

Soul in Vedanta Metaphysics and Emersonian Philosophy*

Keshav Raj Chalise, PhD

Lecturer of English
Nepal Sanskrit University
chalisekeshavraj73@gmail.com

Abstract

Vedanta philosophy, as the foundation of Hindu philosophy, has talked much about the existence and role of Atma in life in depth, and Atma's relationship to Paramatma as the unity of the worldly living beings and the absolute, Brahma. This notion deals with the idea that Atma is immortal and unchanged, but it undergoes transformation from body to body. The western Christian philosophy also has the notion of Atma with the name "the soul," but Christian philosophy gives the message of the changeability of the soul. Being brought up in Christian culture and tradition, Emerson focuses on the soul's spirituality in his writings and develops the theory of transcendentalism, but as influenced by Vedantic philosophy, his concept of the soul departs from pure Christian tradition and gets linked with the Vedantic concept of Atma and Paramatma. This study examines how Vedanta metaphysics and Emersonian transcendentalism share common ground in the perception of Atma and Paramatma, and finds the connection between Vedantic metaphysical notion of the soul as Atma and Paramatma and American transcendental view of the soul and the Over-soul proposed in Emerson's writings. This study is significant to make a meaningful connection between the Eastern Vedic viewpoints with the Western viewpoints in the mode of philosophical understanding.

Keywords: Atma, Paramatma, Over-soul, transcendence, Vedanta metaphysics.

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Concept of the Soul in the East and the West

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the founders of American transcendentalism, has composed essays, poems, and lectures. He has lightened on the typical American values as individualism, self-reliance, self-education, non-conformity, and anti-institutionalism. Talking about American values of material priority, he has equally talked about the essence of spirituality in his writings. He has asserted the individual's intuitive grasp of immensity, divinity— or soul— in observable nature. He has developed his own understanding of the metaphysical Absolute united in the physical and in all life. He has talked about individual soul and its connection with universal soul in his essays in the way it has long been in discussion in the Eastern Vedic texts.

The soul is the most frequently asked issue in philosophical inquiries both in the East and the West. The idea of the soul is the most discussed issue, from ancient eastern Vedanta to modern metaphysics. The notion of the soul has become so complex that it is still a matter of mystery, on the one hand. And, as it is a mystery, philosophies have logic that the soul is invisible, unattainable, unobservable, and non-experimental, but essential. Attempts to research the soul have not reached into the realm of the soul yet. The soul, therefore, is un-researchable matter. However, studies on the perceptions of the soul in various schools of philosophy are possible. The issue in this study is not so much what the soul is as it is, but how the Vedantic concept of *Atma* and *Paramatma* is reflected in Emerson's philosophy of the individual and universal soul. To address this research problem, the study focuses on the nature of *Atma* and *Paramatma* defined in Vedanta metaphysics, especially the Upanishads, and how they are reflected in American transcendental philosophy, especially of Emerson- as the research questions.

The Eastern philosophy of Vedanta is unique in delivering the knowledge of philosophy. Basically, it deals with the knowledge of metaphysics and spirituality. As a dominant factor of spirituality, the matter of *Atma* is the heart of Vedanta metaphysics. This study aims to examine the Vedantic concept of *Atma* and *Paramatma* and how this concept is linked with the American transcendental notion of soul and universal soul, especially in the philosophy of Emerson, with the significance of connecting the Eastern and Western philosophies in the matter of soul and Over-soul.

Vedanta Metaphysics

With the very traditional claim, the Vedas are *shruti*, "what cannot be thought up by the limited human intellect, but is of God" (Torwesten 23), texts. It means the sages heard the matter of the Vedas from the supreme power, the divine, and then they passed it to the people based on their memory, *smriti* (what is remembered). So, the Vedas are *shruti smriti granthas*. Finally, Veda Vyasa composed all those hymns into written forms shaped and structured as Vedas. So, the Vedas, "the first manifestation of the Brahman, so to speak, are its "word" (27), are not the creations of a single author; nor are they the creations of a single time period. The Vedas, with the world of Platonic ideas of universality, are the collection of hymns, believed to have been the voices of the divine, transmitted to human beings in the form of literature. For many generations, after they have appeared in the physical form of words and structures, these Vedic hymns have become the greatest source of knowledge. Vedic hymns were the product of thousands of years back, but their strength of knowledge is so powerful that they hold major philosophical discussions, both in the east and the west, even today, "The Veda, indeed, are said to be coeval with mankind— with the creation of humanity came the simultaneous creation of the knowledge required to live as a conscious being in the universe" (Hodgkinson 09). The conclusion of Vedic literature about the philosophy of life, the world, and the soul is Vedanta in real.

‘Vedanta’, the term from the Vedas, refers to the large world of knowledge from the Vedas, the origin of all post-Vedic texts and ideas. The Sanskrit-originated words, ‘Veda’ and ‘anta’, mean the conclusive knowledge of the Vedas. Vedanta is the conclusion of the Vedas. As a mode of philosophy based on the theological knowledge of the Vedas: *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama*, and *Atharva*, Vedanta, has introduced the rational method of meditating on the Supreme Absolute, the Eternal, and the Infinite. Vedanta is the culmination of human experience and is the end of the faculty of thinking. It is the greatest and the highest knowledge revealed to the ancient sages.

Karl H. Potter considers Vedanta to be a body philosophy accompanied by rituals with philosophical and theological inspiration, and believes that "this literature also contains the beginnings of the philosophical and theological speculations that flowered eventually in classical Hinduism" (3). Vedanta has a philosophy "which takes

its lead from the Upanishads" (3). Vedanta, "better described as wisdom itself" (Hodgkinson 02), consists of the philosophies of Vedic texts and Upanishads.

Not just as a text, Vedanta is a wide concept containing the body of knowledge from a number of religious and philosophical texts. Basically, Vedanta, in Hodgkinson's view, "has a 'triple canon': the canon of Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, and Bhagavad Gita" (3). This is further elaborated and explained by Adi Shankara, elucidating the Vedantic content with regards to the Bhagavad Gita, and even further, he has proposed the concept of *Advaita* Vedanta. In this regard, Vedanta has travelled from the earliest Vedas up to the philosophy proposed and extended by Shankara. Vedanta has later come "to be applied to the philosophy of non-dualism (that is the doctrine that there is no distinction between the soul and Brahma), particularly with respect to the Shiva philosopher Shankara" (Doniger 13). Throughout this long journey, the interpretation of Vedanta, either as dualism or as non-dualism; either as *Advaita*-monism or Vedic-polytheism, has always kept spirituality and the soul at the center; and the discussion of the soul always leads to the discourse of physics and metaphysics.

Is Vedanta physics? Is it purely metaphysics? Because Vedanta is a philosophy, answering in 'yes' or 'no' would be difficult. It requires a chain of inquiries to answer these questions. Vedanta can neither be purely physical nor purely metaphysical. Vedanta talks about life and the earth as the central concern of philosophical insight. It talks about the value of life and death, the value of earthly and beyond, and the value of material and immaterial things. It deals with *samsara* and beyond *samsara* as the quest for *moksha*. It regards *samsara* as the means to get *moksha*. It talks about the soul and the release of the soul from individual life as the mode of liberation from the cycle of life, or from the chain of life, death, and rebirth. The value of earthly life suggests physics, or physical reality, whereas the value of life beyond earthly life suggests metaphysics. Either Vedanta talks about *samsara* or it talks about *moksha*, and Vedanta regards "everything, without any exception whatsoever, is the one spirit" (Hodgkinson 2). It is the perception of the world as "the recognition of unity, the oneness of spirit" (5), and therefore, Vedanta is all about metaphysics.

Metaphysics, as the branch of knowledge, deals with the phenomena that are beyond the physical realm, which could be the arguments on religion or the reasoning based on philosophy, the abstract logics of knowledge because "every religion or

metaphysical quest receives its impetus from the thought-provoking phenomenon that all life is subject to change and ultimate dissolution" (Torwesten 40). Vedantic question of the physical world and its regularity can therefore have an attachment to physics, not particularly as pure science, and of further interpretation, the discourse of the soul or *Atma* as discussed in Vedanta philosophy, as the discussion of the world beyond the earthly is purely metaphysics. So, the philosophy of the soul in Vedanta is the philosophy of Vedanta metaphysics.

From *Atma* to *Paramatma* in Vedanta

The abstract always remains a mystery. Being beyond the physical form, understanding the abstract depends either on logic or on individual realization. Understanding 'the soul', since the soul is an abstract concept, follows the same pattern, the pattern of logic or the pattern of realization. Logic has a deep connection to knowledge; and realization has its foundation in feelings and emotions. The conclusion of both leads to a reliable point of interpretation, which turns out to be even stronger than the understanding of the visible, which comes through sensual experience. However, the experience is not only a sensual one. It can be intangible as well. The totality of tangible and intangible experience, as the sum of all experience and wisdom, is the soul. The understanding of the soul, therefore, is the understanding of the data through experience, both physical and spiritual.

The most discussed but least anticipated notion of Vedanta is the soul. Philosophies of both the east and the west have regarded the soul as a matter of never ending and ongoing discussion. The eastern philosophy, especially Vedic and Vedantic philosophy has regarded the soul as the prime source of all worldly existence, "Soul was the basis, the explanation, then, of motion as well as of life and breath" (Davids 74). It again focuses on the reason that the soul is beyond worldly. Such is the essence that the thing, which is not in physical form or shape, but is the foundation of all worldly existence, is the soul. The *Rig Veda*, being the earliest text in the vast spectrum of Vedic philosophy, has talked about the idea of the Soul, . . . , and then, this idea has come into full concept by the time Upanishads have developed the philosophy of Vedanta. Therefore, the journey of Vedanta began from the *Rig Veda* and has come up to Upanishads.

As an inspiring principle, the soul is believed to have its existence in the heart. As the soul and body are strongly linked in the life form, the soul is capable of separation from the body, but does not remain in this condition of separation as "after death it is united with a glorified double of the terrestrial body in the height of heaven, where it enjoys a life of unending bliss as a reward of virtue (Macdonell 498).

Chandogya Upanishad (III.xiv. 3) exactly defines the vastness of the soul as neither small, nor big, nor medium, but all in each condition, "This Soul within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this Soul is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds (Joshi, Bimali and Trivedi 144). Atma, therefore, is beyond a particular shape, size, and identity: it is smaller than the smallest thing known and greater than the greatest. Similarly, based on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Macdonell has elaborated on the nature of the soul as:

It is not large, and not minute; not short, not long; without blood, without fat; without shadow, without darkness; without wind, without ether; not adhesive, not tangible; without smell, without taste; without eyes, ears, voice, or mind; without heat, breath, or mouth; without personal or family name; imaging, undying, without fear, immortal, dustless, not uncovered or covered; with nothing before, nothing behind, nothing within. It consumes no one, and is consumed by no one. It is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower. There is no other seer, no other hearer, no other thinker, no other knower. That is the Eternal in which space is woven and which is interwoven in it. (Macdonell 500)

Neither the large nor small, neither having any shape nor having any concrete form, the soul or *Atma*, can not exactly be defined in a particular manner, but it stands as the essential factor for all life forms, "the word *Atman*, like the Greek *psyche* and the Hebrew *nephesh*, first and foremost stands for breath and life. But quite early on, the *Atman* came to be associated with the individual person, with the "I" or self" (Torwesten 50). *Atma*, in this sense, has an association with the individual self, the "I"ness of an individual. *Atma* of an individual remains constant until one's life in the physical form. The individual "I" also remains constant. *Atma* gets released from an individual's life as it undergoes changes. This change is either the movement from one

life form to another or the assimilation of *Paramatma*. In both cases, it is eternal. It means *Atma*, being eternal, does not change in essence, but the body or life form does. This mode of passing of *Atma* from one form to other shows how important *Atma* is. As *Kathopanishad* examines, "Though he (personified 'he' for *Atma*) is hidden in all things that Soul (*Atman*, Self) shines not forth, but he is seen by subtle seers with superior, subtle intellect" (Joshi 23). *Atma*, therefore, is in the heart of everything; it dwells in the heart and becomes the heart as an essence.

Atma is always a major philosophical discussion of Vedanta. Though *Atma* is not seen, every religious philosophy, except atheism, acknowledges its existence, and Vedanta does even strongly. Since every life form, as believed, does have an *Atma* and is governed and controlled by an *Atma*, it is individual, and we possess an individual *Atma*. A further question is: what is the connection between *Atma* and *Paramatma*? Is *Atma* Brahma or *Paramatma* Brahma? Torwesten elaborates on this controversy:

What happened to the term Atman is similar to what happened to the term Brahman which, etymologically, suggests a dynamic force and was only later gradually refined to mean a purely static kind of being. Atman, too, was by its very nature primarily something dynamic, referring as it did to respiration as the breath of life, to the very energy that keeps living beings alive. (Torwesten 50)

The concept of Brahma has integrated the concepts of *Atma* and *Paramatma*. *Kathopanishad* concerns the essence of *Atma* with manifold beings but ultimately the one, "The inner soul (*antaratman*) of all things, the one controller, who makes his one form manifold" (Joshi 30). It means an individual *Atma* dwells in an individual being, and that an individual *Atma* has an association with the greater soul known as *Paramatma*. The greater soul is present in individual beings in manifold forms. The fundamental doctrine of the Upanishads is "the identity of the individual soul with this universal soul; it is summed up in the celebrated formula *tat tvam asi*, 'that art thou'" (Macdonell 500). Every individual *Atma* shares the part of *Paramatma* as *Kathopanishad* further states, "The universal Soul (*Atman*), identical with the individual and with all creation. He who knows him, to whom everything is honey" (Joshi 26). *Atma* and *Paramatma*, both united in the form of Brahma, "there are two levels of truth in operation, one concerned with the higher truth of unity of Brahma, the other a lower level representing Brahma" (Gavin 243). There is but one *Atma-Brahma*

reality, "individual souls are regarded as not really existent, being identical with Brahma, which is the only existent entity" (Macdonell 503). The individual *Atma* is thus identical to Brahma as a real entity.

Soul in Emerson: From Individual to Universal Soul

Ralph Waldo Emerson has spoken about the soul in his prose writings, especially "Self-reliance," "Compensation," "The Over-Soul," and "Nature." His works have become the source of knowledge about the idea of 'soul' and 'Over soul' for prominent thinkers, philosophers, and common readers. As a natural philosopher and the first thinker to introduce nature-spirituality in American writing, he has anticipated the mode of transcendence through nature with his belief that the soul is in a perpetual state of transition and evolution. He has the logic that the individual, with an individual soul, undergoes a dynamic process of growth throughout his or her lifetime. This dynamism of life is the product of the link between the soul and the body, in which the soul plays a central role in determining the 'self'. The 'self', identified as the manifestation of an individual's *Atma*, maintains a link between the body and its life form connected with the supreme soul. Emerson supposes it as the 'Over-Soul'. The relationship between the individual soul and the universal soul is the connection between personal and universal wholeness. It is the connection between soul and Over-soul.

With the knowledge of eastern philosophy, Emerson regards the soul as the essential factor of all life forms in nature, and writes in "Spiritual Laws", "God exists. There is a soul at the centre of nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe" (Emerson, "Spiritual Laws" 153). The soul has no shape, no colour, no specific form, but it is essential for which *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* defines as *Atma* and identifies as "free from desires, free from evils, free from fear. . . . That indeed is his form in which all desires are fulfilled, in which all desires become the Self, and which is free from desires and devoid of grief." (IV.iii. 21). The presence of this soul is not just for the presence or existence; it has the power, as Emerson states in "Self-reliance", "In as much as the soul is present, there will be power, not confidence but agent" (Emerson, "Self-Reliance" 129). What makes the soul so much more powerful is its link with the divine, or the God, for which the Vedanta identifies it as the link between *Atma* and *Brahma*, "The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are

so pure. . . . all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole" (Emerson, "Self-Reliance" 127). The soul is never seen, but it is felt on the basis of life's dynamic process, and it is also felt with the sense of divinity within life. However, the knowledge about the soul to every life form or even to every human being is not possible. The life form is filled with purity and virtue due to the presence of the divine, Brahma, in the form of an individual soul. Humans are different in all other cases of physical features, aptitude, behaviour, priority and other worldly things, but the common aspect of all human beings is "the soul", the individual soul having the link with the universal soul that is *Brahma* in essence.

Individual *Atma* is a part of *Paramatma*, but still different. This difference is not in *Atma* but in individuality; however, Emerson emphasizes in "Compensation" that the soul determines the life; "That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law" (141). The soul, as the inner sentiment, can be the guiding principle of an individual if he follows it properly as per its virtues, but outer laws govern the outer activities of an individual more than the voice of inner *Atma* does. As a result, the differences exist between what the soul intends to govern and what an individual does. The inner soul of an individual always demands virtues, virtues in the sense of goodness, "The soul refuses limits, and always affirms an optimism, never a pessimism" (148). The soul, the only factor of life in a being, tries to optimize the power of life without limitation and gives a positive direction in behavior, but it is not always certain that an individual is guided by the voice of the soul.

A Comparison

Both Vedanta and transcendental philosophy focus on the essentiality of the soul. Does it mean that the soul is an organ? An easy answer could be that it must be. The soul is not an organ, but rather something more significant than an organ for life. Emerson clarifies this:

. . . the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie. ("The Over-Soul" 164)

The soul is all the power life receives from it. It is not an organ, but it animates the organs; it is not intelligence, but it is the master of intelligence. People who believe in *Atma* also generally think that *Atma* (soul) is the self, intellect, and a major organ, but Emerson, as Vedanta focuses, "It is true that in later Vedanta the Atman signified almost the exact opposite of "I" or "ego." But this is so because, there, the personified "I" is regarded as illusion, and Atman stands for the divine transcendent Self beyond all ego masks" (Torwesten 50), minutely examines the main drive of the soul as "an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed" (Emerson, "The Over- Soul" 164). Often regarded the soul as essential but always kept in the shadow with an emphasis on the body as the "one" and the soul as "other", Emerson's concentration is that the soul is the life itself, "The soul is not a compensation, but a life. The soul is" ("The Over- Soul" 147). Nothing can compensate for the *Atma* because it is the smallest of the small things or the largest of the large things, and it is complete in itself, though it is not visible to the human eye.

Mascaro observes the idea of the invisible nature of the soul from the *Chandogya Upanishad* (VI.xii), "an invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is reality. That is Atman" (117). The soul is the self of every individual and also the connector of an individual to the universal soul, Brahma, "He is the Self (Atman)". "That is the immortal, the fearless. That is Brahma" (Joshi, Bimali and Trivedi 158) The same Brahma is known as the Over-Soul in Emersonian philosophy where he supposes that the individual soul transcends into the Over-Soul, that is, the transformation of *Atma* to *Paramatma*, the unity of an individual soul to the universal soul, "that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" ("The Over-Soul" 163). In this sense, over-soul, universal soul, *Brahma*, and *Paramatma* are different names for the unity of the soul. Emerson regards this universal soul as the universal identity, "The basic thrust of "The Over-Soul" is to express the nature of a universal presence of identity, and for this Emerson drew upon several traditions. He seems to have taken the phrase from the Hindu concept of "Paramatma," translated as the "Supreme Soul" or "Supreme Spirit" (Dilworth 206). Every man's particular being or individual *Atma* is contained and made one with all others in the form of Over-Soul, "within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related;

the eternal ONE" (Emerson, "The Over- Soul" 164). The unity of the soul, the over-soul, has receptive and responsive power for intuitive human consciousness.

All living beings have a soul; what makes them different is the level of consciousness. The presence of the soul makes humans intuitive through consciousness, but the same does not happen in animals and other living beings. "We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul," Emerson writes in "The Over-Soul". The sun has sun-*Atma*; the earth has earth-*Atma*; and humans have human-*Atma*. These all sound to be separate but, *Atma*, with its receptive and responsive power transfer into the same quality in which it gets entered. The essence of *Atma* is unchanged. Once *Atma* is released from individual life, it has to take another form; and immediately it gets changed into the same, but the essence remains the same, "the soul's scale is one; the scale of the senses and the understanding is another. Before the revelations of the soul, Time, Space, and Nature shrink away" (165). The soul is beyond spatial-temporal limitation. Neither it is within any other power except the divine, the Brahma because "the striving of the soul for the infinite is said to be Brahma" (Radhakrishnan 22). The soul, therefore, is determined by Brahma and united in the form of an Over-soul or Universal soul.

Kathopanishad has clearly explained that "The *Atman* is beyond sound and form, without touch and taste and perfume. It is eternal, unchangeable, and without beginning or end: indeed, above reasoning. When consciousness of the *Atman* manifests itself, man becomes free from the jaws of death" (Mascaro 61). Likewise, the soul, as Emerson thinks, is open and free, "there is no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away. We lie open on one side to the depths of spiritual nature, to all the attributes of God" (Emerson, "The Over-Soul" 165). The soul is also free from the worldly identities of caste, ethnicity, gender, humans and nonhumans, "the soul is not a man, nor a woman, nor what is neither a woman nor a man. When the soul takes the form of a body, by that same body the soul is bound" (Mascaro 94). It is human ignorance to identify the soul with a particular identity. It has an identity just like the soul, not beyond that. It is beyond human sight, sound, smell and taste, "you cannot see the Spirit. But in truth, he is here" (Mascaro 118). *Atma* cannot be captured because "it is smaller than the

smallest thing known and greater than the greatest" (Torwesten 57), and *Chandogya Upanishad* clarifies this real nature of the soul, "He is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a grain of millet; He is my Self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the mid-region, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds" (III.xiv.2-3).

Emerson admits the same as, "For the soul is true to itself, and the man in whom it is shed abroad, cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future, which would be finite" (Emerson, "The Over-Soul" 169). The real identity of the soul for both Vedanta and Emerson, therefore, is from finite to infinite, from shape to shapeless and from visible to invisible.

Emerson, having a Christian upbringing, has a strong belief in the Christian tradition, "the soul of the Western Christian tradition is understood to undergo constant change and can even fall and become corrupt, the Atman of Vedanta is understood to be ever-pure and self-enlightened" (Torwesten 54). He believes in the change of the soul from one body to another. That is the transformation, "every end is converted into a new means" (Emerson, "Nature" 41) and this new means is the change in the material form "in the nature of things, one of the facts we contemplate is external and fugitive, and the other is permanent and connate with the soul" (Emerson, "The Over-Soul" 165). Emerson does not believe in the possibility of the fall and corruption of the soul. The soul, for him, is pure and sacred as it is "the embodiment of holiness, which is now regarded as the soul (*atman*) of the universe" (Macdonell 500). The soul always remains holy; every impurity is a product of the body or material form. Vedanta philosophy also teaches that the soul is always genuine and unaffected by any physical evils, and no amount of dirt can stain it. The evil a person does has no connection with the purity of the soul and it cannot destroy the purity of the soul because the soul "is untouched by space and time, and beyond all superficial personality changes, remains forever intact" (Torwesten 54). The uniqueness of the soul is that it is timely but timeless; it has to do with the body and space but it is beyond the space. The *Chandogya Upanishad* provides the logic on the soul's unchanging mode:

The Spirit who is in the body does not grow old and does not die, and no one can ever kill the Spirit who is ever-lasting. This is the real castle of Brahman wherein dwells all the love of the universe. It is Atman, pure Spirit, beyond

sorrow, old age, and death; beyond evil and hunger and thirst. It is Atman whose love is Truth; whose thoughts are Truth. (Mascaro 120-121)

One important aspect of the soul, as Emerson views it, is the unity in variety. Variety exists in individual souls in nature, and unity exists in the universal soul, "the unity in variety— which meets us everywhere. All the endless variety" (Emerson, "Nature" 41). The variety in natural form ensures the differences and constant modification, but connection to the absolute is the point of unity, "Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same" (Emerson, "Nature" 42). The sameness in the beings out of variety is the real unity, "Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" is its "inevitable nature," within which "private will is overpowered" (Scalia 272). This unity is the divine design.

Conclusion

The concept of the soul is a guiding principle for the understanding of Vedanta philosophy as metaphysics. Vedanta metaphysics defines the soul as *Atma*, the eternal soul. *Atma*, as the real self, underlies the existence of living beings. Vedanta metaphysics has established the theory of *Atma* and *Paramatma* in which *Atma* is the individual soul, also understood as *Jivatma*. *Atma* governs every individual. However, it is beyond all the material size, shape, pattern, and qualities. *Atma* is the smallest of the smaller things, or it is the largest of the larger things. This *Atma* does not have a separate identity, though every individual being has a different *Atma*. It entails the idea of the self as a spiritual power rather than a material one. Emerson defines this *Atma* as an individual soul in transcendental philosophy.

Emerson also believes that the soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. The material world is not the truth; it is not static and permanent. What is permanent is the soul, but the transformation of the soul from one body to another appears as if the soul is changeable. The soul communicates with the events in nature at the highest level, in which nature is the means of the manifestation of the soul. The soul makes a response not through words, but always makes a response through the thing itself.

Another connection between Vedanta metaphysics and Emersonian philosophy is the idea of unity in variety. Both philosophies agree on the unity of the individual soul into the form of a universal soul, or the Over-Soul. According to Vedanta, *Atma* is connected to *Paramatma*, which is the absolute power or Brahma, and Emerson believes that the individual soul is connected to the universal soul, which is Over-Soul. Both philosophies have generated the idea that God's wisdom is not the end result of anything, but the beginningless beginning itself. Vedanta, mainly *Advaita*, believes in the absolute, the Brahman as the single power, and our inmost being, the *Atma* is identical with the Supreme Being, Brahma. In this sense, there is variety in *Atma* in individual form and unity in the form of *Paramatma*. The embodied soul and the higher self (*Jivatma* and *Paramatma*) can be understood as two aspects, one within another.

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