



31. Sattvaguṇa – Nature and Effects (117-119)

सत्त्वं विशुद्धं जलवत्तथापि ताभ्यां मिलित्वा सरणाय कल्पते ।
यत्रात्मबिम्बः प्रतिबिम्बितः सन् प्रकाशयत्यर्क इवाखिलं जडम् ॥ ११७ ॥

*sattvam viśuddham jalavattathāpi tābhyaṁ militvā saranāya kalpate,
yatrātmabimbaḥ pratibimbitaḥ san prakāśayatyarka ivākhilaṁ jaḍam.* (117)

117. *Pure sattva is like clear water, yet in combination with rajas and tamas, it provides for transmigration. But when the light of the Self gets reflected in sattva alone, then, like the sun, it reveals the entire world of matter.*

Having explained rajoguṇa and tamoguṇa, Śaṅkara now gives an explanation of sattvaguṇa. Sattva is ever pure like water. Like water, it can get mixed up with many things, but not as a compound of its own nature. Water as water is ever pure. When we say 'dirty water', we mean that a sample of pure water has something other than it, in it. When we say 'stinky water and muddy water', we mean a specimen of pure water in which the stink and the mud are held in suspension. If the stink and the dirt are removed, the water again becomes pure. Similarly, sattva is always present, even in a tāmasika man. When pure sattva in an individual is in conjunction with rajas and tamas, it becomes the cause for his transmigration. If he is in pure sattva, that is if he has eliminated rajas and tamas, then for him there can be no transmigration. Only when sattva is muddied with rajoguṇa and tamoguṇa does it cause transmigration.

When there is pure sattva, the intellect works steadily. There is no veiling and there are no agitations. The mind then becomes steady in utter meditation. It is face to face with divinity, with Reality.