

## Everything Inseparably One with the Universe!

At the very fundamental level, everything that has “name and form” (and exists within the framework of time, space, and causality) is comprised of various permutations and combinations of five basic elements: 1) earth element 2) water element 3) fire element 4) air element and 5) space element. Taking human body as an illustration, our skin and bones are examples of the earth element; blood, sweat, and other fluids in our body are examples of the water element; our body temperature, flow/burning of energy are examples of the fire element; our incoming/outgoing breath is an example of the air element; and the empty space within our nostrils, ears, mouth, stomach etc.—we are told that at the sub-atomic level, particles are essentially 99% empty—are the examples of space (ether) element.

As listed, each successive element is more subtle than the preceding one. For example, water is subtler than the earth, fire is subtler than water, air is subtler than fire, and space is subtler than air. It may also be postulated that earth element emanates from water, water element from fire, fire element from air, and finally air element emanates from space. Thus space emerges as the subtlest or the finest element of them all. The space also makes the “coming together” of the rest of the four elements possible.

Now, it is a matter of common experience that these elements are in a state of constant flux, change or mutation. In order for change to be reckoned, however, there has to be some measure. We call it “time.” Thus ‘space’ and ‘time’ are the two fundamental constructs of reality. To wit, “space” prevents things from being at the same place at the same time, and “time” prevents all events from happening at the same time and at the same place! Thus, time and space seem to be inseparable twins. One cannot exist without the other. Hence, modern physics speaks of the time-space continuum. Actually, time is considered to be the fourth dimension of space—length, breadth, and height being the other three.

So far, so good! Now what this analysis has to do with the title of this piece: *‘Everything is Inseparably One with the Universe!’*

Well, everything. Let's return to our original list of five elements, the basic building blocks of the universe: earth, water, fire, air, and space. Here is something to ponder over: the earth element in us cannot exist without the Totality of the Earth outside us. Got food?! The water element within us cannot exist without the Totality of Water outside us. Got water?! The air element within us (breath) cannot exist without the Totality of Air, and so forth. Hence, we are inseparably one with (and totally interdependent on) the totality of existence. As above, so below: *Jo brahmaandey, soee pindey*. The macrocosm within the microcosm: *Samashti within Vayashti*.

A discerning reader must have noticed that we have left out the most important constituent of it all, which is even more subtle than space. The sages call it Awareness. The conscious principle that makes life possible and gives meaning to all that exists! It is the warp and woof of our conscious life. If it is true of the five basic elements—that we share them with rest of the creation—how much more so it is of the Awareness—the organizing principle of life. *Only when we realize oneness of our true reality within (Atman) with this common shared ground of existence without (Brahman) can we truly fulfill our purpose as human being. The Journey to the Divine starts and ends here.*

**Moral of the Story:** We all share the same earth, water, fire/light, air, and space element with rest of the creation and at the same time with the Totality of Creation. More so, the Awareness—the subtlest element of them all—pervades ubiquitously and commonly within and without each manifestation of creation. Let's reclaim and celebrate our kinship with rest of the universe and do nothing to endanger our sacred pact with the Cosmos.

Putting it all together... So, what does this understanding of unity of the truth in us (Atman) and the truth of the universe (Brahman) really mean in practical terms. The Bhagavad Gita, at two places (5:25, 12:4) uses the expression “delighting in the well-being of all beings” (*sarvabhutahiteratah*) to describe the attitude of the liberated ones towards all beings. Sri Krishna, using Himself as an example of a liberated being, tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita (3.22) that ‘there is nothing in all the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me, yet I continue to work.’ And, in BG verse 3.25, comes the greatest practical advice to live by: ‘As the unwise

act with attachment, so should the wise man, seeking maintenance of the world order, *should act without attachment.*' (emphasis added)

Here is Sri Sankara's understanding of this wonderful *sloka*: "For Me, or for any other person who, knowing the Self, thus seeks the welfare of the world, there is nothing to do except it be with a view to that welfare of the world at large." (BG 3:25, p. 108)

When we 'see the self in all beings and all beings in the self' (BG 6:29), only then we come upon the abode of true liberating knowledge. In the verses that follow the verse 6:29, Sri Krishna eloquently describes the practical implications of this understanding of oneness, culminating in verse 6:32, as follows:

*Thus seeing that what is pleasure or pain to himself is alike pleasure or pain to all beings, he causes pain to no being. Doing no harm, and devoted to right knowledge, he is regarded as the highest among all Yogins.*

~Sastri, pp. 199-200, Sri Sankara's commentary on BG verse 6:32

For such a person, in the words of *Isa Upanisad* (6-7), there is complete freedom from hate, delusion and sorrow:

*One who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that realization. What delusion and what sorrow can there be for the Seer of Oneness?!*

(Note: All translations of the BG verses are from Gita Press, Gorakhpur, publications; *Isa Upanisad* verses 6-7 are based on Swami Gambhirananda's work; and the translation of Sri Sankara's Bhasya is from the incomparable pen of Alladi Mahadeva Sastri, originally published in 1897!)