

Proper light has been thrown upon the assertions in these verses by the well-known technique of scientific observation and analysis. The constituent parts of the body, their behaviour, how the body gathers its knowledge of the world outside, its relationship with the possessor of the body and with the world around, when all these are analysed and carefully investigated into, we shall readily come to know that we are, in fact, not the body. With this subjective knowledge alone is it possible for us to learn to withdraw from the body identification. The arguments are convincingly marshalled here. To remember these arguments is to help ourselves in our daily independent reflections.

In this verse, the body is brought under the focus of our close observation. This body was born out of the seed in the loins of its father. The seed is formed by the food assimilated by the father. When the seed was in the mother's womb, it was being maintained by the food taken by the mother. After birth, it grew because of the food taken and assimilated by it, day after day. When it perishes it shall become food for other living creatures like birds, insects and plants. Hence, that which is born out of food, exists in food and goes back to be food for others is appropriately called the food sheath (annamaya koṣa).

This body when carefully analysed is found to be constituted of skin, flesh, blood, and marrow. The container made up of the above parts is filled with faecal matter. All these together constitute this fascinating, enchanting, 'my body'.

Therefore, this filthy, unholly body cannot be the ever pure and resplendent Ātman because the parts that constitute it are finite.



पूर्वं जनेरधिमृतेरपि नायमस्ति
जातक्षणः क्षणगुणोऽनियतस्वभावः ।
नैको जडश्च घटवत्परिदृश्यमानः
स्वात्मा कथं भवति भावविकारवेत्ता ॥ १५५ ॥

*pūrvam janeradhimṛterapi nāyamasti
jātakṣaṇah kṣaṇaguṇo'niyatasyabhāvah,
naiko jaḍaśca ghaṭavatparidṛśyamānah
svātmā kathām bhavati bhāvavikāravettā.* (155)

155. Before its birth it does not exist, nor does it continue to be after its death, it lasts only for a short period. Its qualities are fleeting and by nature subject to change. It is diversified and inert and like a jar, is a sense object. How then can it be the Self – the witness of all changes in all things?

This body came into existence with the birth of the individual. After death it shall perish and decay. Its existence is only for a short time, from its birth to its death – at the most a span of eighty to a hundred years. From the concept of infinite time, eighty or a hundred years are most insignificant. Indeed, this body is very short lived.

Psychologists have discovered that no dream can last for more than one and a half minutes. Within this short time span, we dream, sometimes, the experience of many years. From the concept of the waking time, the dream time is very short, from the vision of infinite time our lifespan too, is very small. The concept of time itself is relative.

During this short period of time while the being resides in the body, the nature of the body changes from moment-to-moment. Now it is happy, now unhappy, now sāttvika, now rājasika, a good man becomes bad and a bad man good. All the time, the guṇas are changing. These changes – physical, emotional and intellectual – cannot be stopped; their expressions continuously manifest through the body.

As long as the body is carefully looked after, it lives. If we neglect it, even then it lives. Now it is up to each one to decide whether looking after it is necessary or not. It lives because of its destiny (prārabdha). The nature of this body is most uncertain and unsteady. It can never be predicted with exactitude. Also, there is not