

They determine the condition of the body, the beauty of the mind and the keenness of the intellect. It is again the vāsanās that determine the type of environment we are in and the type of experiences we gather from the world. From the viewpoint of the Man of Realisation, his body is a continuation of the body he had in the past, and one that has been taken up is ordered or determined by its vāsanās. Now that he has transcended the equipments, he is content to remain in his experience of the infinite Consciousness. Thereafter, the body may cling to him, it being a product of the past, but he cares not for it. The body is no more a source of fulfilment for him. He considers it as an excretion or like a discarded old dress and is least concerned whether it falls or remains. An individual is least concerned with the destiny of his own excretion, once it has left him. This unconcern towards the body is being described here by Śaṅkara, by using a very powerful simile.

On the Gopāṣṭamī day, Hindus generally bathe their cow and adore and worship it. They put a garland around its neck. The garland is of no concern to the cow. It is not even conscious of it. If, because of the garland more people are looking at it, it is unconcerned. If the garland breaks and falls down on the road, it is still unconcerned. Similarly, the Man of Perfection strides the path of his existence considering his body as an unnecessary decoration upon him. Whether it falls or exists, it is a matter of no importance to him. He does not care. He has realised the Infinitude. He is in that awakened state. For us, the body is the only source of happiness, hence we care for its security. The Man of Perfection is one who has merged himself with Brahman, the infinite Bliss. Since he is always experiencing it, to him the little joys the sense organs can bring through the body from the world outside are of no significance at all. Therefore, in that supreme state of fabulous richness that he is, he has no concern for his body.



अखण्डानन्दमात्मानं विज्ञाय स्वस्वरूपतः ।
किमिच्छन् कस्य वा हेतोदैहं पुष्णाति तत्त्ववित् ॥ ४१८ ॥

*akhaṇḍānandamātmānam vijñāya svasvarūpataḥ,
kimicchan kasya vā hetordeham puṣṇāti tattvavit.* (418)

418. Having known the Ātman which is unbroken Bliss, to be his very own Self, with what motive or for whom is the body to be cherished by the knower of Truth.

Continuing the same arguments for the rejection of the physical body, Śaṅkara says, ‘Having realised his own essential Self to be of the nature of unbroken and infinite Bliss, then desiring what, or for what purpose should a Man of Realisation fatten his body?’ We fatten the body because it is the only source for our sense gratification. Seeking these little joys of life we preserve the body and try to maintain it as well as we can. But a Man of Realisation who has awakened from his egocentric existence into the greater ambit of the Self and is continually experiencing the absolute Bliss, for what purpose should he maintain the body? Or for fulfilment of which desire should he maintain it?

The term, ‘desiring what’ (kimicchan), echoes the words of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* where Yājñavalkya asks the same question –

‘When one has realised one’s Self to be nothing other than this great Puruṣa, this infinite Saccidānanda, then desiring what, (or for the fulfilment of which desire), should he thereafter nurse, nourish and fatten his physical body?’¹

¹ *ātmānam ced vijñiyādayamasmiti pūruśah,
kimicchan kasya kāmāya śarīramanusamjvaret.*

– *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*-4.4.12

