist. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is devoid of feet, hands etc. and ever having feet, hands etc. (30)

Vedas and Upanishads appear on the surface to propose contrary theories. It is stated in one place that Brahman is formless, attributeless and changeless; and, in another place, that Iswara should be praised with form as described and as being full of compassion and prayed to for mercy; Karmakanda is full of rituals in praise of Iswara. Brahman is similarly said to be very far beyond one’s reach, and, also extremely near, right in one’s heart. These

statements are all true; but made with different Adhikaris (qualified aspirants) in view. It is only through Guru's guidance that appropriate path can be chosen and followed profitably, suited to one's equipment and needs. Adi Sankaracharya says in Viveka Chudamani:

सत्यं यदि स्याज्जगदेतदात्मनोऽनन्तत्व-हानिर्-निगमाप्रमाणता ।

असत्यवादित्वमपीशितुः स्यान्नैतत्त्रयं साधु हितं महात्मनाम् ॥ (२३४)

"If the universe is real, the Atman would not be infinite; the Vedas would lose authority; Iswara (Bhagavan Krishna) would be guilty of speaking untruth (in Bhagavad Gita). These three matters are neither desirable nor wholesome for the pure-minded persons." (234)

योऽणोरणीयांसमात्मानमेकं महन्तं महद्वस्तुनश्चेतनेभ्यः ।

परं चेतनं नित्यतो वेद नित्यं यमेवेह विद्वान्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ३१ ॥

Atman is tinier than atom, and larger than the largest; more sentient than all sentient beings; more eternal than all eternal beings; unique; equal. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, whom the wise man knows here thus. (31)

The Vedic contradictions referred to in the earlier verse are pointed out here. The wise man realizes the uniqueness of Atman, whom words cannot describe, and mind cannot reach.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

अनण्वस्थूलं-अह्रस्वं-अदीर्घं-अजं-अव्ययम् ।

अरूपगुणवर्णाख्यं तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ (६०)

"Realise that to be Brahman, which is neither subtle nor gross; neither short nor long; without birth or change; without form, qualities, colour and name." (60)

यदानन्दलेशोपभोगेन सर्वे सदानन्दिनः संभवन्त्यत्र तस्मै ।

सदानन्दसंदोहपूर्णार्णवाय प्रसन्नाय तुभ्यं नमः केवलाय ॥ ३२ ॥

By enjoying a tiny part of the Bliss of Brahman, all beings here feel extremely happy. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, who is the ever full unique ocean of Bliss, ever delightful. (32)

After mentioning the Sat and Chit aspects of Brahman in the last verse, the Ananda aspect is taken up here. Lalitasahasranama says:

स्वात्मानन्द-लवीभूत-ब्रह्माद्यानन्दसंततिः ।

“The successive happiness of beings from Brahma downwards is indeed a tiny part of one’s own Atmananda, Bliss of Atman.” Anandavalli in Taitriyopanishad and Kathopanishad go so far as to actually measure the happiness quotient of beings starting from the happiest man on earth and proceeding on to Devas in intermediate regions and Swarga, and right up to Brahma. Each higher being enjoys happiness hundredfold that of the next lower being in hierarchy. The relevant conclusion is that the Bliss of Atman enjoyed by the Gnani is immeasurably richer than all the happiness of all the created beings right upto Brahma.

यमुत्सृज्य मर्त्या भजत्यन्यदेवान्न तेषां विमुक्तिः फलं किंतु तुच्छम् ।

श्वपुच्छं गृहीत्वा तरिष्यन्तिके वा समुद्रं ह्यपारं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ३३ ॥

Those, who adore other Devas after discarding Brahman, do not attain to Liberation; their fruit is small. Is it possible to cross the ocean by holding on to the tail of dog? Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (33)

We find a similar reference in Bhagavad Gita. When we worship Iswara with the conviction that he is indeed the formless, attributeless Brahman, the benefit is immense. We are frequently warned not to worship 'Tuccha' (inferior) Devatas like Yakshas. Svetasvatara Upanishad states:

यदा चर्मवद्-आकाशं वेष्टयिष्यन्ति मानवाः ।

तदा देवं-अविज्ञाय दुःखस्यान्तो भविष्यति ॥ (६.२०)

“When men will be able to roll up the sky like leather, then there will be an end of sorrow without knowing the Effulgent One.” (6.20)

यथा विद्युदुपास्तौ फलं दास्यतीशस्तथा विष्णुरुद्रेन्द्रवहन्याद्युपास्तौ ।

फलं दास्यति ब्रह्म यद्धीशसंज्ञः स्वकर्मानुसारं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ३४ ॥

Brahman, with the name of Iswara, confers fruit in accordance with one’s action, when Brahma is worshipped, and similarly when Vishnu, Rudra, Indra, Agni and other Devatas are worshipped. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (34)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

स तथा श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधानमीहते ।

लभते च ततः कामान्मयैव विहितान्हि तान् ॥(७.२२)

“Imbued with that faith, he engages in the worship of that Devata; from him he obtains fulfillment of his desires; all these being ordained by Me (Brahman) alone.” (7.22)

न यद्ब्रह्म मोक्षप्रदं स्यात्कदाचिद्विनेहैव मुक्तिप्रदं ज्ञानमेकम् ।

न मोक्ष कृतः कर्मणातः कृतेन प्रपन्नार्तिहन्त्रे नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ३५ ॥

Moksha (Liberation) is not attained by karma. Brahman confers Mukti here itself when Gnana is present, and never without Gnana. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, the destroyer of misery of those who take refuge in you. (35)

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Atmabodha’:

बोधोऽन्यसाधनेभ्यो हि साक्षान्-मोक्षैक-साधनम् ।

पाकस्य वह्निवज्ज्ञानं विना मोक्षो न सिद्ध्यति ॥

अविरोधितया कर्म नाऽविद्यां विनिवर्तयेत् ।

विद्याऽविद्यां निहन्त्येव तेजस्तिमिर-सङ्घवत् ॥ (२, ३)

“Just as fire is the direct cause for cooking, so without Knowledge, Moksha is not attained. Compared with all other forms of discipline, Atmagnana is the one direct means for Liberation.”

“Karma cannot destroy ignorance, for it is not opposed to ignorance (it being insentient). Knowledge does verily destroy ignorance as light destroys intense darkness.” (2, 3)

इदं नेतिनेतीत्यमूर्तं च मूर्तं निरस्यैव सर्वं जगद्दृश्यमेतत् ।

निषेधावधि ब्रह्म यच्छिष्यते वै मनोवागतीताय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ३६ ॥

After rejecting the entire world of experience including objects with form and those without form (such as thoughts etc.) saying ‘Not this, not this’, what remains at the very end of the scope of rejection is Brahman. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, beyond the ken of mind and speech. (36)

'Neti Neti' (Not this, Not this) is a celebrated declaration expounding Vichara Marga in Brihadaranyakopnishad, cited by the author here.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

निषिध्य निखिलोपाधीन्- नेति नेतीति वाक्यतः ।

विद्यादैक्यं महावाक्यैर्-जीवात्म-परमात्मनोः ॥ (३०)

“By the process of negation of the conditionings through the help of the Upanishadic statement ‘it is not this, not this’, the unity of the individual Atman and the Supreme Atman, as indicated by the great Upanishadic declarations (Mahavakyas), has to be realized.” (30).

One of the four Mahavakyas is 'Tattvamasi', meaning 'You are That'.

परित्यज्य यत्तत्त्वसम्यग्विचारं प्रवर्तेत यस्तीर्थयात्राजपादौ ।

करस्थान्नमुत्सृज्य लेढीति हस्तं न यस्योदयस्तस्य तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ३७ ॥

He, who abandons proper enquiry of Truth and proceeds on pilgrimage to Tirthas, Japa (repeated chanting of mantra) etc., is like the one who throws away the food in his hand and

then starts to lick his own hand. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, whose dawn in the mind of such a person does not happen. (37)

Through a telling example, the author brings out the efficacy of the direct and the most fruitful path of Self-enquiry, the Gnanamarga, as opposed to the external paths of devotion. This should not be taken as decrying the path of devotion, but as emphasizing the fact that all devotion has necessarily to culminate in Vignana, the Self-experience, without which there is no Liberation. When devotion is ripe, it draws Iswara's grace, who bestows Vignana on the aspirant. One cannot but recall the repeated insistence of Sri Ramana Maharishi on Self-enquiry in this regard. Ramana Gita says:

अद्भुताः सिद्धयः साध्या उपायान्तरतश्च याः ।

ताः प्राप्तोऽपि भवत्यन्ते विचारेणैव निर्वृतः ॥(७.७)

“Marvellous occult powers may be had through other means. But in the end freedom can come only through Self-enquiry.” (7.7)

न चेत्प्राणवर्गेष्वयं स्याज्जडत्वात्कथं प्राणनाडी क्रियाकारितैषाम् ।

अतो यस्य सिद्धा स्थिता युक्तितोऽपि प्रपञ्चप्रकाशाच्च तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ३८ ॥

In living beings, if Atman were not present, how would Prananadi (nerve of life-breath), being insentient, perform actions? Thus the presence of Atman is also deduced by logic and by the lighting up of the created universe. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (38)

The difference between the living and the dead is generally considered to be Prana, life-breath. But Prana is itself insentient. It belongs to Sukshma Sarira, the subtle body. It is the power of Atman that propels Prana also into action. Kenopanishad says:

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः ।

चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥ (१.२)

“Since Atman is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech, the vital breath (Prana) of Prana, and the Eye of the eye, therefore the intelligent men after giving up (self identification with the senses) and renouncing the world, become immortal.” (1.2)

भयं यद्विदां नास्ति मृत्युश्च नूनं बिभेत्येव वाय्वादि सर्वे च यस्मात् ।

शरीरेऽहमित्यत्र बुद्धेर्भयं स्यान्नमस्तेऽभयायाशरीराय तस्मै ॥ ३९ ॥

When the intellect assumes body as I, fear follows. For those who know Atman, there is no fear; Vayu, Mrityu and other gods in fact fear Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is free from fear and who has no body (also meaning body-consciousness). (39)

Taittiriya Upanishad states:

भीषाऽस्माद्वातः पवते । भीषोदेति सूर्यः ।

भीषाऽस्मादग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च । मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चम इति । (२.८.१)

“Out of fear of Atman, the Wind blows; out of fear Surya rises; out of fear of Atman, Agni and Indra, and Death, the fifth, run.” (2.8.1)

गुरौ भक्तियुक्तैरिहैवेश्वरो यः सुविज्ञेय आत्माऽन्यथा त्वद्बकोऽद्या ।

अविज्ञेय एकः स्वबुद्धिस्थितोऽपि प्रियायाखिलेभ्योऽपि तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ४० ॥

Atman, who is Iswara, is known well (experienced) by those who have bhakti towards Guru; in the absence of Guru bhakti, Atman cannot be known even in a crore of years by one, who is alone and who uses his own intellect. Obeisance to you, who are Atman, who is loved by one and all. (40)

The necessity of having a good Guru is emphasized in all scriptures. Veda says:

आचार्याद्वैव विद्या विदिता – “Knowledge (of Brahman) can be obtained only from Acharya”. Adi Sankaracharya says:

शास्त्रज्ञोऽपि स्वातन्त्र्येण ब्रह्मान्वेषणं न कुर्यात् ।

“Even if one is master of Sastras, he should not enquire after Brahman on his own.”

Swami Vidyanaraya says in ‘Anubhuti Prakasam’:

वेदान्तानां अनेकत्वात् संशयानां बहुत्वतः ।

वेद्यस्य अतिसूक्ष्मत्वात् न जानाति गुरुं विना ॥

“Owing to multiplicity of Vedantic principles and doubts arising during study of Vedanta, and the extreme subtlety of the object to be known, viz. Brahman, one cannot get that knowledge without Guru.”

समस्तात्प्रियो देह एवाक्षमस्मात्प्रियं प्राण एवाक्षतोऽपि प्रियोऽतः ।

प्रियः प्रत्यगात्मैव भोक्ता परो यः स्वतोऽतिप्रियायेह तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ४१ ॥

Body is the most loved; sense-organs are even more loved; Prana (life-breath) is even more loved than sense-organs. But even more loved is the higher indwelling Atman, who is the true enjoyer. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is intrinsically the most loved. (41)

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says in a well-known passage:

न वा अरे भूतानां कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्ति, आत्मनस्तु कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्ति । न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवं भवति, आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवं भवति ।(२.४.५)

“Yagnavalkya said: “Verily beings are dear not for the sake of beings, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that they are dear. Verily all is dear not for the sake of all, my dear, but it is for one’s own sake that all is dear.” (2.4.5)

प्रियादात्मनोऽन्यन्न विद्येत किञ्चित्क्वचित्कारणान्नैव भिद्येत कार्यम् ।

य आत्मा समस्तस्य हेतुर्नमस्ते निदानाय सर्वस्य दृश्यस्य तस्मै ॥ ४२ ॥

There is nothing more loved than Atman. Nowhere is the effect different from the cause. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is the cause of everything and is the substratum of all things seen. (42)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।

इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ॥ (१०.८)

“I (Brahman) am the source of all; from me everything evolves; understanding thus, the wise worship me with love and conscious identity.” (10.8)

समस्तं जगत्कारणात्त्रैव भिन्नं समस्तात्मनः केवलादद्वितीयात् ।

परब्रह्मणोऽव्याकृतेशाच्च यस्मान्नमस्ते क्षरायाक्षरायापि तस्मै ॥ ४३ ॥

The entire universe is non-different from the all –pervading Supreme Brahman, who is singular, non-dual, Iswara, the fundamental cause. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, who is the decaying effect and the non-decaying cause. (43)

The ‘Kshara’, decaying universe created by the ‘Akshara’, non-decaying Brahman is also viewed as ‘Kshetra’, field of action pervaded by ‘Kshetragna’, the knower of Kshetra. Bhagavan Krishna identifies the characteristics of Kshetra and Kshetragna in Gita and says:

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।

भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥ (१३.१७)

“Undivided, Brahman exists as if divided in beings. He is to be known as the supporter of beings; he devours and also generates.” (13.17)

यतः कारणान्नेह कार्यं विभिन्नं ततो ब्रह्मणो नैव भिन्नं जगत्स्यात् ।

समस्तं जगद्ब्रह्म तच्चास्मि विद्वानुपास्ते यमेकं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ४४ ॥

As effect is not different from cause, the created universe is not different from Brahman. The wise man worships that unique Brahman with the conviction “I am indeed this entire universe.” Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman.

Adi Sankara says in ‘Atmabodha’:

स्वयं-अन्तर्बहिर्-व्याप्य भासयन्नखिलं जगत् ।

ब्रह्म प्रकाशते वह्नि-प्रतप्तायस-पिण्डवत् ॥ (६२)

“Pervading the entire universe outwardly and inwardly, the Supreme Brahman shines of itself, like the fire that permeates a red hot iron-ball and glows by itself.” (62)

यथा मृद्विकारो मृतो नैव भिन्नस्तथा चिद्विकारश्चितो नैव भिन्नः ।

अतः सर्वमेतच्चिदेवेति विद्वान्विजानाति यद्ब्रह्म तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ४५ ॥

Just as the modification of soil (like earthen pot) is soil alone and non-different from it, the modification of Chit, the Supreme Consciousness, viz. the universe, is Chit alone and not different from Chit. Hence the wise man knows that all this is nothing other than Chit. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman shining as Chit. (45)

Mandukya Karika says:

मृल्लोहविस्फुलिङ्गाद्यैः सृष्टिर्या चोदिताऽन्यथा ।

उपायः सोऽवताराय नास्ति भेदः कथंचन ॥ (३.१५)

“The creation that has been multifariously set forth with the help of the examples of earth, gold, sparks etc. is merely by way of generating the idea (of oneness of the individual and the Supreme Atman); but there is no multiplicity in any way.” (3.15)

जगद्यस्य सर्वं शरीरं जगन्न प्रमातृप्रमाणप्रमेयात्मको यः ।

समस्तान्तरायाखिलेशाय तस्मै नमः सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय तुभ्यम् ॥ ४६ ॥

Brahman has got the universe as his body. Brahman, who is of the form of authority, proof as well as thing to be proved, is himself not the universe. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is the indweller of all, lord of all and of the form of Existence-Awareness-Bliss. (46)

Sri Krishna declares in Bhagavadgita:

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।

मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥ (९.४)

“All this universe is pervaded by me in my unmanifest form (aspect). All beings exist in me, but I do not dwell in them.” (9.4)

विदुर्यं न सर्वेऽपि यो वेत्ति सर्वं समस्तेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्स्वयं यः ।

समस्तान्तरः प्रेरयत्येव सर्वान्निमस्ते समस्तान्तरेशाय तस्मै ॥ ४७ ॥

All beings do not know Iswara; but he, himself dwelling in all beings, knows them all. Being indweller, Iswara stimulates them all. Obeisance to you, who are that Iswara, dwelling in all beings. (47)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।

विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥ (१३.२७)

“He sees, who sees the Supreme Iswara existing equally in all beings, the unperishing within the perishing.” (13.27)

न देहेन्द्रियप्राणधीभूतवृन्दं न संसार्यहं किंतु चिन्मात्रमेकम् ।

परं चापरं ब्रह्मविद्वान्विशुद्ध तदस्तीति यद्वेद तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ४८ ॥

The wise man knows that he is not the body, sense organs, life-breath, intellect, group of living entities, nor is he the Samsari (one who travels from birth to death to another birth); but he is the unique Consciousness alone; he is Brahman, who is both the higher and the lower (beings or knowledge) and is ever pure. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (48)

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Atmabodha’:

देहान्यत्वान्न मे जन्म-जराकार्श्यलयादयः ।

शब्दादिविषयैः सङ्गो निरीन्द्रियतया न च ॥ (३२)

“I am different from the body and hence I am free from changes such as birth, old age, senility, death etc. As I am without sense organs, I have nothing to do with the sense objects such as sound etc.” (32)

यथा स्वप्नदृष्टा च हस्त्यादि मिथ्या तथा सर्वमेतज्जगद्भ्रूति मिथ्या ।

अधिष्ठानमात्रं जगद्द्रष्ट सत्यं विशुद्धं च यद्ब्रह्म तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ४९ ॥

Just as elephant etc. seen in dream is all false, this entire universe shines falsely. Brahman is alone the substratum, the seer of the universe, the Truth, the pure. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman. (49)

Adi Sankara says in Dakshinamurthy Stotram:

विश्वं दर्पण-दृश्यमान-नगरी-तुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।
यस्साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं
तस्मै श्री गुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ १ ॥

“To him who sees the universe like a dream existing within oneself or like a city seen in a mirror but appearing externally due to Maya; who upon enlightenment, beholds the universe directly as his own non-dual Atman – Salutations unto him, Shri Dakshinamurti, who has taken the form of my Guru.” (1)

परा चापरा यस्य माया द्विधेयं जगत्कर्तृतामक्रियस्यातनोति ।

स्वतो द्रष्टृदृश्यातिरिक्ताय तस्मै नमः केवलायाव्ययायात्मनेऽस्तु ॥ ५० ॥

The Maya of Atman is twofold- the higher and the lower; it bestows apparent doership of this universe on Atman, who is non-doer. However Atman is by nature beyond the seer and the seen, is alone and decayless. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (50)

The higher Maya is the manifestation of Iswara, who is Suddha Satva (pure goodness). The lower Maya is the manifestation of the universe, which is of three attributes (Satva, Rajas and Tamas). Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥ (४.१८)

“He, who recognizes inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men. He is a Yogi and a true performer of all actions.” (4.18)

विशुद्धात्मतत्वापरिज्ञानमूलं विशेषावभासं सुखित्वादिरूपम् ।
विशुद्धात्मतत्त्वे परिज्ञात एतत्क्वचिन्नास्ति यस्मिन्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ५१ ॥

The special appearance of forms like feeling of pleasure etc. has its root in non-cognisance of the truth of the ever-pure Atman. Once the truth of the ever-pure Atman is cognized, this appearance is felt nowhere in Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (51)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ (३.३४)

“Attachment and aversion for the objects of the senses abide in the sense. One should not come under their sway; for, they are his foes.” (3.34)

नहि त्वक्परिज्ञानतः सर्पभानं क्वचिद्विद्यते सर्पता कल्पिता स्यात् ।
तथा कल्पितं सर्वमेतच्च यस्मिन्नमस्ते समस्तावभासाय तस्मै ॥ ५२ ॥

Once the twig of tree is cognized, the cognition of snake is no longer there; the appearance of snake was our imagination. Similarly this entire appearance of universe is imagined (superimposed) on Brahman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who causes all this appearance to shine. (52)

The celebrated example of twig of tree or rope appearing as snake due to false understanding, or ignorance of truth, is brought out here. Once the truth of tree branch is cognized, there is no more appearance of snake. Similarly this universe appears as true only to the ignorant. On rise of true Gnana, Brahman alone appears and the falsity of the universe becomes clear. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

स्थानौ पुरुषवद्भ्रान्त्या कृता ब्रह्मणि जीवता ।

जीवस्य तात्त्विके रूपे तस्मिन्दृष्टे निवर्तते ॥ (४५)

"Brahman appears to be a 'Jiva' because of ignorance, just as a post appears to be a ghost. The ego-centric individuality is destroyed when the real nature of the Jiva is realized as Atman." (45)

सुषुप्तौ न संसारलेशोऽस्ति कश्चित्प्रबोधेऽखिलाहंकृतौ दृश्यतेऽयम् ।

अतोऽहंकृतेरेव संसार इत्थं न वै संसृतिर्यस्य तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ५३ ॥

There is not even a bit of samsara (this world of experiences) during deep sleep. On waking up, with the rise of ego (Ahamkara) with all its aspects, this world is seen. Hence this samsara is only for one with ego. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who has no samsara. (53)

Mandukya Karika says:

अन्यथा गृह्णतः स्वप्नो निद्रा तत्त्वमजानतः ।

विपर्यासे तयोः क्षीणे तुरीयं पदमश्नुते ॥ (१५)

"Dream belongs to one who sees falsely, and sleep to one who does not know Reality. When the two errors of these two are removed, one attains the state that is Turiya (Fourth). (15)

न शास्ता न शिष्यो न शास्त्रं न विश्वं नं शाक्तं च शैवं मतं वैष्णवं वा ।

सुषुप्तौ तदानीं यदस्त्यात्ममात्रं स्वतो निष्प्रपञ्चाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ५४ ॥

During deep sleep, there is no enforcer of discipline, no disciple, no Sastra (rules of conduct), not even universe, and no sect like Saakta, Saiva or Vaishnava. At that time Atman alone exists. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who by nature has no scent of the created universe. (54)

Mandukya Upanishad says:

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत् सुषुप्तम् । सुषुप्तस्थान एकीभूतः प्रज्ञानघन एवानन्दमयो ह्यानन्दभुक् चेतोमुखः प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः ॥ (५)

“That state is deep sleep, where the sleeper does not desire any enjoyable thing and does not see any dream. The third quarter is Pragna, who has deep sleep as his sphere, in whom everything becomes undifferentiated, who is a mass of mere consciousness, who abounds in Bliss, who is surely an enjoyer of Bliss, and who is the doorway to the experience (of the dream and waking states). (5)

जडानां प्रवृत्तिः स्वतो नास्ति यस्माद्विभोश्चेतनात्सा प्रवृत्तिः प्रवृत्ता ।

मनःप्राणदेहेन्द्रियव्याकृतानां नमस्ते चिदात्मस्वरूपाय तस्मै ॥ ५५ ॥

Mind, life-breath, body, sense organs and their modifications are all insentient and hence they cannot act on their own. They act on the stimulation of the omnipresent Consciousness. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, of the form of Consciousness. (55)

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

सर्वव्यापृत्तिकरणं लिङ्गमिदं स्याच्चिदात्मनः पुंसः ।

वास्यादिकमिव तक्षणस्तेनैवात्मा भवत्यसङ्गोऽयम् ॥ (१०२)

“Just as the tools of a carpenter are his instruments, this subtle body is an instrument for all the activities of the Atman, who is Awareness Absolute. This Atman, therefore, is perfectly unattached.” (102)

मनःप्राणदेहेन्द्रियव्याकृतानि स्वतः काष्ठतुल्यानि यत्सन्निधानात् ।

स्वयं चेतनानीव भ्रान्त्येव मोहाज्जडेभ्यः परस्मै नमस्तेस्तु तस्मै ॥ ५६ ॥

Mind, life-breath, body, sense organs and their modifications are all by nature insentient like wood. In the presence of the supreme Consciousness, they shine as if they are sentient themselves, through delusion. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, higher than those insentient organs. (56)

Adi Sankaracharya says in Atma Bodha:

अज्ञानान्मानसोपाधेः कर्तृत्वादीनि चात्मनि ।

कल्प्यन्तेऽम्बुगते चन्द्रे चलनादि यथाम्भसः ॥ (२२)

“The tremblings that belong to the waters are attributed through ignorance to the reflected moon dancing on it. Likewise, agency of action, of enjoyment and other limitations (which really belong to the mind) are delusively understood as the nature of Atman. (22)

बहिर्बुध्यते प्राणिबुद्धिः पदार्थान्न यं बुध्यते प्राणनाथं स्वसंस्थम् ।

समस्तान्तरात्मानमेकं च तस्मै नमस्ते विरिञ्चादिधीबोधयित्रे । ५७ ॥

The intellect of living beings cognizes external objects and does not know the lord of their own life-breath, seated inside them, and the same unique Atman dwelling in all beings. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who lights up the intellect of Brahma and others. (57)

Adi Sankaracharya says in Viveka Chudamani:

अन्धत्व-मन्दत्व-पटुत्वधर्माः सौगुण्य-वैगुण्य-वशाद्धि-चक्षुषः ।

बाधिर्य-मूकत्वमुखास्तथैव श्रोत्रादिधर्मा न तु वेत्तुरात्मनः ॥ (१०३)

“Blindness, weakness or keenness of the eye are conditions merely due to its defect or fitness. So too, deafness, dumbness etc. belong to the ear etc. And not to Atman, the Perfect Awareness. (103)

परं यत्स्वरूपं विदुर्नापि देवाः कुतोऽन्ये मनुष्यादयो बाह्यचित्ताः ।

तदेवाहमस्मीति भक्तास्त्वजस्रं भजन्त्यद्वितीयं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ५८ ॥

Even Devas do not know the form of Atman. How would then humans with minds going outward know Atman? Devotees worship that non-dual Atman constantly with conviction that 'I am That alone'. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman.

Devas are imbued with highest Satvaguna, whereas humans, as a class, possess the highest Rajoguna. When the Satvic Devas themselves find it difficult to be devoted to the pursuit of Atman, where is the question of humans succeeding in this tough venture? But some devoted humans pursue with concentration and determination and attain Atmagnana.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

शरीरपोषणार्थी सन् य आत्मानं दिदृक्षति ।

ग्राहं दारुधिया धृत्वा नदीं तर्तुं स इच्छति ॥ (८६)

"Whoever seeks to have vision of Atman, while being devoted to the care of the body, is like one, who proceeds to cross the river, holding on to a shark, which one has mistaken for a log of wood." (86)

समस्तेषु देहेषु सूर्येऽपि तिष्ठन्त्य एकोऽखिलात्मा समस्तैकसाक्षी ।

स एवाहमस्मीति वेदान्तविद्धिः सदोपास्यतत्त्वाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ५९ ॥

The omnipresent Atman is seated in all bodies and even in Surya. He is unique and the lone witness of all. Knowers of Vedanta realize that 'He alone is myself'. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the Truth to be worshipped always. (59)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।

असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥ (१३.१५)

“Making the functions of all sense organs shine, yet without the sense organs; unattached, yet supporting all; devoid of qualities, yet their experience is Atman.” (13.15)

अहं विश्वकस्तैजसः प्राज्ञरूपो विराट्सूत्रमायेशरूपान्न भिन्नः ।

उपाधौ विभिन्नेऽपि किंत्वस्मि सोऽहं यमेवं भजन्वेद तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ६० ॥

The wise man realizes that ‘I am Visva, Taijasa and Pragna; I am no different from Virat, Sutradhari, lord of Maya; though conditionings are different, I am the essential Atman’. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, whom the wise man worships and knows. (60)

The same Atman is known as Visva when the body is in waking state; as Taijasa when the body is in dream state; as Pragna when the body is in deep sleep. Virat and Sutradhari are forms taken by Atman with the help of his innate power, Maya. These are the subtle forms projected by Atman gradually at the beginning of creation of the universe with jivas.

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Tatva Bodha’:

यथा देहोऽहं पुरुषोऽहं ब्राह्मणोऽहं शूद्रोऽहमस्मीति दृढनिश्चयस्तथा नाहं ब्राह्मणः न शूद्रः
न पुरुषः किन्तु असङ्गः सच्चिदानन्दस्वरूपः प्रकाशरूपः सर्वान्तर्यामी
चिदाकाशरूपोऽस्मीति दृढनिश्चय रूपोऽपरोक्षज्ञानवान् जीवन्मुक्तः ॥

“Just as one has the firm belief that ‘I am the body’, ‘I am a man’, ‘I am a brahmana’, ‘I am a sudra’, so also one having the firmly ascertained ‘Aparoksha Gnana’ (immediate knowledge) that ‘I am not a brahmana’, ‘I am not a sudra’, ‘I am not a man’, but ‘I am unattached, of the nature of Existence-Awareness-Bliss, effulgent, the indweller of all, the formless Awareness, is Jivanmukta (Liberated even while in human form).”

समस्तानि कर्माणि संत्यज्य विद्वांस्तदेवाहमस्मीत्युपास्ते ह्यजस्रम् ।

यदेवाह सर्वागमान्तैकवेद्यं नमस्तेऽनिशं चिन्तनीयाय तस्मै ॥ ६१ ॥

Abandoning all actions, the wise man worships Atman constantly with conviction that ‘I am That alone’. Atman is said to be the final aim of all Agamas and the one to be known. Obeisance to that Atman, who is ever to be meditated upon. (61)

Here abandonment of actions does not mean non-performance of any action, but only means abandoning the desire or expectation of fruit of any action performed, as well as the sense of doership of actions. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च ।

वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्-वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥ (१५.१५)

“And I am seated in the hearts of all; from me are attained the qualities of memory, knowledge and their absence. I am verily that which is to be known in all the Vedas, I am indeed the author of Vedanta and the knower of the true intent of Vedas.” (15.15)

न कृत्याकृतेः प्रत्यवायः क्वचित्स्यादभावात्कथं भाव उत्पत्स्यतेऽतः ।

अहं प्रत्यवायीति कृत्याकृते स्यामयं यस्य मोहान्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ६२ ॥

Non-performance of obligatory action does not result in sin. How can existence arise from non-existence? The thought that ‘I am sinner’ arises when not performing obligatory action, owing to delusion of not knowing the Truth of Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (62)

The statement that non-performance of obligatory action does not result in sin applies not to ordinary aspirants who are in early stages of Sadhana (spiritual practice), but to Gnanis. As far as ordinary aspirant is concerned, he has to keep performing the obligatory duties enjoined by Sastras till those karmas drop off on their own on dawn of Gnana. Gnani, having realized the Supreme Truth, has no need to perform Karma. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

सर्वकर्माणि मनसा संन्यस्यास्ते सुखं वशी ।

नवद्वारे पुरे देही नैव कुर्वन्न कारयन् ॥ (५.१३)

“Mentally renouncing all actions and fully self – controlled, the jiva (embodied one) rests happily in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing others (body and sense organs) to act.” (5.13). The body is indicated by the term ‘nine-gated city’, the nine apertures being two eyes, two nostrils, two ears and one mouth (totaling to seven in the face), and the genital and excretory organs (two in the trunk).

अधर्मोऽयमेवायमेवात्र धर्मो भवेदित्ययं मोह एवाखिलानाम् ।

यदज्ञानिनां प्रत्यवायप्रदं स्यात्क्वचिन्न ह्यभावो नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ६३ ॥

‘This is Adharma only, but this becomes dharma here.’ This type of delusion bestows sin on all persons, ignorant of Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is absent at no place. (63)

In the case of ordinary persons, they tend to take the path of adharma at times, justifying it as dharma, being the need of the hour. This approach arises because of selfish attachment to body-consciousness and results in sin, as Sastraic injunctions are violated in the process. In the case of Gnani, he has no attachment to body, and whatever he says or does even involuntarily becomes Absolute Truth and will never be found to violate any Sastra. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥ (२.४०)

“In Karmayoga, there is no waste of effort; nor is there any harm, i.e. production of contrary results. Even a little of this (practice of) dharma protects one from the great fear (of rebirth).” (2.40)

अधर्मं च हृत्स्थं विहाय प्रशान्ता भजन्त्यत्र नूनं स्वरूपं यदीयम् ।

स्वरूपं विचार्यामृतेरासुषुप्तेर्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै विमुक्तिप्रदाय ॥ ६४ ॥

The men of tranquility discard adharma residing in heart and enquire after Truth and worship Atman till the arrival of death and sleep. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who bestows Mukti (Liberation). (64)

The Adharma described as residing in heart here is attachment to body. The purport of the verse is that devotees worship Atman all through the waking hours till death comes calling

and thus attain Mukti, earning deliverance from Samsara. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

आविद्यकं शरीरादि दृश्यं बुद्बुदवत्क्षरम् ।
एतद्-विलक्षणं विद्यादहं ब्रह्मेति निर्मलम् ॥ (३१)

"The body etc. upto the Causal body, Ignorance, which are objects perceived, are as perishable as bubbles. Realise through discrimination that I am the pure, stainfree Brahman, completely separate for ever from all these." (31)

न वै बद्धता मुक्तता वा कदाचित्क्वचिन्नित्यमुक्तस्य किं चात्मनोऽतः ।
बहिश्चेतसोऽन्तश्च गत्यागती ते नमश्चित्तविक्षेपहर्त्रेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ६५ ॥

For the Nityamukta (one who is ever Liberated), there is no bondage or liberation at any time or place. Then what to say of Atman? It is the mind which keeps travelling outward and inward. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who destroys the projections of the mind. (65)

The Jivanmukta (Liberated while still in body) is permanently rooted in Atman. He has lost all sense of doership and ego. Though his mind may do all normal human functions, he acts as true Witness of the functions of the mind and never attaches himself to them.

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यः तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (२.६८)

"Therefore, O mighty-armed, his awareness is steady, whose senses are completely restrained from sense-objects." (2.68)

यथा क्षीणचित्तस्तथैवात्मनिष्ठः पुमान्नित्यमुक्तो भवेदद्वितीयः ।

यथा चेतसो क्षीणता यत्प्रसादात्तथा त्वत्प्रसादाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ६६ ॥

When the mind is weakened, then the man gains concentration in Atman and becomes ever-liberated and non-dual. The weakening of mind happens due to the grace of Atman. Obeisance to Atman, who confers such grace. (66)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।

वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवासुम्-उपायतः ॥ (६.३५, ३६)

“Undoubtedly, o mighty-armed one, the mind is difficult to control and is restless; but, by practice, o son of Kunti, and by dispassion, it is restrained.

Yoga, I think, is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled mind; but the self-controlled, striving person can obtain it by proper means.” (6:35, 36)

Here dispassion is towards mundane objects and practice is that of constant meditation on Atman.

प्रसन्ने त्वयि प्राणिनां किन्न लभ्यं परस्त्वत्प्रसादान्न लाभोऽस्ति कश्चित् ।

बुधोऽतोऽनिशं यत्प्रसादाभिकाङ्क्षी नमस्ते प्रपन्नप्रसन्नाय तस्मै ॥ ६७ ॥

When you are pleased, what is not attainable for living beings? There is no gain higher than your grace. Hence the wise man always eagerly looks forward to your grace. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is pleased with those who surrender to you. (67)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥ (१८.६२)

“Take refuge in him with all your being, O Bharata. By his Grace you shall obtain supreme peace and the eternal state.” (18.62)

पृथिव्यादियुक्ताऽपरब्रह्मनिष्ठा न मुख्या भवन्त्यत्र जन्मास्ति तेषाम् ।
निरस्ताखिलोपाधिनिष्ठो हि मुख्यो न यस्येह जन्मास्ति तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ६८ ॥

Those, who are rooted in Apra Brahman connected with earth etc., are not of consequence; for them there is rebirth here. One, who is rooted in Brahman with all limitations removed, is significant. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, for whom there is no rebirth. (68)

Sri Vidyaranya says in 'Panchadasi':

अन्नं प्राणो मनो बुद्धिरानन्दश्चेति पञ्च ते ।
कोशास्तैरावृतः स्वात्मा विस्मृत्या संसृतिं व्रजेत् ॥ (१.३३)

“The five sheaths of Atman are those of the food, vital air, mind, intellect and bliss. Enveloped in them, it forgets its real nature and becomes subject to transmigration.” (1.33)

न मुख्यं सुषुप्तेरधिष्ठानतोऽन्यत्सुषुप्तेरधिष्ठानमात्रं हि मुख्यम् ।
यदज्ञानतो दृप्तबालाकिरेतन्नृपाद्वेद चैवं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ६९ ॥

For the person in deep sleep, there is nothing more significant than the substratum; for that state of deep sleep, the substratum alone is significant. Balaaki, who was conceited through ignorance, gained this knowledge from the king. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (69)

In the state of deep sleep, the mind is at rest with no activity. The only active entity is the Atman, who is the witness of deep sleep and is known as Pragna in Vedanta.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2.1) mentions one sage Balaaki (son of the woman Balaaka), who was a descendant of the sage Garga. He was nicknamed 'Dripta-Balaaki' since he was a vain person (dripta means vain). He had mastered one aspect of the knowledge of Brahman. He went to King Ajatasatru of Kashi and expressed his desire to teach him. The king, who was more learned and could see through his vanity, proved his superiority. Then Balaaki became his disciple and learnt about Brahman without attributes. Ajatasatru concluded his teaching thus:

स यथोर्णनाभिस्तन्तुनोच्चरेत्, यथाग्नेः क्षुद्रा विस्फुलिङ्गा व्युच्चरन्ति, एवमेवास्मादात्मनः सर्वे प्राणाः, सर्वे लोकाः, सर्वे देवाः, सर्वाणि भूतानि व्युच्चरन्ति; तस्योपनिषत् - सत्यस्य सत्यमिति; प्राणा वै सत्यम्, तेषामेष सत्यम् ॥ (२.१.२०)

“As a spider moves along the thread it produces, or as from a fire little sparks scatter, just so from this Atman issue all organs, all worlds, all Devas and all living beings. Its secret name is the Truth of truth. The vital force is truth, and it is the Truth of that.” (2.1.20)

विरिञ्चादिलोकादिहावृत्तिरस्ति क्वचिच्चात्मलोकादनावृत्तिरस्मात् ।

ध्रुवो ह्यात्मलोकोऽध्रुवानात्मलोकात्परो योऽस्ति चैको नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ७० ॥

Return to earth from the realm of Brahma and others is there. There is never return from Atmaloka, the world of Atman. Atmaloka is eternal. Atman is the unique entity beyond the world of Anatma (non-Atman). Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (70)

Atmaloka is not a physical realm, but constant experience of the Bliss of Atman.

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥ (८.१६)

“Worlds upto the world of Brahma (Satyaloka) are subject o rebirth, O Arjuna. But he who attains Me (Brahman), O Kaunteya, has no rebirth.” (8.16)

परं वेद सन्मात्रमुद्दालकेन स्वपित्रोपदिष्टो यदा श्वेतकेतुः ।

यमात्मानमात्मस्थमव्यक्तमेकं नमस्तेऽनिशं सत्स्वरूपाय तस्मै ॥ ७१ ॥

Svetaketu realized on receiving instruction from his father Uddalaka that Atman, seated in him, is inexplicable and unique and is the highest Existence. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is ever of the form of Existence. (71)

Svetaketu is a great sage mentioned in Chandogya Upanishad. He was the son of Uddalaka. In his younger days he was arrogant, but had to taste defeat in the court of the king Pravahana Jaivali. Later on, his father taught him the science of Brahman. In course of time he himself became a great teacher.

The famous Mahavakya 'Tavamasi' occurs in the final teaching of Uddalaka to Svetaketu. The passage is as given below:

स यथा तत्र नादाह्येतैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो इति
तद्वास्य विजज्ञाविति विजज्ञाविति ॥ (६.१६.३)

“As in that case he was not burnt (similarly the man of Knowledge does not return, but the ignorant one does). That which is this subtle essence, all this has got That as the Atman. That is Truth. That is the Atman. **You are That, O Svetaketu.** He understood that from him. He understood that from him.” (6.16.3)

भृगुर्वेद पित्रोपदिष्टोऽन्तरेव प्रकृष्टः परब्रह्मरूपात्मलोकम् ।

अनन्ताऽद्वयानन्दविज्ञानसत्यं यमेकं विशुद्धाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ७२ ॥

Bhrigu received instruction from his father and realized the world of Atman, the highest Brahman, who has no end and is non-dual, ever existent and unique, and who is experience of Bliss, inside himself. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, extremely pure. (72)

Bhriguvalli in Taittiriya Upanishad starts with the request of Bhrigu to his father Varuna to teach him the science of Brahman. Stating that Brahman is that form from which all beings are born, in which they live, and to which they ultimately return, Varuna advises his son to find it out through Tapas. Every time Bhrigu returns after a brief period of Tapas, with a solution, he is sent back by Varuna, since what he has discovered is only the lower truth. After thus eliminating anna (food), prana (life-force), manas (mind) and vignana (intellect), he finally arrives at Ananda (Bliss) as Brahman, the ultimate cause of the world. The relevant Upanishadic passage is given below:

आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात् । आनन्दाद्ध्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति । सैषा भार्गवी वारुणी विद्या । परमे व्योमन्प्रतिष्ठिता । (३.६.१)

“He (Bhrigu) knew Bliss as Brahman; for, from Bliss, indeed, all these beings originate; having been born, they are sustained by Bliss; they move towards and merge in Bliss. This knowledge, realized by Bhrigu and imparted by Varuna (starts from the food-self and) terminates in the supreme Bliss, established in the cavity of the heart.” (3.6.1)

विहायैव कोशात्परं पञ्च वेद स्वरूपं यदानन्दकोशस्य पुच्छम् ।

मुमुक्षुः सुषुप्तेरधिष्ठानमेकं सदात्मस्वरूपाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ७३ ॥

Leaving aside the five Kosas (sheaths), the sage, who strives for Liberation, realizes Brahman, who is beyond the five sheaths, who is at the base of the sheath of bliss, the unique substratum of the state of deep sleep. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman of the form of Existence. (73)

As per Vedanta, the Kosas hiding our true nature are five: the physical body, which is a product of anna or food; prana or vital energies activating the sense organs and other internal processes within the body; manas or the mind; vignana or the intellect; agnana or basic ignorance, also called anandamaya kosa (apparent happiness). Anandamaya kosa is the closest to Atman and is enjoyed during deep sleep; but that is also ignorance, preventing us from experiencing the true Bliss of Atman. Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Atmabodha’:

वपुस्तुषादिभिः कोशैर्युक्तं युक्त्यावघाततः ।

आत्मानमन्तरं शुद्धं विविच्यात्तण्डुलं यथा ॥ (१६)

“Through discriminative self-analysis and logical thinking, one should separate the pure Atman within from the (five) sheaths, as one separates rice from the husk, bran etc., that are covering it.” (16)

अनन्तानि शास्त्राण्यधीत्यापि विद्वान्न दुःखेतरो नारदोऽनात्मवित्त्वात् ।

ऋषिर्मीनसाद्वेदं यं शोकहृत्यै नमस्ते सुखौघाय तस्मै विभूम्ने ॥ ७४ ॥

Though Sage Narada studied endless Sastras, he did not come out of the state of misery, as his knowledge was limited to Anatma (non-Atma). He then learnt from the mind-born son of Brahma, Sanatkumara, the science of Atman, which destroys all grief. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is omnipresent and pool of happiness. (74)

The seventh chapter in Chandogya Upanishad teaches Bhuma Vidya, knowledge of the Infinite. Narada, though himself a great and erudite sage, approaches the Self-realised sage Sanatkumara with a heavy heart seeking peace and happiness. Sanatkumara takes him step by step through meditations on fifteen objects like name, speech, mind and so on, to Bhuman, the Infinite. Bhuman, which is everywhere, which is established in its own glory, after knowing which there is nothing else to be known, is the Atman of all beings. One, who realizes it, becomes 'Svarat'. Like a king, he will have full freedom in all the worlds. To obtain this knowledge, purity of mind obtained through purity of food and purity of sense-experience, is necessary. The relevant Upanishadic passage is given below:

यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमाथ
यत्रान्यत्पश्यत्यन्यच्छृणोत्यन्यद्विजानाति तदल्पं यो वै भूमा तदमृतमथ यदल्पं तन्मर्त्यं स
भगवः कस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठित इति स्वे महिम्नि यदि वा न महिम्नीति ॥ (७.२३.१)

“The Infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, and does not understand anything else. That which indeed is the Infinite, is immortal. On the other hand, that which is finite, is mortal.” “O venerable sir, on what is That established?” “In its own glory, or not even in its own glory.” (7.23.1)

ऋषेर्याज्ञवल्क्याद्विदेहो महात्मा यदेवाभयं ब्रह्म सम्यग्विदित्वा ।

स्वमेवाभयं तद्ध्यभूद्वेदवेद्यं समस्ताभयाप्याय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ७५ ॥

King Videha (Janaka) learnt well about Brahman, the Abhaya (fearless) from Rishi Yagnavalkya and became himself that Abhaya Brahman, known only by Vedas. Obeisance to you, who are that Brahman, the fullness of Abhaya. (75)

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, chapter 4, mentions that king Janaka received spiritual wisdom from sage Yagnavalkya. Abhaya Brahman here refers to Brahman, free from all conditionings and their effects; in short, beyond nescience, Agnana. Janaka, though a king, was a Jivanmukta. His is the only name to be cited by Bhagavan Krishna in Bhagavadgita as an example of an ideal Karmayogi. Mahabharata and Devi Bhagavatham describe how sage Vedavyasa despatched his wise son Suka from his asrama in the Himalayas to Mithila to meet king Janaka and receive Brahmagnana.

The final teaching of Yagnavalkya to Janaka is given below:

स वा एष महानज आत्माऽजरोऽमरोऽमृतोऽभयो ब्रह्म; अभयं वै ब्रह्म; अभयं हि वै ब्रह्म
भवति य एवं वेद ॥ (४.४.२५)

“That infinite, birthless, undecaying, indestructible, immortal and fearless Atman is Brahman. Brahman is indeed fearless He who knows Atman as above indeed becomes the fearless Brahman.” (4.4.25)

विदित्वात्र भूमानमेनश्छिदेऽस्ति प्रवाच्यं किमु प्राणवित्पापनाशे ।

अतः प्राणविद्यामनादृत्य विद्वानुपास्ते यमीशं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ७६ ॥

If the sins of the knower of Pranavidya are destroyed, where is the need to speak of destruction of sins by knowing the Infinite Brahman. The wise one therefore neglects Pranavidya and worships Iswara. Obeisance to you, who are that Iswara. (76)

Upanishads mention several Vidyas or Upasanas. Kausitaki Brahmana Upanishad (3) refers to one such Vidya called Pratardanavidya, known also as Pranavidya. Indra teaches this Vidya to king Pratardana in Swargaloka. In this, one’s identity with Atman, who is Mukhyaprana (chief life-force) and Pragna (pure consciousness) is contemplated upon and realized. Adi Sankaracharya stresses the need for removal of mental impurities in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

जलं पंकवदत्यन्तं पंकापाये जलं स्फुटम् ।

यथा भाति तथात्मापि दोषाभावे स्फुटप्रभः ॥ (२०६)

“Water, which is extremely muddy, appears as transparent water, when the mud has been removed. So too, the Atman manifests its clear lustre when the impurities have been removed.” (206)

अजस्रान्नदानं परित्यज्य जानश्रुतिर्ह्यैक्यमभ्यागमद्धंसवाक्यात् ।

स वै प्राणवित्प्राण उत्कर्षवांस्तत्परोऽस्माद्य आत्मा नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ७७ ॥

Janasruti discarded the continuous gift of Anna (food), which he was practising and attained unity with Brahman after hearing the words of swans. He became knower of Prana (life-force) and of that which is higher than Prana, viz. Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, higher than Prana. (77)

Janasruti Pautrayana was a noble king, well-known for his generosity, especially for distributing food to the needy. Once he heard from some swans flying over his palace that the greatness of sage Raikva far exceeded his own. After a vigorous search, he located the sage sitting under a cart. On the king's plea for bestowing wisdom on him, Raikva taught him the Samvargavidya. Samvarga means the ultimate substratum, which absorbs everything into itself. Vayu, the cosmic air is the Samvarga in the external world since Agni (fire), Chandra (moon), Surya (sun) and Apa (water) get absorbed into it at the time of dissolution. Mukhyaprana (chief vital air) is Samvarga in the body since, in deep sleep, the sense-organs and the mind get dissolved in it. Identifying Mukhyaprana with Vayu and meditating on it as Virat (the cosmic Being) leads to realization of Atman. This is Samvargavidya in essence. This story is described in Chandogya Upanishad as well as in Skanda Purana.

Bhagavan Krishna stresses the necessity of rising above karmas and acquiring Atmagnana in Gita:

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।

यः पश्यति तथात्मानं-अकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥ (१३.३०)

“He sees, who sees that all actions are performed by Prakriti (Nature consisting of Satva, Rajas and Tamas) and that Atman is actionless.” (13.30)

रवीन्द्रग्नितेजो जगद्भासक चेन्न तस्यापि चित्सन्निधानेन तत्स्यात् ।

न यत्सन्निधानं विना किञ्चिदस्ति क्वचिद्वस्तु तस्मै नमो ज्योतिषे च ॥७८ ॥

It is not that the radiance of Surya, Chandra and Agni brightens the world. The radiance is there owing to the presence of Chit, the Awareness. There is no object anywhere in the absence of Atman, the source of radiance. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the great Radiance. (78)

Svetasvatara Upanishad says:

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तं-अनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ (६.१४)

“There the Sun does not shine, neither do the moon and the stars; nor do these flashes of lightning shine. How can this fire shine? After Him, all these shine; through His lustre all these are illumined.” (6.14)

परं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरात्माख्यमेतद्रवीन्द्रादिबुद्ध्यादिविद्योतकं यत् ।

विदित्वैव नूनं नरो ब्राह्मणः स्यादमर्त्यश्च तस्मै नमः स्वात्मने ते ॥ ७९ ॥

This Atman is indeed the source of light of the most radiant objects and is what illumines Surya, Chandra and others and also intellect etc. By knowing this Atman alone, man becomes brahmana (rooted in Brahman) and deathless. Obeisance to you, who are that indwelling Atman. (79)

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Atmabodha’:

यद्भासा भास्यतेऽर्कादि भास्यैर्यत्तु न भास्यते ।

येन सर्वमिदं भाति तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ (६१)

“That, by the light of which the luminous orbs like Surya and Chandra are illuminated, but which is not illumined by their light - Realize that to be Brahman.” (61)

यथाश्वत्थवृक्षे स्वदेहे च तुल्यं स्वमेवाब्रवीद्वासुदेवोऽर्जुनाय ॥

तथा यस्य साम्यं विजानाति विद्वान्नमस्ते समस्तात्मरूपाय तस्मै ॥ ८० ॥

Bhagavan Vasudeva has himself told Arjuna that he resides equally in the fig tree as well as in his own body. In the same way, the wise man knows the equal presence of Atman everywhere. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the indweller in all. (80)

Bhagavan says in Gita: अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणाम् – Among trees, I am the holy fig. In the course of narration of his Vibhutis (divine splendours), Krishna mentions the fig tree as his abode.

Svetasvatara Upanishad says:

यस्मात्परं नापरमस्ति किञ्चिद्यस्मान्नाणीयो न ज्यायोऽस्ति कश्चित् ।

वृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येकस्तेनेदं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम् ॥ (३.९)

“By that Person is filled all this, in relation to whom, there is nothing superior or inferior, nothing smaller or greater, and who exists alone in his own effulgent glory, unmoving like a tree.” (3.9)

द्विजे पुलकसे हस्तिनि स्वे शरीरे समः सात्त्विके राजसे तामसे च ।

य आत्मा गुणैस्तैरसंस्पृष्ट ईशो नमस्ते सदा निष्कळङ्काय तस्मै ॥ ८१ ॥

Iswara, the Atman, is equally present in brahmana (who is keen on contemplation of Brahman), Chandala, elephant and in one’s own body, as well as in the (varying) qualities of Satva (virtuousness), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (laziness and violence), and is also beyond and untouched by those qualities. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is ever free from taint. (81)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥ (५.१८)

The wise men perceive the same Atman in brahmana, rich in knowledge and humility, cow, elephant, dog and dog-eating outcaste. (5.18)

यमाश्चर्यवद्वक्ति कश्चिच्छृणोति प्रशान्तस्तु जानाति न ह्यप्रशान्तः ।

विदित्वाऽपि साक्षात्करोत्यत्र नान्यश्चिदस्मीति दीक्ष्याय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८२ ॥

That which someone talks of as a marvel, another hears of it as a marvel, the man of tranquility knows; the man, who has no tranquility, does not know; even after knowing, someone directly experiences his own existence as none other than that Chit, Pure Awareness. Obeisance to you, who are that Awareness, which is taught (to qualified aspirants) by you. (82)

Bhagavan Krishna makes a similar statement in Gita (2.29). Till one gets actual experience of Atman, it remains hearsay and subject of wonder. Bhagavan states clearly in Gita that tranquility results only after senses are controlled and intellect is directed to contemplate with concentration on Atman and that the bliss of Atman is experienced only by such a man of tranquility. Even in the path of Gnana, the third stage of 'Nididhyasana' means assimilation by deep contemplation. It comes after 'Sravana', listening of teaching from Guru, and 'Manana', reflection and ascertainment by clearing of doubts. Adi Sankaracharya emphasises the need for immediate knowledge in a telling verse in 'Viveka Chudamani':

न गच्छति विना पानं व्याधिरौषधशब्दतः ।

विनापरोक्षानुभवं ब्रह्मशब्दैर्न मुच्यते ॥ (६४)

"A disease is not cured by merely uttering the name of the medicine and without actually taking it. Without direct realisation, by a mere utterance of the word 'Brahman', none can be liberated." (64)

पती देवदैत्यौघयोः पद्मजाद्यं चतुर्वारमाकर्णयन्तौ तथाऽपि ।

न जानाति कश्चित्तयोर्वेद चान्यो ह्यतो दुर्वितर्क्याय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८३ ॥

The lords of Devas and Daityas (Indra and Virochana) heard the science of Atman from Brahma four times. One of them (Virochana) still did not know, but the other (Indra) knew. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is beyond debate. (83)

Chandogya Upanishad (8.7) tells the story of how Virochana and Indra approached Brahma for getting the knowledge of Atman. Virochana returned satisfied after the first visit that the body is indeed Atman. He taught accordingly to Daityas, who became thorough materialists. Indra went to Brahma four times and finally gained the true knowledge of Atman that Atman is eternal and indestructible, and body is transient and given to death. The final teaching:

मघवन्मर्त्यं वा इदं शरीरमात्तं मृत्युना तदस्यामृतस्याशरीरस्यात्मनोऽधिष्ठानमात्तो वै सशरीरः प्रियाप्रियाभ्यां न वै सशरीरस्य सतः प्रियाप्रिययोरपहृतिरस्त्यशरीरं वाव सन्तं न प्रियाप्रिये स्पृशतः ॥ (८.१२.१)

“O Indra, this body is indeed mortal. This is covered by death. That is the seat of this Atman, which is immortal and not having body. Anything embodied is within the range of the desirable and the non-desirable. Surely, for that which remains embodied, there can be no elimination of the desirable and the undesirable. But the desirable and the undesirable cannot surely touch Atman, which is unembodied.” (8.12.1)

शरीरेन्द्रियप्राणविज्ञानशून्येष्विहैकैकमात्मेति दृप्ता वदन्ति ।

तथा बुद्धिसम्यग्विचारासमर्था यदज्ञानमोहा हि तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८४ ॥

Those, who are deluded owing to ignorance of Atman and are incapable of proper intellectual analysis and are conceited, talk of Atman as either body, sense organs, vital breath, specialized knowledge or emptiness. Obeisance to you, who are that true Atman. (84)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत ॥ (२.१८)

“These bodies of the embodied Atman are said to have an end. The Atman is eternal, indestructible and incomprehensible. Therefore, fight, O Bharata.” (2.18)

अनेकत्वकर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वधर्मः स आत्मा विभुश्चिद्गुणश्चेति केचित् ।

न कर्तैव भोक्ता क्वचिच्चेति चान्ये यदज्ञा वदन्तीह तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८५ ॥

Some say that Atman is of the nature of multiplicity, doer and enjoyer, is omnipresent and has awareness as an attribute. Some say that Atman is not the doer, but enjoyer in some places. They are unaware of the truth of Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that true Atman. (85)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।

अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥ (३.२७)

“Actions are performed in all cases merely by the qualities of Nature (Satva, Rajas and Tamas). He, whose mind is deluded by egoism, thinks ‘I am the doer’.” (3.27)

अनेकात्मना प्रेरकोऽन्यो न हीशोऽस्त्विति प्राहुरेके नचास्तीति चान्ये ।

विवादास्पदं नैव माया विना यन्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै विवादात्पराय ॥ ८६ ॥

Some say that the one who stimulates the jiva in many forms is Iswara and not anyone else; others say that he is not Iswara. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, without whom Maya would not be the subject of debate and who are beyond all debate. (86)

In the last three verses, the author brings out various kinds of misrepresentations of Atman. Atman is indeed none of those and is beyond all debate. That is why Upanishads emphasise that Atman is beyond the scope of mental cogitation and also speech.

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।
इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते ॥ (४.१४)

“Actions do not taint me (Brahman), nor have I any desire for the fruits of actions. He who knows me thus is not bound by his actions.” (4.14)

विवादो निवर्तेत यस्य प्रसादात्स्वरूपप्रकाशे जगद्भ्रान्तस्य ।

निवृत्ते विवादे पुनर्नैव लोके भ्रमन्त्यद्वितीयाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८७ ॥

By the grace of Atman, when the true form of Iswara, the protector of the world, becomes distinct, all debate ceases. Once debate ceases, the jiva does not get deluded again in the world. Obeisance to you, who are that non-dual Atman. (87)

Mundaka Upanishad says:

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिः छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥ (२.२.८)

“When that Atman, which is both high and low, is realized, the knot of the heart gets untied, all doubts are resolved and all of one’s actions become dissipated.” (2.2.8)

विभुं चित्तनिष्ठं यद्गुणमात्रं पुराणं पुमांसं वदन्त्यत्र वेदाः ।

जनानां हृदंगुणमात्रं यतोऽस्मादनंगुणमात्राय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८८ ॥

Vedas describe Atman as omnipresent, of the size of thumb, ancient Purusha. Atman resides with the size of thumb in the hearts of people. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who is not just of the size of thumb. (88)

Vedanta sometimes describes Atman in conflicting terms – distant and yet near, tinier than atom and larger than the largest etc. This means that Atman cannot be described in words as it is beyond the ken of words as well as mental imagination. The apparent conflict in qualities is on account of relating Atman to worldly objects, which are products of time and

space. Time and space are products of Maya and Atman is beyond them. The description here of Atman as being of the size of thumb in human hearts, and at the same time, as not being of the size of thumb, is an example of the conflicting presentation of Atman. The omnipresent Atman, not limited by time and space, is what activates the insentient human body. To make this clear, Vedanta says that Atman resides in human heart with the size of thumb.

Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Viveka Chudamani':

अत्रैव सत्त्वात्मनि धीगुहायां-अव्याकृताकाश उशत्प्रकाशः ।
आकाश उच्चै रवित्प्रकाशते स्वतेजसा विश्वमिदं प्रकाशयन् ॥ (१३४)

"In this very body, in a mind full of Satva, in the cave of the intellect, in the atmosphere of the Unmanifest, the Atman, of captivating glory, shines like Surya, high in the sky, illumining the universe by its effulgence." (134)

भ्रुवोर्मध्यमेवाविमुक्तं मुनीनां महाक्षेत्रमित्यत्र बुद्धेः श्रुतञ्च ।
न वा वारणासीपुरं गन्तुमिच्छेत्स्वरूपे स्थितो यस्य तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ८९ ॥

One, who is established in his true nature of Atman, focused by sages by concentrating on the space between eyebrows with the help of their intellect, which is Avimukta Mahakshetra, and by means of Sruti (Veda), would not like to go to the city of Varanasi. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (89)

Sages concentrate on Atman by focusing their attention on the space between eyebrows as guided in Vedas and Yogasastras. They control their wavering minds with the help of intellect, which is described here as Avimukta Mahakshetra, which means the great spiritual centre, never left by Iswara. Avimukta Mahakshetra is the name of Kashi, which is never abandoned by Siva even in times of the great dissolution. Similarly the human intellect is never abandoned by Atman; otherwise it would be dead. Intellect and, indeed all body organs function only in the light of Atman.

One, who is established in Atman, does not find it necessary to go to Kashi for attaining Gnana and Liberation. The Liberation desired in Kashi is already attained by him. In a beautiful verse in 'Atmabodha', Adi Sankaracharya says:

तीर्त्वा मोहार्णवं हत्वा रागद्वेषादिराक्षसान् ।
योगी शान्तिसमायुक्तः आत्मारामो विराजते ॥ (५०)

“After crossing the ocean of delusion and killing the monsters of likes and dislikes, the Yogi, who is united with peace, dwells in the glory of his own realized Atman, as an Atmarama.” (50). By a metaphorical reference to the story of Ramayana, the great Acharya tellingly brings out the glory of Atma-Vichara, Self-enquiry.

शरीरे यथाऽहंमतिः सर्वजन्तोस्तथा मुक्तिबुद्धिश्च काशीमृतेर्वा ।
स्वरूपप्रकाशं विना यस्य मुक्तिर्न वै सम्भवेत्क्वापि तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ९०

The sense of I is there for all beings in their own bodies; similarly the sense of liberation is there for one, who dies in Kashi. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, without whose light of true nature, liberation is not possible anywhere. (90)

‘ज्ञानादेव हि कैवल्यम्’ - Liberation is attained only by true knowledge of Atman– this is what Upanishads teach. But scriptures state that Liberation is assured for those who shed their bodies in Kashi. This only means that Siva, in his great compassion, bestows that Gnana on the dying mortal and makes him immortal. This is similarly true of any aspirant, who is into spiritual practice. His devotion is crowned by the compassion of Atman, who showers him with Gnana and then bestows liberation on him. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥ (४.३८)

“Certainly there is no purifier in this world like Gnana. He who is himself perfected in Yoga finds it in Atman in time.” (4.38)

स्वरूपप्रकाशप्रकाशैकहेतुर्हि यस्य प्रकृष्टागमान्तार्थसम्यग्विचारः ॥

अतो यत्प्रकाशाय वेदान्तनिष्ठोऽनिशं स्याद्विवेकी नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ९१ ॥

Deep contemplation of the import of lofty Vedanta texts paves the way for attaining the light of one's true nature, viz. Atman. Hence the discriminating aspirant remains established constantly in Vedanta for attaining that light. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (91)

In Vicharamarga, the path of enquiry, three steps are enunciated in Vedantic texts: Sravana (listening to Guru's teaching), Manana (contemplation including getting doubts cleared from the Guru and firming up the knowledge) and Nididhyasana (absorption of the truth into self). Thus the aspirant experiences his non-different, non-dual Atman in himself by deep contemplation. Adi Sankaracharya expounds the significance of contemplation in 'Viveka Chudamani':

सम्यग्विचारतः सिद्धा रज्जुतत्त्वावधारणा ।

भ्रान्त्योदित-महासर्प-भयदुःखविनाशिनी ॥ (१२)

"The fear and sorrow created by the delusory serpent on the rope can be ended only after fully ascertaining the truth of the rope, which is available for recognition only through steady and balanced thinking." (12)

वदन्तश्च रुद्रादयोऽप्यात्मतत्त्वं न जानन्त्यतः केऽपि वेदान्तनिष्ठाः ।

ततःतानिहोत्सृज्य वेदान्तनिष्ठो भवेद्यत्प्रबोधाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ९२ ॥

Some, who are focused on Vedanta, and Devas like Rudras, who talk of the principle of Atman, do not know it in truth. The aspirant therefore leaves them aside and gets established in Vedanta for knowing Atman. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (92)

The import is that even Devas hanker after non-Atman attainments like victory over Asuras etc. The dedicated aspirant is focused only on Atman. (The Rudras indicated here are divine

beings, not blessed with the grace of Gnana by Siva, and hence not Self-realised).
Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषां तद्भ्रुवत्यल्पमेधसाम् ।

देवान् देवयजो यान्ति मद्भ्रुक्ता यान्ति मामपि ॥ (७.२३)

“The fruit (of Karmas) that accrues to those men of little intelligence (worshipping Devas for petty ends) has an end. The worshippers of Devas proceed to Devas; My devotees come to Me.” (7.23)

सुरेन्द्रो विदित्वैव यस्य स्वरूपं समस्तादघाद्वृत्रहत्यादिरूपात् ।

विमुक्तो हि वेदान्तनिष्ठो मुदाऽऽस्ते निरस्याभिमानं नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ९३ ॥

Devendra realized the true nature of Atman and got relieved of all sins like killing of Vritra etc. and became established in Vedanta and remained blissful, having got rid of selfish attachment. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman. (93)

Devendra committed many grave sins like killing of Visvarupa, Vritrasura and others in a stealthy manner. He got rid of all the sins by undertaking penance for long periods of time, worshipping Isvara and realizing Atman. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।

ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ (४.३७)

“As the blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, so does the fire of Gnana reduce all actions to ashes.” (4.37)

यदीयं स्वरूपं विचार्यैव तिष्ठन्सदा वन्दनीयोऽमरैरिन्द्रमुख्यैः ।

विशुद्धो ह्ययं देववन्द्यत्वतो वै नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै विशुद्धिप्रदाय ॥ ९४ ॥

By constantly enquiring of the real nature of Atman, one becomes very pure and worthy of worship by Devas headed by Indra. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the bestower of worthiness of worship by Devas, and purity. (94)

Maharishis were all human beings. They had attained purity and realized Atman and hence they were all worshipped by Indra and other Devas. We find many occasions in Puranas, where Devas came down to earth and offered worship to Maharishis. Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam refers to Devendra coming down to earth and worshipping sages Sutikshna and Sarabhanga. There are instances where the lord of Devas, Indra was cursed by Maharishis too. Sage Goutama cursed Indra to become impotent, when the latter assumed the form of the sage and violated Ahalya, the sage's wife. Sage Chyavana cursed Indra to become paralysed in his arm, when the latter tried to prevent him from offering Somapanam to Asvini Devatas. Such is the power of Self-realised humans.

Srimad Ramayanam refers to sage Visvamitra's severe austerities for acquiring the state of Brahmarishi. Brahma finally said to him:

ब्रह्मर्षे स्वागतं तेऽस्तु तपसा स्म सुतोषिताः ॥
ब्राह्मण्यं तपसोग्रेण प्राप्तवानसि कौशिक । (१.६५.१९)

“Brahmarishi! We are very happy with your austerities. You are welcome (to become Brahmarishi). Kousika! You have acquired the quality of brahmana (Brahmagnana) through severe austerities.” (1.65.19)

स्वयं शुद्ध एवान्यशुद्धिं ददाति क्वचिन्न ह्यशुद्धोऽन्यशुद्धिप्रदः स्यात् ।

स्मृतः शुद्धिदः सर्वजंतोर्य आत्मा विशुद्धः पवित्राय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ९५ ॥

One, who is pure himself, can alone bestow purity on another. Nowhere can an impure person give purity to another. Obeisance to that Atman, who is sacred and very pure, and, who imparts purity to all beings, when thought of by them. (95)

Kathopanishad says:

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।

अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अणीयान् ह्यतर्क्य-अणुप्रमाणात् ॥ (१.२.८)

“Atman is certainly not known adequately when spoken of by an inferior person; for, it is thought of variously. When taught by one, who has become identified with it, there is no further cogitation with regard to it. For, it is beyond argumentation, being subtler than the size of the atom.” (1.2.8)

सकृत्संस्मृतश्चेत्समस्तं च पापं दहत्यग्निवद्यस्त्विहात्यन्तदीप्तः ।

चिदेवाहमित्येव बुद्धौ प्रवेशस्वदीप्तिर्नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै महिम्ने ॥ ९६ ॥

Once one remembers the radiance, which induces the thought ‘I am only Chit (Awareness)’, it burns away here all sins like fire, with tremendous brilliance. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman of such glory. (96)

Karmas are categorized into three: Sanchita, Prarabdha and Agami. Sanchita is the karma, accumulated over countless births in the past. Prarabdha karma is that part of the Sanchita karma, which is ordained to bear fruit in the present birth. Agami is karma accumulated in the present and future births. Both Sanchita and Agami karmas are destroyed on the dawn of Gnana. Prarabdha karma continues to operate on the body till the body drops, but it has no bearing on the Gnani, as he is totally free from attachment to body. Thus the Gnani is free from the clutch of all karmas. Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Tattva Bodha’:

सञ्चितं कर्म ब्रह्मैवाहमिति निश्चयात्मकज्ञानेन नश्यति ।

आगामि कर्म अपि ज्ञानेन नश्यति, किञ्च आगामि कर्मणां नलिनीदलगत-जलवत् ज्ञानिनां सम्बन्धो नास्ति ।

“The Sanchita Karma is destroyed by the knowledge ‘I am Brahman’.

The Agami karma is also destroyed by Gnana; and the Gnani is not affected by it just as a lotus leaf is not affected by the water on it.”

नहि स्नानदानादिना पापनाशे तु तत्संस्कृतिः क्वापि नश्येत्कदापि ।

विना यत्स्मृतिं स्मृत्युपायं च मुक्त्वा स्मरत्पापहन्त्रे नमस्तेऽस्तु तस्मै ॥ ९७ ॥

Though performance of holy bath, ceremonial gift etc. without remembering Atman as well as the means of remembering Atman, will destroy sins, the latent impressions of sins will never be destroyed. Obeisance to Atman, who destroys sins, once remembered. (97)

Any action, once performed, has two effects: one is, the Punya (religious merit) and Papa (sin) resulting from the nature of that action; the second is, the latent tendency the action creates in the mind, which generates the urge to repeat the act in a given circumstance. Though sin is destroyed by taking sacred bath in a holy river, ceremonial gift etc., the latent tendency to commit the same sin under a given circumstance is not removed. The latter is eliminated only by the grace of Atman, earned by prayer and surrender. Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥(२.५९)

“The objects of the senses turn away from the abstinent man leaving the longing (behind); but his longing also leaves him on seeing the Supreme.” (2.59)

अनात्मन्यहन्ताभिमानं निरस्य स्वरूपप्रकाशस्ततः सर्वपापम् ।
न संस्कृत्यनात्माश्रयं स्याद्विनष्टं स्मृतेर्यत्प्रकाशे तु तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ ९८ ॥
When the light of one’s true nature shines, the attachment to the sense of ‘I’ in Anatma (objects and experiences other than Atman) drops off. Hence all sins rooted in Anatma and Samskriti (latent tendencies left by actions) are removed; the memory (of Anatma) is destroyed. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the source of that radiance. (98)

Adi Sankaracharya says in ‘Viveka Chudamani’:

अनात्मवासनाजालैस्तिरोभूतात्मवासना ।
नित्यात्मनिष्ठया तेषां नाशे भाति स्वयं स्फुटा ॥ (२७५)

“Innumerable desires for things that are the non-Atman cloud the desire for Self-realisation. When these have been destroyed by being constantly established in Atman, the Atman manifests all by itself.” (275)

अनाकर्ण्य वेदान्तभाष्यं समग्रं न कस्यापि यत्स्मृत्युपायोऽस्ति कश्चित् ।

अतस्तद्विकीर्षा स्वतो यस्य जाता नमस्ते दयाळुस्वरूपाय तस्मै ॥ ९९ ॥

Without listening to the entire commentary (of Adi Sankaracharya) on Vedanta, no means of remembering Atman is available to anyone. Hence the desire to author that commentary arose naturally in you. Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the very embodiment of compassion. (99)

Adi Sankaracharya, out of boundless compassion for the misery-struck humanity, wrote the commentary on Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita, referred in totality here as Vedantabhashya. By teaching this commentary to disciples, he reestablished the truth of Advaita Vedanta. Without proper comprehension of Advaita Vedanta, the natural human outward propensity towards objects and experiences, promoting attachment to Anatma and disinterest in Atman, cannot be overcome. Hence Adi Sankara is hailed here as the personification of compassion. A verse in praise of him is as follows:

व्याकुर्वन् व्याससूत्रार्थं श्रुतेरर्थं यथोचिवान् ।

श्रुतेर्न्याय्यः स एवार्थः शङ्करः सविताननः ॥

“The way Sankara, the incarnation of Siva, has authored commentaries explaining the import of Sruti (Veda –Upanishad) and Veda Vyasa’s Brahmasutras, he has declared the correct interpretation of those texts.”

समस्तागमान्तानिह व्याचिकीर्षुः स्वयं शङ्कराचार्यरूपावतीर्णः ।

कृतव्याससूत्रादिभाष्यो य आत्मस्वरूपैक्यधीदाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १०० ॥

Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, who bestows the knowledge of unitary nature of the Atman, and who himself incarnated as Sankaracharya, desirous of expatiating on the purport of all Sastras, and who wrote commentaries on Vyasa's Brahma Sutras etc.

Kurma Purana refers to the conversation between Siva and Parvathi on the advent of Sankaracharya on earth as Siva's Amsavatara. Siva says:

उपदेक्ष्यति तद्ज्ञानं शिष्याणां ब्रह्मसंज्ञितम् ।
सर्ववेदान्तसारं हि सर्वस्माच्च तु दर्शनात् ॥

“Sankara will teach the knowledge of Brahman to his disciples. That will be the essence of all Vedanta and all philosophies.”

चतुर्भिः प्रशान्तैः स्वशिष्यैर्युतः सन् भुवं पर्यटन्नात्मनिष्ठाऽखिलात्मा ।
स्वभाष्यप्रचारं सदा कारयन्त्यो विभात्यद्वितीयाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १०१ ॥

Obeisance to you, who are that omnipresent Atman, ever established in Atman, who travelled on earth with four tranquil disciples, always propagating his own commentaries (of Brahmasutras etc.) and who shines as one without a second. (101)

Adi Sankaracharya had hundreds of disciples, four of whom are regarded as preeminent; they are Sureswaracharya, Padmapadacharya, Totakacharya and Hastamalakacharya. Bhavishyottara Purana says:

कल्यब्दे द्विसहस्रान्ते लोकानुग्रहकाम्यया ।
चतुर्भिस्सह शिष्यैस्तु शङ्करोऽवतरिष्यति ॥

“Sankara will incarnate on earth with four disciples at the close of 2000 years after Kaliyuga begins, with the desire to bless the people.”

विराट्सूत्रमायेशतुर्यस्वरूपैः क्रमात्तोटाचार्यनामादिसंज्ञैः ।
चतुर्व्यूहवेषैः स्वशिष्यैर्युतायाद्वयायात्मने ते नमो निर्गुणाय । १०२ ॥

Obeisance to you, who are that non-dual Atman without attributes, and who is accompanied by four disciples with names of Totakacharya etc., representing respectively Virat (Cosmic whole); Sutratma; Iswara, the lord of Maya; and Turiya (the fourth). (102)

Turiya, the fourth is indeed the formless, attributeless Parabrahman. Iswara, Sutratma and Virat are the successive stages in the creation of the universe, moving from subtle to gross. Adi Sankaracharya says in 'Atmabodha':

जगद्विलक्षणं ब्रह्म ब्रह्मणोऽन्यन्न किञ्चन ।
ब्रह्मान्यद्भाति चेन्मिथ्या यथा मरुमरीचिका ॥ (६३)

“Brahman is other than this, the universe. There exists nothing that is not Brahman. If any object other than Brahman appears to exist, it is unreal like the mirage.” (63)

अजं कर्मठं विश्वरूपं विदित्वा तुरीयाश्रमं चाथ तस्मै प्रदाय ।

व्यधादृश्यशृङ्गाश्रमे शारदार्यापरं तत्त्वरक्षाय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १०३ ॥

Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, the protector of the true principle, who granted the fourth Asrama, Sanyasa to Visvarupa, knowing him as the incarnation of Brahma and engaged in Karmamarga, and appointed him in the asrama of Rishyasringa in the service of worship of Sarada Devi. (103)

Visvarupa, otherwise known as Mandana Misra, became Sureswaracharya on receiving Sanyasa diksha from Adi Sankaracharya after being defeated by him in philosophical debate. He was appointed as the first Mathadhipati of Sringeri Sarada Peetham. Sringeri was in earlier times the place where the asrama of sage Rishyasringa was located. Sankara Vijayam records the establishing of Sringeri Matham:

श्रीमच्छङ्करदेशिको मुनिवरः श्रीब्रह्मविद्यात्मिकां
श्रीचक्रोपरि भावयन् भगवतीं श्रीशारदामम्बिकाम् ।
तां संस्थाप्य च मन्दिरेऽतिमहिते शृङ्गाचलस्थेऽर्चयन्
स्वान्तेवासिवरं सुरेशमपि तत्पूजार्थं-आजिज्ञिपत् ॥

“The great sage and Guru Sri Sankara invoked Sri Brahmaidiasvarupini in Srichakra, meditating on Bhagavati Sri Saradambika and established her in a grand temple in Sringagiri and worshipped her. He bade his best disciple Sureswaracharya to perform Puja there (and function as the head of Sri Sarada Peetham).”

य आचार्यभाष्याण्यधीत्यैव भक्त्या लभन्ते निजानन्दमात्मस्वरूपम् ॥

गुरुस्तैरयं वन्द्य आत्मात्मविद्धिस्ततः सर्ववन्द्याय तस्मै नमस्ते ॥ १०४ ॥

Obeisance to you, who are that Atman, worshipped by all, and specially worshipped as Guru and Atman by the knowers of Atman, who have attained their true nature of bliss in themselves by studying the commentaries of Acharya Sankara. (104)

A famous verse in praise of Adi Sankaracharya says:

उद्धृत्य वेदपयसः कमलामिवाब्धेः आलिङ्गिताखिल-जगत्प्रभवैकमूर्तिम् ।

विद्यामशेषजगतां सुखदामदाद्यः तं शङ्करं विमलभाष्यकृतं नमामि ॥

“Just as Lakshmi sprang from the ocean and embraced the most glorious form (of Vishnu) in all the worlds, Sankara extracted the essence from the ocean of the Vedas and wrote clear commentaries and handed that knowledge, which provided succour to the entire world without exception.”

नमः शङ्कराचार्यं तुभ्यं पुरस्तान्नमः पृष्ठतः पार्श्वतश्चाध ऊर्ध्वम् ।

नमः सर्वतः सर्वरूपाय तस्मै विशुद्धात्मने ब्रह्मणे ते नमस्ते ॥ १०५ ॥

O Sankaracharya, prostrations to you from the front, from the back, on the sides, below and above. Prostrations in all directions to you, who are that Brahman, shining in all forms and remaining very pure. (105)

Though Brahman shines in all bodies in the form of Jivatma, he is not tainted by the deficiencies of the jiva's mind and body, and remains established in his very pure state. Svetasvatara Upanishad says beautifully about the relationship of Jivatma with Brahman (or Paramatma):

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्यनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति ॥
समाने वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नोऽनीशया शोचति मुह्यमानः ।

जुष्टं यदापश्यत्यन्यमीशमस्य महिमानमिति वीतशोकः " (४.६,७)

"Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, cling to the same tree. Of these two, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating. On the same tree the Jiva remains drowned as it were; and so, being deluded, it moans because of its impotence. When it realizes thus the other, the adorable Iswara, and his glory, it becomes liberated from sorrow." (4.6,7)

अहं देहबुद्ध्या तवैवास्मि दासो ह्यहं जीवबुद्ध्याऽस्मि तंशैकदेशः ।

त्वमेवास्म्यहं त्वात्मबुद्ध्या तथापि प्रसीदान्वहं देहबुद्ध्या नमस्ते ॥ १०६ ॥

I remain your slave from the point of view of body; I remain a part of yourself from the standpoint of Jiva; I am no different from you from the viewpoint of Atman. Still, with the sense of body, I worship you every day. Be pleased. (106)

So long as body-consciousness remains, one has to do all ordained Karmas as a slave of Iswara. As bhakti develops, one becomes closer to Iswara and feels that he is a part of Iswara. When Atmagnana ripens, he becomes one with the omnipresent Brahman and realizes no difference from Brahman.

There is a famous verse of similar expression from Hanuman to Rama:

देहदृष्ट्या तु दासोऽहं जीवदृष्ट्या त्वदंशकः ।

आत्मदृष्ट्या त्वमेवाहमिति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

"I remain your slave from the point of view of body; I remain a part of yourself from the standpoint of Jiva; I am no different from you from the viewpoint of Atman. This is my conclusive view."

स भाष्यार्थ आशु स्फुरत्वन्तकाले चिदाभासचैतन्यदृक्त्वत्प्रसादात् ।

गतिर्नान्यथा मे समस्तापराधं क्षमस्वाखिलात्मन्नमस्तेऽस्तु नित्यम् ॥ १०७ ॥

In my end time, may the purport of your commentaries, which is the seer of the sense of the image of Awareness, shine quickly in me. I have no other retreat. You are the Atman of all, please pardon all my faults. Prostrations to you always. (107)

Bhagavan Krishna says in Gita:

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥ (८.५)

“Whoever leaves his body at the end time, thinking only of Me, attains My state; there is no doubt.” (8.5). Hence the thought lingering in one’s consciousness at the last moment of his life is what determines his future life. If his thought is concentrated in the Supreme Brahman, there is no rebirth for him; he merges with Brahman. That is why the prayer for the last thought to be focused on Brahman is clearly spelt out here.

नमो भाष्यबृन्दाय भाष्योपदेष्ट्रे नमो भाष्यकृद्भ्यो नमो भाष्यविद्भ्यः ।

नमो भाष्यवृन्दार्थभूताय भूम्ने विशुद्धात्मने ब्रह्मणेऽस्मै परस्मै ॥ १०८ ॥

Prostrations to the group of commentaries; prostrations to the preceptors of commentaries; prostrations to the knowers of commentaries. Prostrations to Brahman, who is the true purport of the cluster of commentaries, who is Infinite, lofty, very pure Atman. (108)

A verse in praise of Adi Sankaracharya is as follows:

वेदान्तार्थ-विभासकाय गुरवे शान्ताय संन्यासिने

नानावादि-नगेन्द्रसंघ-पवये योगीन्द्रवन्द्याय च ।

मोहध्वान्त-दिवाकराय भगवत्पादाभिधां बिभ्रते

तस्मै भाष्यकृते नमोऽस्तु सततं पूर्णाय बोधात्मने ॥

“Prostrations always to the Guru, the great exponent of the truth of Vedanta; the Sanyasi of peace; the thunderbolt for the mountains of various disputations; worshipped by the best among Yogis; Sun for removing the darkness of delusion; holding the honorific of

Bhagavatpada; the author of commentaries of Vedanta; the ever-full; the very form of Gnana.

शतोर्ध्वाष्टकश्लोकमेतद्भुजङ्गप्रयातं पठेद्योऽत्र भक्त्या त्वदीयम् ।

चिदाभासचिद्रूपमेकं पदाब्जं स्मरन्स्वस्वरूपेण नूनं रमेत ॥ १०९ ॥

One, who reads with devotion these 108 verses set to Bhujanagaprayata metre, and who is indeed the reflected image of Chit (Awareness), would certainly delight in his own true nature, remembering your lotus feet, the one and only form of Chit (Awareness). (109)

A verse of prayer to Adi Sankaracharya is as follows:

नमामि शङ्कराचार्यगुरुपादसरोरुहम् ।

यस्य प्रसादान्मूढोऽपि सर्वज्ञोऽहं सदास्म्यहम् ॥

“I prostrate to the lotus feet of my Guru Sankaracharya, by whose grace I am always omniscient, though I have been a dullard.”

भुजङ्गप्रयातार्थमत्यन्तभक्त्या सकृद्वा स्मरेत्प्रत्यहं श्रीगुरोर्यः ।

निरस्तांधकारः स आनन्दरूपं व्रजत्यच्युतं त्वां त्वदीयप्रसादात् ॥ ११० ॥

One, who remembers with deep devotion every day at least once the import of this Sri Gurubhujangaprayata Stotra, attains you, the Imperishable form of Bliss, having got rid of the darkness of ignorance, through your grace. (110)

A famous prayer to Adi Sankaracharya runs as follows:

शास्त्रं शारीरमीमांसा देवः श्रीचन्द्रशेखरः ।

आचार्याः शङ्कराचार्याः सन्तु मे जन्मनि जन्मनि ॥

“May the scripture be Advaita Vedanta, Deva be Sri Chandrasekhara, and Acharya be Sankaracharya for me in every birth.”

अहं ब्रह्म भूत्वापि नेति भ्रमोऽभूत्तदीयस्वरूपावबोधासुरा मे ।

गुरो त्वत्प्रसादाद्विमुक्तोऽहमस्मि चिदाभासचिद्रूप आत्मा विशुद्धः ॥ १११ ॥

Though I am without doubt Brahman, I was deluded that I was not Brahman, prior to realization of my true nature. O Guru! Owing to your grace, I, who am the reflected image of Chit (Awareness), am fully liberated and I have realized that I am indeed the form of Chit, very pure Atman. (111)

Adi Sankaracharya says of the Self-realised state in 'Atmabodha':

नित्यशुद्धविमुक्तैकं-अखण्डानन्दमद्वयम् ।

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं यत्परं ब्रह्माहमेव तत् ॥ (३६)

"I am verily that Supreme Brahman alone, who is eternal, pure and free, unitary, indivisible, Blissful and non-dual, and of the nature of Changeless-Knowledge-Infinite." (36)

अतो बुद्धिमांस्त्वत्प्रसादाय नित्यं भुजङ्गप्रयातं पठेद्वा तदर्थम् ।

स्मरेद्वा गुरो ते प्रणम्यैव भूयश्चिदाभासचिद्रूपमेकं परं तत् ॥ ११२ ॥

Hence the wise person shall read this Bhujangaprayata Stotra or bring to memory the meaning of that Stotra every day for obtaining your grace. O Guru! That person, who is the reflected image of Chit (Awareness), will realize that Superior form of Chit by prostrating to you again and again. (112)

Totakacharya says in praise of Adi Sankaracharya:

येषां धीसूर्यदीप्त्या प्रतिहतमगमन्-नाशमेकान्ततो मे

ध्वान्तं स्वान्तस्य हेतुर्जनन-मरण-सन्तान-दोलाधिरूढेः ।

येषां पादौ प्रपन्नाः श्रुतिशम-विनयैः भूषिताः शिष्यसङ्घाः

सद्यो मुक्ताः स्थितास्तान् यतिवर-महितान् यावदायुर्नमामि ॥

"I prostrate all my life to that greatest and most glorious Sanyasi, through whose Sun-like brilliance of intellect, the deep-seated darkness inside me, which was the cause of the cycle of repeated births and deaths and children, got uprooted and destroyed totally; by taking refuge in whose feet, groups of disciples become embellished with Vedantic perception, mind-control and humility, and attain Liberation immediately."

मुनीन्द्रैः पुराणैरनुध्येयमीशं विरिञ्चादिभिः सर्वदेवैश्च वन्द्यम् ।

कथं त्वामहं स्तोतुमिच्छन्भवन्तं क्व वा साधये नेह किं किं महेशे ॥ ११३ ॥

Desirous of praising you, who are meditated upon by ancient great Munis, and who are worthy of worship by all Devas including Brahma, where and how shall I attain you? There is nothing here. What is there in Maheswara? (113)

The idea is this: the aspirant finds now, having praised Adi Sankaracharya as Brahman himself, that there is nothing of substance in this created world. About Maheswara, he cannot find the truth. Unless you become Maheswara, you cannot imagine who he is. That is Brahavidya. You can enjoy the Bliss of Brahman in Samadhi state. But Maheswara is Brahman with forms and attributes. How to imagine that? That is, being free of attributes and forms as Brahman, and still assuming attributes and forms as Maheswara – this state is beyond the comprehension of human being. A famous verse on Adi Sankaracharya is as follows:

वेदे ब्रह्मसमः तदङ्गनिचये गर्गोपमः तत्कथा-
तात्पर्यार्थ-विवेचने गुरुसमः तत्कर्मसङ्कीर्तने ।
आसीत् जैमिनिरेव सूत्रनिचयस्यार्थोपसंवर्णने
व्यासेनैव समस्स शंकरगुरुः जेजीयतां मानसे ॥

“Sankara is like Brahma with reference to Vedas; like Garga on the collection of Vedangas; like Guru on expounding the substance of Vedas; like Jaimini in setting out the Vedic rituals; like Vyasa in determining and explaining Vedanta through Sutras. May that Sankara Guru shine in my mind.”

कृपा ते कृपाळो विमुग्धं विशुद्धं करोतीह मूकं च वाचालमीशम् ।

अतस्त्वत्कृपावैभवेनैवमेतत्कृतं मे चिकीर्षाखिलात्मन्नमस्ते ॥ ११४ ॥

O compassionate one! Your grace makes the highly deluded person into a highly pure one. It makes the dumb person into Iswara, the orator. Hence my yearning of writing this Stotra bore fruit purely by the majesty of your grace. Prostrations to you, the Atman of all. (114)

Totakacharya's prior name was Ananda Giri. He was an extremely devoted disciple of Adi Sankaracharya; he used to engage always in attending to the Guru's personal needs like washing of clothes etc. He was not known to be good in studies. Other students scorned him on this account. One day the Guru decided to teach them a lesson. He transferred all knowledge to Giri in no time. Giri came running, singing the famous Totakashtakam and dancing his way to the Guru and fell at his feet. Sankara Vijayam says:

गर्वदोषमपहर्तुमखर्वं स्वाश्रवेषु करुणातिशयाच्च ।
व्यादिदेश स चतुर्दश विद्याः सद्य एव मनसा गिरिनाम्ने ॥

“In order to remove the fault of growing conceit in his disciples, who had taken refuge in him, and goaded by very special compassion, Sankaracharya taught all the fourteen Vidyas in a moment mentally to his disciple named Giri.” The fourteen Vidyas are: Vedas -4; Vedangas – 6; Mimamsa, Nyaya, Puranas and Dharmasastra – 4.

इति श्रीगुरुभुजङ्गस्तोत्रम् सम्पूर्णम् ।

ॐ तत्सत्