

# Beyond Time and Space

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**Depak:** Hi, Arlindo. Is *atman* beyond time and space? Do we need to meditate beyond space and time, which in turn will merge with *atman*? If yes, how then can we realize *atman*, since we are inside space and time? Shed any light on these doubts, please.

**Arlindo:** Hello, Depak, good question. As you probably know, pure *atman* is free of all attributes and qualities. It is *nirguna* (without *gunas*). The *gunas* are the subtlest energies emerging in creation once *maya* begins operating. Once *maya* fully comes into activation it projects an apparent reality we call the dualistic world of subject and objects.

The initial projection is the three *gunas* (the building blocks of creation). *Sattva*, being the intelligence and knowledge of the entire creation, is the very creation but in potential mode. But it cannot create without *rajas*, the energy responsible to combine and project ideas and knowledge to begin producing the “soup of creation,” which later on, with the development of *tamas* (grossified energy), manifests as the physical universe.

Space is the subtlest of all elements – it pervades all other elements and consequently all objects created in it – but all five elements depend on *atman*, or pure awareness. Space is free (independent) of all other elements, but space depends on *atman*, or pure existence/awareness. The bottom line is that awareness is the only independent principle without which creation is impossible, not even as a vague dream.

The word “beyond” is a very misleading one because it implies action/space/time. The best way to phrase it is that awareness/*atman* pervades, sustains, maintains and recycles the entire creation within its space-time projection, but it is altogether something other than the projected creation, other than space and time. It never modifies with the presence or absence of the objects (the three *gunas* + five elements) appearing, always modifying and disappearing into “itself,” creating a sense of time.

Time is only a function of space and the objects appearing in it. The human *jivas* intelligently perceive the objects, gross and subtle, and by doing so they experience each thought-object one at the time. This phenomenon gives rise to a sense of duration of experience and interval between them. But in reality there is only space pervading all apparent objects to produce the seeming perception of duration of thoughts/objects because in *mithya* nothing remains the same from one moment to the next; they appear, modify and disappear.

If you wish to meditate “beyond” space-time, my suggestion is that you meditate on the self, or awareness, alone. But since the self cannot be objectified, because it is the ever-present subject and not an object of knowledge or experience, we will need to meditate on something which represents the self, a symbol of the self.

And what would be the best symbol of the self/*atman*? The scriptures! Why so?

Because it is a body of knowledge that self-reveals the self to the apparent *jiva*. And it does so by canceling *jiva's* wrong notions about the nature of reality to reveal the nature of the *jivatman* to be the one and the same as the non-dual, limitless, all-pervasive self (the only self there is). Furthermore, scriptures were not created by *jivas*, but self-revealed to human *jivas* by *Isvara*. That alone makes the scriptures the best symbol of the self.