

'TAT TVAM ASI' NINE TIMES

shrIgurubhyo namaH |

A Vichara on the Aikyam/Abheda (identity between jIva and Sat) brought out by the examples in the teaching of the 'tat tvam asi'

In the Chandogya Upanishad 6th chapter the famous **tat tvam asi** teaching occurs. This teaching is given out nine times with examples to clarify a doubt/question raised by Shvetaketu, the aspirant, at each stage. This study is taken up to find out whether the several examples do indeed bring out the identity in the teaching **tat tvam asi** reiterated nine times.

The first time tat tvam asi occurs is in 6.8.7. After having shown by various experiments that the human body is a product of the elements – tejas (fire), aapaH (water) and annam (food, or earth), in their gross, middle and subtle forms, Uddalaka, the teacher (also Shvetaketu's father), concluded that since the elements have originated from Sat (Existence), they are non-different from their cause Sat (on the principle of the effect being unreal as effect but real only as its material cause as established in the 'vaachArambhaNa Shruti' of this very chapter at the commencement). Since the body, gross as well as subtle, is only a transformation of the elements, the body itself is unreal **as** the body-name and body-form, but in essence is only the elements. Since the elements themselves are only Sat in real terms, the body, that is, the jIva associated with the body, is also non-different from Sat. The mantra (6.3.2) '...anEna jIvena AtmanA anupravishya...' teaches that it is the Sat Itself that has entered the bodies as the jIva-s. This mantra itself sets the tone for the establishment of identity between the Sat (Brahman) and the jIva. Apart from this, the mantra 6.8.6 also spoke about the manner in which the elements merge in their preceding causal elements and finally in the Sat when death of the jIva occurs. The origin as well as the ground of dissolution of the elements was shown as the Sat.

In the subsequent mantra 6.8.7 occurs the teaching: This Sat which is the essence of the universe is the Truth, is the Self of the Universe and 'you are that Sat'. This is the **first time** the teaching 'tat tvam asi' occurs.

The First question:

Upon hearing this instruction Shvetaketu expresses his doubt: (As per the bhashyam) It was taught earlier (in 6.8.2 through the Bird example) that the jIva-s become united with the Sat every time during deep sleep. Why is it that they do not realize that they have become united with Sat during sleep?

The Reply:

The (first) example taken up to reply the above question is: (6.9.1) The honey bees collect nectar from various sources (trees/flowers) and deposit their collection in their hive. Now, this nectar is a total mass of juice where it is impossible to distinctly identify the specific tastes/flavours of the sources of the juices like mango, tamarind, etc. In other words, the juices with various tastes/flavours have now become indistinguishably 'one'. Similarly the jIva-s having become 'one' with Sat in deep sleep are unable to realize their individual identities. This is a state where the jIva-s have given up their upAdhi-s namely the instruments of mind, sense organs, etc. that help in grasping the worldly objects and also recognize their own identities as for example 'I am a man, a son, a student, etc.' In the example, the juices/flavours have 'given up' their upAdhi-s namely the specific tree/flower to which they had belonged to prior to their being drawn by the honey bee.

The example demonstrates the 'nAnAtva', distinctness, plurality, that obtains when identification with upAdhis is at play. In the waking, all beings experience their mutual distinctions.

The 'ekatva/aikyam', unity, is what remains in the sleep state. (the mass-honey) In this example we find that what caused the distinction in tastes/flavours is the upAdhi. When the upAdhi-s were no longer in evidence, there is no distinction possible. Thus, aikyam between the *individual* (juices/flavours) and the *total* (honey) is taught by the Upanishad through this example.

The Upanishad gives the further example (6.9.3) of the numerous beings having distinct identities in the waking like, 'lion, tiger, mosquito, etc.'. When these enter sleep and become one with their true nature, Sat, they do not have the cognition of their waking-identities of being a lion, tiger, etc.

The Second Question:

Uddalaka instructs Shvetaketu after giving the above example of bees-juices-honey and the 'lion, tiger, etc.' that this Sat, upon entering which the jIva-s know not their individual identities and also do not know that they have merged in the Sat, is That Sat which is the cause of the world, That is the Truth, and 'That thou are, O Shvetaketu'. This is the **second time** that Tat tvam asi is taught.

After hearing this, Shvetaketu raises a question and requests the reply to be given with an example. His question, as per the bhashyam, is:

'If all the jIva-s have indeed united with the Sat in deep sleep, why is it that after emerging from sleep they do not recognize that they have indeed emerged from Sat?'

The Reply:

Uddalaka replies by taking an example (6.10.1): The various rivers (with specific names) that have really originated from the waters of the ocean, through the process of evaporation and falling as rain, do not recognize/realize that ‘we have indeed come from the ocean but are now appearing with various names and forms’. Similarly do the jIva-s upon emerging from the Sat after sleep do not recognize that they have indeed emerged from the Sat just as they did not realize that they have become one with the Sat during sleep.

Also, upon reaching the ocean, the rivers do not know their individual identities with specific names.

We can see the logic of the earlier example being presented in a reversed way in the present example. While the ‘giving up’ of the upAdhi-s was the cause of not knowing the identity with Sat in sleep, now the assuming of the upAdhi-s is the reason for not knowing the source, Sat. While being united with the Sat the upAdhi-s were not present. When the waking occurs, the upAdhi-s present themselves and upon identification with the upAdhi-s one becomes deluded and does not recognize/recollect the earlier unity with the Sat as their source.

Again, in this example, the identity of the rivers with the ocean is brought out through the method of their not realizing their oceanic source.

The Upanishad, in mantra 6.10.2 states again that the jIva-s which entered the Sat in deep sleep without having consciously given up their avidyA-born identities like lion, tiger, mosquito, etc. now return from Sat, after sleep, to the waking, with those very respective identities.

The Upanishad, in the ocean-river example makes it clear that the rivers are non-different, abheda, from their source, the ocean.

It is only the association with the limiting upAdhi-s that results in the rivers not being aware of their oceanic source and their essential oceanic nature.

So, too, the jIva-s do not know their Sat-source and their essentially Sat-nature, abheda, when they are associated with their avidyA-born limiting identities. We are reminded of the seminal teaching of this Upanishad: mRRittiketyeva satyam (6.1.4). All the jIva-s are essentially non-different from Sat, their true nature.

The mantra 6.8.4 through the words ‘sanmUIAH somya imAH sarvAH prajAH sadAyatanAH satpratiShThAH’ teaches that all the beings that are born have the Sat for their source, stay and dissolution. Clay is the material cause of the clay-products. As products they are insubstantial, being mere names and therefore false; the substance, the truth there, is only the clay.

An important teaching that the example (in mantras 6.10.1 & 2) gives out is:

Since it is the identification with the upAdhis – body-mind – that causes ‘estrangement’ from Sat, it becomes the foremost duty of the spiritual aspirant to dissociate from such an identification in the waking state. It is this goal that is intended by the Upanishads. When the necessary practice towards this end is in place, one will slowly start realizing one’s Sat-identity in the waking state. When this realization becomes firm, it results in liberation.

Uddalaka instructs that this Sat, emerging from which the beings do not recognize their source, is That which is the Cause of the universe and is the Truth. ‘That thou are, O Shvetaketu’. This is the **third time** that ‘Tat tvam asi’ is taught.

The Third question:

After hearing this, Shvetaketu raises another question wanting to be replied with an illustration: ‘ In the world we see that the transformations of water like a wave, a ripple, froth, bubbles, when they become one with water lose their individuality itself and become extinct as a wave, ripple, etc. But in the case of jIva-s when they enter their source, Sat, in sleep or death, they do not become extinct. How is this explained?’

The Reply:

(6.11.2) Uddalaka takes up the case of a tree and shows that a tree is vibrant with life. This is known by the sap it drains when the trunk is hit with an axe at different places at random. This lively tree at times, due to disease or decimation, gives up its association/identification with a particular branch. Such a branch eventually dries. The entire tree does not get dried but only certain parts/branches dry. Sometimes the entire tree dries. It is only what is ‘left/discarded’ by the jIva in the tree that dies but not the jIva that resides in the tree. Similarly the jIva-s do not become extinct just upon contacting Sat during sleep. Their karma brings them back from Sat for the experience of sa.msAra. Only when the karma-s are exhausted for this particular janma does the jIva leave the body and death occurs to the body but the jIva does not die. Sat, the mUlakAraNam, of the world, which is the one that has entered the body as the jIva, and which is what the jIva is in truth, however, never dies.

In this tree example too we find that the Sat itself is what is manifesting as the jIva-in/as-the-tree. There is a mantra that says....sImAnam vidAryaitayA dvArA prApadyata (Ait.up. 3:12) and ‘...sa eSha iha praviShTaH A nakhAgrebhyaH (Br.Up. 1.4.7) (Brahman has entered the body by piercing a hole in the head and stays all over the body up to the tip of the nails.)

The experiment of hitting the tree with an axe at the bottom, middle and top of the tree and the sap flowing from the cuts is to show that the tree-jIva is alive there.

It also shows that the Sat is what is manifest there as the jIva.

The identity of the jIva with the Sat is taught by the mantra ‘anena jIvena AtmanA anupravishya..’ quoted earlier. (See [footnote](#) at the end)

There is a specific sequence involved in the presentation of the three examples taken up by the Upanishad so far. First, the question is regarding the jIva merging in Sat during

deep sleep. This, although experienced by everyone, is not known to be a merger with Sat; only the Shruti has to 'inform' us. This 'information' leads to the enquiry naturally resulting in the question: If everyone merges with Sat in sleep, why does not one know this? The next question is: Why does not one know, in the waking, when the instruments required for gaining knowledge are present, that one has returned from Sat? This was answered through the next example: of the ocean-river. By showing that during sleep the awareness that one is in Sat is not present and also that the awareness of having emerged from Sat is not there in the waking, the Upanishad taught that it is aj~nAnam and the identification with the avidyA-created upAdhi-s that is the culprit. The two examples also teach that the jIva in essence is Sat. This gives rise to the next question: If the jIva is essentially Sat, why is it that the jIva is not annihilated/destroyed when merger with Sat happens? This was explained by taking up the tree-sap example. It became clear to Shvetaketu that the jIva does not die; what has caused jIvatvam is only the identification with upAdhi-s due to ignorance. Thus, by employing the three examples the Shruti has established the Advaitic truth: jIvo brahmaiva, jIvatvam (sa.msAritvam) tu aavidyakam, jIvaH sadeva san naiva mriyate. [The jIva is essentially Brahman (Sat), the jIvahood is only due to ignorance and the jIva being Sat never dies.]

Such a Sat, upon contacting which every day in sleep, the jIva does not die but continues to live, is the Cause of this world and is the Truth. 'You are that Sat, O Shvetaketu' is the instruction. This is the **fourth time** tat tvam asi is taught.

So far, through the various examples, the teacher Uddalaka clarified Shvetaketu's doubts pertaining to the *jIva-svarUpa*. The clarification came in the form of the firm teaching that the **jIva is essentially Sat**.

The Fourth Question:

(The following question concerns itself about the *jagat-svarUpa*. The reply of Uddalaka is framed by way of bringing out the firm teaching that the **jagat is non-different from Sat**.)

Upon hearing 'tat tvam asi', Shvetaketu asks: How is it that this extremely **gross** universe consisting of earth, etc. and endowed with names and forms, emerge from the Sat that is extremely **subtle** and free of names and forms?

The Reply:

In the mantra 6.12.1 the Upanishad gives the reply, through the example of a banyan tree. One sees a huge banyan tree with all branches and foliage. When one takes up the seed of the tree to examine its being the cause of a huge tree, one only ends up seeing 'nothing'. But one cannot deny the fact that the seed is the cause of the tree. The subtle nature of the cause that engenders a gross effect is brought forth in this example.

The Upanishad itself taught earlier that the elements fire, water and earth have come from the Sat. The elements, combining with each other, form the gross universe. By the rule

taught in the 'vAchArambhaNa' shruti of this very Chapter, the effect is essentially non-different from its cause. The tree is really non-different from its cause, the seed. The huge tree is 'contained' in the seed in a subtle form. The causal seed may not be physically perceivable all over the tree. (The difference between the cause and the effect may be maintained for answering practical utility purposes but their essential non-difference is what tattva j~nAnam is about.) Yet, by considering that the tree would not have sprung up in the absence of the seed (the presence of other factors like water, soil, manure, etc. notwithstanding) we can establish the cause-effect relationship between the seed and the tree. Bhagavatpada has pointed out elsewhere that the succeeding stages like the sprout, the sapling, the small plant, and the grown up tree, can be seen to have their preceding stages as their causes. In all these stages, including the seed, what is common is that they are all 'Sat' essentially. Sat is therefore the mUlakAraNam of every effect in the universe. And, Sat is what essentially everything is.

□□□□□ The above example brings out a very important teaching: The 'cause' Sat, is not known by sensory means; nevertheless, it has to be first *accepted to exist*. It is this initial acceptance when taken forward through mananam and nididhyAsanam will culminate in the direct realization of the Truth. The Kathopanishad (2.3.13) teaches 'asti ityeva upalabdavyaH..' (Atman is to be known as 'It exists')

Upon hearing the teaching: 'That Sat which, despite being extremely subtle, is the cause of this gross universe, is the Self of the universe and is the Truth, are thou in truth, tat tvam asi' (**fifth time**), Shvetaketu comes up with another question:

The Fifth Question:

'If that Sat is the cause of the world, why is it not perceived?'

The Reply:

The Upanishad, in mantras 6.13.1 and 2, gives the reply by taking up an experiment. A certain quantity of salt is put in a vessel containing water. The next day, when one looks for the salt in the vessel, one does not see any. However, when one takes a sip of the water from the vessel, from any part, it tastes salty. From this it is concluded that even though the salt is very much present in the water, it is not perceptible for the eyes (sight) or hand (touch). But it is graspable by the sense of taste, the tongue. Similarly, the Cause, Sat, even though present, is not available for senses. But it has to be known through a non-sensory means. 'Such a Sat are you Shvetaketu' is the teaching of tat tvam asi for the **sixth time**.

This example teaches that the Sat, the Cause, pervades the entire universe, the effect. Although salt is not the cause of water which it pervades, the part of the 'pervasiveness' is what is relevant in the example. It forcefully brings to the fore the fact that even though the 'subtle/unseen' Sat is present very much and all-pervading, yet it cannot be known by ordinary means of knowledge. It

requires a unique means to know it – upAyAntaram. In the example, the eye and the hand (sight and touch), which were employed at the time of putting the salt in the water, are now incapable of grasping the salt in the water; the tongue, tasting faculty, is required for this. So too, the subtle Sat is graspable only by the special methods taught by the Guru and Shastram. (See [footnote](#))

The presence of the aNimA nature of Sat was initially ‘accepted’ (in the earlier seed-tree example). Its knowledge is now further strengthened by knowing the exact means required for realizing it. This is further elucidated in the next example.

The Sixth question:

Shvetaketu asks: If this is so, what is that extra-sensory means by which I can know the Sat?

The Reply:

The mantras 6.14.1 and 2 bring out *the means and method of knowing the Sat*. An illustration is taken up to convey this. A man from a city is blindfolded and abducted by some robbers and left in a deep forest, without removing the blindfold. Hearing the victim’s wailing, someone taking pity for this man removes his blindfold and freeing his tied hands, instructs him the path he will have to take to reach his city. The saved man, taking the instruction, reaches his city, being guided by several others on the way. Similarly does a mumukshu seek the guidance of the Guru and implements the teachings and finally realizes his goal of freedom from transmigratory existence. After attaining the liberating knowledge, however, he remains in the physical body/world as long as the body lives and finally attains oneness with the Sat. The teaching essentially is: The one endowed with an Acharya, a teacher, gets the liberating knowledge. Acharya upadesha is the unique means required to gain this knowledge. ‘Such a Sat, are you, tat tvam asi’ is the **seventh time** teaching.

The example brings out the truth that ignorance consists of not knowing the truth about oneself (and taking the unreal for the real). When one is ‘blindfolded’ by ignorance, what results is misery, signified by the victim’s wailing in the wilderness. The misery ends only when one gets the right knowledge of his self through the teaching of the Acharya. This reminds one of the verse: aj~nAnAntargahana patitAn AtmavidyopadeshaiH... where the Lord Himself comes in the form of the Guru to give this Atma vidya thereby freeing the jIva from anAtma adhyAsa and abhimAna (that is, wrong identification with the non-Self and taking that to be one’s true nature).

In the example we find that the savior instructs the suffering man on the path to his destination. The Bhashyam says the word panditaH means the one who has gained the right instruction. The word medhAvin of the mantra denotes the capacity on the individual to implement the instruction without flaw and reach the destination.

Bhagavatpada adds that only such a one with the right instruction and capacity reaches the goal and not the one who gets distracted by what he sees on the way and thereby loses the enthusiasm to reach the goal. The ‘distraction’ comes from the anAtma.

The anAtmA consists of that which is taught as ‘vAchArambhaNam vikAro nAmadheyam’ (the names and forms that are the effect and therefore unreal). The Satyam is thus the Atman and the goal. The man’s ‘coming away from his home-town’ is the ‘ignorance pertaining to the svarUpa, the Truth’. His ending up in a forest, knowing not how to get back to his town, is the ‘experiencing of sa.msAra’. By taking recourse to the savior, he reaches his town. Similarly, the Guru and Shastra upadesha guide one to the source, the svarUpa. Here, of course, there is no physical movement from one place to another. Getting the firm conviction as to one’s svarUpa is what constitutes liberation. One is Brahman even while one thinks one is in sa.msAra. One realizes one’s own Brahman nature and becomes freed from sa.msAra. He realizes that he has ever been Brahman and ever will be That.

The example also reminds one of the other example, of that of a bird tied to a post wandering in various directions and returning to the post for rest described in the mantra 6.8.2. For the word ‘prANa’ occurring therein the bhashyam says: ‘prANa’ denotes the Sat’. The idea conveyed by this mantra is: A jIva indulges in various actions in search of peace and finally not finding it anywhere, returns during sleep to his source, the Self, Sat. In the example of the blindfolded person we see that he has come away from his source and is miserable and seeks to get back to his source. This shows that one is non-different from the source and anything other than being in the source does not give the peace that is longed for.

The Seventh question:

Shvetaketu asks: What is the process by which such a Knower becomes united with the Sat?

The Reply:

The Upanishad, in the mantra 6.15.1, replies thus:

The man on the verge of passing out is found to respond to questions from those surrounding him so long as his speech does not subside in the mind and the mind in the prana and the prana itself in the tejas, bodily heat and finally the heat also (not) dissolving in the Sat. But as soon as the successive dissolving of the faculties occurs, the man stops responding to the others’ questions. ‘It is such a Sat that is the cause of the world, are thou, O Shvetaketu’, is the **eighth time** the teaching tat tvam asi is given out.

The example (process) brings out the fact that the Sat is the material cause of the world consisting of the various physical and subtle bodies and the objects. The world is made of elements tejas, ApaH and annam (fire, water and earth).

In the description of the death, the faculties of speech, mind, life force (vAk, manas and prANa) are shown to merge in tejas, fire and tejas itself in Sat. The Sat is the material cause from which matter consisting of fire, etc. has emerged and into which all these dissolve in the end.

The body and the faculties are also transformations of matter that have emerged from Sat. Such a Sat is taught in the tat tvam asi mantra as the Cause of the world and the Truth, the Self of the world as well as of Shvetaketu.

The eighth question:

When replied thus, Shvetaketu asks: If the process of passing out is the same for the Knower (j~nAnin) and the ignorant, aj~nAnin, why is it that only the aj~nAnin returns to sa.msAra and not the j~nAnin who gets liberated?

The Reply:

The reply is given in the mantra 6.16.1, 2 and 3 through an example. An accused in a crime is brought for trial. In this system of trying an accused, a heated axe is given to the accused to hold. If the accused is the real culprit but does not admit to his crime, the heated axe burns his palm. Thereafter he is punished with death. On the other hand, if the accused is innocent and puts forth his plea and holds the heated axe, his palm is not burnt. Thereupon he is released. The lesson that is conveyed is: Adhering to the Truth releases a person and clinging to falsehood binds a person, even though the act of holding the heated axe is common to both an offender and an innocent man.

Similarly the aspirant who has held on to the Sat, the Truth, and realized It, upon death does not return to sa.msAra. The ignorant man, taking the body-mind to be his self, returns to transmigratory existence, after death.

□□□□□ The heated-axe example brings to the fore the Advaitic teaching contained in the Chandogya Up. 6.1.4: The effect, the products of clay, is insubstantial being mere names and forms and therefore unreal. The cause, the clay, alone is the substance that inheres in the effect and therefore real: mRRittiketyeva satyam. The Knowledge of this Sat, satyam, the Real, constitutes liberating knowledge and its opposite, the taking of the unreal as the real, leads to remaining in bondage.

The **Ninth and Final** teaching of tat tvam asi: Uddalaka teaches: ‘That Sat, (upon reaching which after death, the j~nAnin does not return to sa.msAra and the ignorant one comes back,) is the Cause of the Universe, and is the Truth and the Self of all. That is thou Shvetaketu.’

Freedom from doubts:

At this stage Shvetaketu finds that he has no more questions to ask and that the teaching of sadvidyA or AtmavidyA is crystal clear to him. The Upanishad concludes the teaching, having reached its culmination in the aspirant gaining the direct realization of the Truth.

A synopsis:

□□□□□ The above study was taken up with a view to appreciating the teaching of Advaita contained even in the various illustrations that the Upanishad gives in the process of giving out the teaching of ‘tat tvam asi’ nine times.

□□□□□ Various aspects of Advaita were brought out in the different illustrations.

□□□□□ The non-difference of the effect from the cause is brought out in the illustration concerning the relation of Sat and the world.

□□□□□ The world consists of matter, a transformation of Sat. ‘World’ includes all that is experienced as ‘this’ including the body-mind complex of any individual being.

□□□□□ Separated from the ‘matter’, the individual being is pure Consciousness. Sat is taught as the Atma, Self, of the individual. It is the Consciousness that is equated with Sat.

□□□□□ Separated from ‘matter’ the world is pure Existence. Sat is Existence.

□□□□□ The Ultimate Teaching is: The Jiva is essentially Sat. The jagat is also essentially Sat. What is inessential in the jIva and jagat is the vikAra, nAmadheyam, mere name.

□□□□□ Sat alone Is, ekam eva advitIyam. By knowing Sat one knows everything and this knowledge is the liberating knowledge taught by this Upanishad in Chapter VI.

The above study also reveals a particular order in which the teaching of tat tvam asi has been given nine times.

□□□□□ The first time teaching has for its content a general view of Sat as the underlying cause of the universe.

□□□□□ The second, third and fourth time teachings have the 'tvam' pada viveka (the meaning of the word 'tvam' signifying the true nature of the jIva) for their content. (honey, lion-tiger-mosquito identification, river-ocean and tree-sap-branch-drying up examples)

□□□□□ The fifth and sixth time teachings have the 'tat' pada viveka (the true meaning of the word 'tat', Sat/Brahman/The Cause of the universe) for their content. (seed-tree, salt-in-water examples)

□□□□□ The seventh, eighth and ninth time teachings have the 'asi' or aikyam (the identity of the tvam with tat) for their content. (blind-folded victim, process-of-death and heated-axe examples)

□□□□□ We are able to say the above on aikyam because in the example of the 'heated axe', the falsely accused, being an adherent of truth, passes the heated-axe test and is freed. He is not put to death. So too, the j~nAni is freed and does not 'die' in the way the aj~nAni dies. Death, in normal terms, means returning to sa.msAra. Punishment with death signifies continued sa.msAra. The j~nAni does not return to sa.msAra. This example teaches 'apunarAvRRitti' (non-return to embodied existence). The earlier description (6.15.1) of the process of attaining union with Sat during death teaches us the 'sat sampatti' (becoming one with Sat). sat sampatti and apunarAvRRitti are characteristics of aikyam, denoted by the word 'asi'.

□□□□□ Jivanmukti is taught by the Upanishad in the words 'tasya tAvadeva chiram...(there is delay only till such time the body falls)'

□□□□□ After the ninth and final teaching of tat tvam asi, Shvetaketu, having no more questions, realizes the Truth.

Foot notes:

1. The Bhagavadgita too teaches the above identity. In verse

In the 15th Ch. of the Gita we have this verse:

utkrAmantam sthitam vApi bhU.njAnam vA gunAnvitam |

vimUDhA na anupashyanti pashyanti j~nAna-chakShuShaH ||

What we most closely encounter in our human lives is graphically described as a reminder by the Lord in this verse. We see death and birth around us. We see a variety of experiences, bhoga, sukha and duHkha. We see the variety of moods that the mind undergoes: sattvam, rajas and tamas. All these can happen only to a sentient being. And that is what we are. The Lord says that we have failed to enquire into ‘to whom do these experiences happen? Who is the one Sentient Being behind all these experiences?’ Once this is known, the Lord says, liberation ensues. In other words, the knowledge of the One Being behind these experiences is the Liberating Knowledge. The ignorant ones fail to see this Being whereas those endowed with wisdom perceive This Person. This Person is the Purushottama.

[As to what this ‘j~nAna-chakShus’ is, we have the Lord’s words in the Gita 13th Ch.:

kShetra-kShetraj~nAyorevam antaram j~nAna-chakShuShA |

.....ye viduH yAnti te param ||

That ‘vision’ born of wisdom that enables to ‘see’ the difference between the knowable kShetra, the anAtma, and the Knower kShetraj~na, the AtmA, is what is termed as the liberating knowledge possessed by the wise.]

In the very next verse in the 15th chapter the Lord says: Those who strive for this knowledge, with their minds purified, succeed in realizing the Person who is ‘seated’ in the mind, intellect, heart. ‘Atmani avasthitam’. Who is the one seated in the heart? In this very chapter the Lord says: sarvasya chAham hRRidi sanniviShTo... It is the Paramatma, the Lord, that is seated in everyone’s heart.

The Lord says in the verse:

yatanto yoginashchainam pashyanti Atmanyavasthitam |

yatanto.apyakRRitAtmAno nainam pashyantyachetasaH ||

‘enam’: This one. The ‘This one’, him, enam, is of crucial importance for our present study. It is ‘enam, this’, that was just spoken of in the earlier verse as undergoing the various experiences of sa.msAra. The Lord says that the gaining of the knowledge of the ‘svarUpa’ of the sa.msArI jIva is the liberating knowledge. For, the Lord says he who is not endowed with this knowledge is ‘vimUDha’, an ignorant one. In the concluding verses of this chapter the Lord says: yo mAm evam asammUDho jAnAti puruShottamam....He who thus knows Me, the Purushottama, as the true Self of the Samsari is the wise person. Again He says that this teaching is the core teaching of the Vedanta. He who knows this teaching is kRRitakRRitya, buddhimAn. The knowledge about the True identity of this ‘enam’ who undergoes sa.msAra is the knowledge about the Truth that is Paramatma. ‘enam’, referring to the one seated in the heart, (nihatam guhAyAm), is the word that links the jIva to the Paramatma in identity.

Thus, the Lord teaches that the sa.msArI jIva's (tvam) svarupa is Purushottama Paramatma, (tat). This is the teaching of the Vedanta: tat tvam asi. The 'dvA suparNA' mantra only states that the One that does not eat the fruit of sa.msAra is the Atmani, hRRiddeshe, avasthita Ishwara of the Gita 18th chapter. It is this Paramatma that is referred to as Purushottama in the Gita 15th chapter. The Gita word 'enam', This one, is the word that signifies the aikyam, identity, of the jIva and Ishwara.

Incidentally, it would be interesting to have a look at the Gita verse 13.26:

yaavat sa.njAyate ki.nchit sattvam sthAvara-ja.ngamam |

kShetra-kShetraj~na-sa.nyogAt tadviddhi bharatarShabha ||

(O Scion of the Bharata dynasty, whatever moving or non-moving comes into being, know that to be from the association of the field and the knower of the field.)

The tree that is taken up as an example in the tat tvam asi teaching belongs to the class 'sthAvaram' of the above verse. ([Back](#) to the article)

2. Shri Shankaracharya has elaborated on this special method in the Bhashyam for the Gita verse 2.16 (nAsato vidyate bhAvo..) wherein the Sat, existence, is shown as the unfailing factor in the experiencing of any object while the objects themselves keep alternating. This method of looking at the world, the Gita calls, is the way of the tattvadarshin-s. The Sat is the tattvam and the asat (objects of name and form) is the atattvam. The tattvam, though extremely subtle, 'aNimA' as the Chandogya Upanishad calls it, is all-pervading and undeniable. Yet it is most difficult to grasp. ([Back](#) to the article)

shrI-sadguru-charaNAravindArpaNam-astu