

Points to Ponder : Ātma Bodha

Sep 13, 2025 Class-7

- 1) In verses 40-46, we saw how Shankaracharya gradually builds up how a yogi “finds” Brahman. Explain the thought process in these verses.
- 2) What are Satyam and Mithya ? Illustrate using an example.

Sep 6, 2025 Class-6

- 1) Why are Siddhis (powers beyond what is considered normal) de-emphasized during the study of Vedanta even though they are mentioned in the scriptures ?
- 2) Please recap the following terms and what they mean:
 - a) Brahman, Ātma and their differences.
 - b) Māya
 - c) Adhyāsaḥ

- d) The two powers of Māya and explain them and give a practical example for each
- e) Mithya
- f) The 3 levels of realities
- g) Anyōnya Adhyāsaḥ
- h) Upadhih
- i) The 3 bodies as Upadhis and what are the three called and what are their functions ?
- j) Chidabasa, why is this concept introduced, and explain using an example
- k) Drk Drshya Vivekam
- l) Anvaya–Vyatireka and explain how using this it is proved that the feelings like fear, sorrow etc. belong to the intellect alone and not “I”
- m) Mahavakyam
- n) The 3 steps involved in obtaining knowledge
- o) Difference between Upasana and Nidhidhyasanam
- p) What are the factors involved in cognition and describe them with an example

q) Vṛtti-vyāpti and Phala-vyāpti. What are they and give an example to illustrate them.

Aug 30, 2025 Class-5

- 1) In [slide 122](#), we saw that Ātma cannot know because it is immutable (changeless) and that the Buddhi (intellect) cannot know because it is inert (जडम्/ jadam) just like electricity and the apple sorting machine. Then where does knowing take place ?
- 2) Is the mind needed to know the Ātma ?
- 3) What is the difference between Upasana (object based meditation in the yoga sutras) and Nidhidyasanam ?
- 4) From verse 31, Shankaracharya quietly uses the word “I” instead of “the Atma” or “the Brahman”. Why is he doing this at this juncture ?
- 5) By part 4, the āvaraṇa śaktiḥ or the veiling power of Māyā is sorted out. In part 5, the Vikshepa śaktiḥ (projecting power) of Māyā is

being sorted out. In this context, [the 3 levels of realities](#) become very relevant. Using this as a navigating tool, explain why it makes sense to worship God, especially God with name and form (like Krishna or even a sacred mountain), even though you are the same as God with consciousness as the common feature, just as a wave is the same as the ocean, in that they are both water. i.e. from one angle, the great equation, “Aham Brahma asmi” says that “I am Brahman” and therefore worship of God is like self-worship, which at best does not make sense and at worst looks like narcissism. But from another angle worship of God is a well accepted feature in Vedanta. Explain the seeming dichotomy

Aug 23, 2025 Class-4

We are now studying part-4 which talks about the solution to the imagined superimposition of the characteristics of the Body and the Mind onto “I”, the Ātma.

- 1) In Shloka 18, the concept of “Drk (seer) Drishya (seen) Viveka (differentiation through discrimination)” was introduced. Describe what this concept is ?
- 2) Name the three similes we saw in class-4 that are used to illustrate how the body, mind and the senses are superimposed on “I”, the Ātma.
- 3) What is the Anvaya Vyatirekha method ?
- 4) In Vedanta, a very famous simile that is used is that of mistaking a rope for a snake which results in fear. What does this simile convey ?

Aug 16, 2025 Class-3

- 1) In the previous class, we saw how the characteristics of “I”, the Brahman or the Ātma are transferred to the Universe as part of this mutual superimposition, called [Anyōnya Adhyāśah](#).

In this class, we studied various Upadhis at the Jiva or the microscopic level. i.e. at our level. Since an Upadhi is something that transfers its properties to something else, we saw how the properties of the various “inert” entities that belong to the “body-mind complex” were transferred to “I”, the pure Ātma. In this context,

a) describe the two ways in which our inert mind-body complex is partitioned based on structure.

b) Describe their equivalence. I.e. what parts of the first classification are equivalent to the parts of the second classification.

2) Vedanta uses beautiful analogies to explain the a) Gross (Sthūla Sharīram) b) subtle (Sūkṣma Sharīram) and c) Causal bodies (Kāraṇa Sharīram). Please explain what each is analogized to. (slide 15 of “[Our 3 bodies](#)”)

3) What is the cause of the body that we inhabit ? In other words, why did we get the body that we have ?

4) What is the necessary condition for a Upadhi, that which transfers its qualities to another, a upahitam ? Give some examples.

5) If you say that Ātma is that which sheds light on anything, then why is there a gradation in intelligence between various people as well as between people and animals and further between animals and plants ?

6) Which of the three bodies mentioned in question #2 survives a) after death b) after dissolution of the Universe ?

7) Let us consider a very smart person with very high IQ who is reborn as a chicken in his/her next lifetime. Since the sukshma shariram transmigrates, how come the intelligence of that person is not reflected in the chicken ?

8) Why is the concept of reflected consciousness introduced and why is it so important ?

Aug 9, 2025 Class-2

- 1) In today's class we covered a very important concept called Māya (root ignorance) which is the cause of all our problems. Just like Brahman/Atma is consciousness that reveals everything it shines on (hence, knowledge with "K"), Māya is called root Ignorance (with capital "I", a.k.a. Mūlāvidhyā).

Real life example:

If a fearful person is ignorant (veiling power or āvaraṇa śaktiḥ) of the motive of another person then he/she projects a mental image of the other person harming him (Vikṣēpa śaktiḥ : the power of projection). This will lead to a set of actions by the first person to protect themselves. All this is caused by ignorance.



Question: Using this flow of thought, explain the sequence of events from creation to our state of suffering and transient pleasures. [Note

that if you understood this train of thought, you have understood the entire class]

2) Why is this superimpositions in the previous “train of thought” described as mutual superimposition (Anyōnya Adhyāsaḥ) ? i.e. what is mutual about it ?

3) What is Mithya (the root for the English word “myth”) ?

4) We saw several analogies in class today. Let us recapitulate them

What does the mother of pearl shining like silver signify ?	
What do the bubbles arising, staying for a while and disappearing, in the ocean signify ?	

What does the spider signify ?



5) What is a Upadhi ? Describe the earth as a Upadhi for space just as the body is a Upadhi for the Atma.



6) Explain the analogy of Upadis of color, taste etc (from additives) on pure water which is colorless and tasteless ?

7) Reflect on the fact that the “Gold ornaments are just names and forms and the only thing there is underneath all is Gold for each ornament can be melted into something else or into a lump of gold”.
How is it relevant to our everyday life ?

Aug 2, 2025 Class -1

- 1) After the first class of Ātma Bodha, if you consider “you” as the subject of enquiry, what are the three main and distinct components of “you” that come to your mind ?
- 2) In Vedanta, analogies are always used to describe the Ātma. Why is this ?
- 3) In Vedanta, the primary postulate is that all our experiences (including physical pleasure and pain) happen in the mind alone and not in the body. What are the 4 portions of the mind ? Describe them and say where they are located in the body.
- 4) In Yoga, there is a popular analog of the mind to a movie theater. Describe this analogy and delineate which components of the movie theater correspond which parts of you. Most importantly, which is “you”, the Ātma.
- 5) If “you” are the consciousness different from the mind and as it is said in the introduction, “you”, the Ātma, can shed light and

illuminate anything in the Universe, why is there gradation in minds

-within people, between people and animals and also between

people and plants ?

- 6) In shloka 4, it is said that “Atma shines on its own”. Does it mean that you do not need the mind to realize that you are the Atma ?