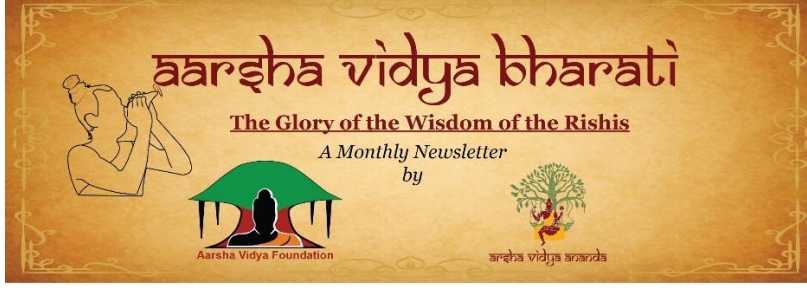


# Aarsha Vidya Bharati - July 2021

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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## Spotlight

### Spotlight on word



### and meaning for clarity

#### Ātmā

*Ātmā*, like many others words in Sanskrit, cannot be directly translated into English. Hence we understand the meaning and use the word *Ātmā* itself. *Ātmā* is not some entity that is external to you. It is to be identified as 'I'. *Śaṅkara* makes an important etymological point about *Ātmā* as oneself in *Kaṭhōpaniṣadbhāṣya* – 2.1.1.

*Ātmā* is that which is all pervading (*yat-ca-āpnoti*), that which resolves (*yat-ādatte*) everything onto itself at the time of *pralaya*, that which experiences (*yat-ca-atti*) all the sense objects as *jīvātmā* in this *janma*, and that which has got permanent existence (*yat-ca-santataḥ-bhāvaḥ*), that is said to be *Ātmā*.

*Tattvabodhaḥ* defines *Ātmā* as

स्थूलसूक्ष्मकारणशरीराद् व्यतिरिक्तः पञ्चकोशातीतः

सन्नवस्थात्रयसाक्षी सच्चिदानन्दस्वरूपः सन् यस्तिष्ठति स आत्मा ।

*sthūla-sūkṣma-kāraṇa-śarīrādvvyatiriktaḥpañca-kośātītaḥ*

*sannavasthā-traya-sākṣīsaccidānandasvarūpaḥ san yastiṣṭhatisaātmā.*

The one who is distinct from the gross, subtle and causal bodies, who is beyond the five levels of experience, being the witness of the three states (of experience), that which remains in the form of existence, consciousness and fullness, he (is) the self, *Ātman*.

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*Bhagavān* Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā* says,

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।  
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

*najāyatemriyatevākadācinnāyam̐bhūtvābhavitāvānabhūyaḥ*  
*ajonityaḥśāśvato yaṁpurāṇonahanyatehanyamāneśarīre* (2.20)

This (self) is never born; nor does it die. It is not that, having been, it ceases to exist again. It is unborn, eternal, undergoes no change whatsoever, and is ever new. When the body is destroyed, the self is not destroyed.

*Ātmā* is NOT Soul. Pujya Swami Dayananda ji would often joke that he had two soles and displaying his palms, would say, he now had four soles!

While we need to understand words in Vedanta from within the system, there is no need to contrast it with Christianity. Yet we do it here so that we stop translating *Ātmā* as soul, for good. According to Christianity soul is subject to sin and could be sent to heaven or hell depending on the belief in a saviour. In contrast *Ātmā* by definition is *nitya-śuddha-mukta* – ever pure, ever untouched by *punya/pāpa* and ever free from life and death.