

The Wholeness of You by Swamini Saralananda

This is the twelfth part of the serial article, continuation from April 2022 newsletter.

A Glimpse of Reality

How to see this intangible Self of pure unconditional love, awareness, fullness, etc., etc. True, there is nothing my physical eyes will see, but the seers.....the ones who 'saw' left us a legacy of teachings whereby we can see with our 'eye' of wisdom. This is what is meant by the symbolic third eye, an 'eye' to understand the knowledge of things beyond what my physical eyes can see. Just as how human beings saw the world as flat until a higher knowledge, science, taught us different. For example, the sun does not move, the earth is rotating on its axis in its orbit and it only looks like the sun is moving across the sky, rising and setting. If you think about a lot of knowledge and whatever wisdom you have, it is not tangible, but it can be appreciated and known, taught and shared in a very real way.

Experience vs Knowledge

It is an epistemological law; Experience can never be a substitute for valid knowledge. "But I saw it with my own eyes". It is not given that much weight in a court of law these days. Our eyes and all other senses fool us all the time and when proper inquiry is done, we find the truth is quite often entirely something else. And how I see and know myself now needs to be displaced by a valid, 'truer' version of who I am; I need to get at least a glimpse.

If the Self is Infinite.... how will we 'see', grasp it, what will be at least a glimpse? There are two particular Sanskrit verses in Vedanta that can serve as an answer. To understand those verses one Sanskrit word needs to be translated and explained because there simply is no word for it in English. Please fasten your cognitive seat belt again and hang in here. To attempt to explain the Infinite, within some few paragraphs is no easy task.

A Need To Understand The Word '

The word "Brahman" is a word for that Infinite, Oneness which has been spoken of already, as it is my Self. It is the formless essence of us all and everything else. It pervades absolutely everything known and unknown that you can name or think of. Once we use the word "Infinite" then it cannot exclude anything. And it is not a 'thing', not some primordial ooze, some formless gel out of which this universe is made. (I only bring that in because people do have some funny kinds of words when trying to grasp Brahman.) So, it

being not a thing and being the essence of everything, still, what is it...because that "essence" should be explainable. If the 'seers' saw...then how and what did they see?

Formlessness

First, "Brahman" is the formless reality as "Beingness"... "Is-ness". It is that because of which the first and last comment you can make about anything and everything is that "it is", meaning, it exists. If you say "The son of a barren woman does not exist;" it will be said, "But your thought and knowledge of that non-existent son...IS... known to you. You know his non-entity status. "So, for absolutely everything we can think of, known or unknown....is...is...is.... isness is always there. The tree is, the table is, he is, water is, my 'I' is...your 'you' is. This isness of everything can only be known to you because it exists. Brahman is the 'isness' of everything. It is pure Existence, per se, which excludes nothing.

There are three words that are used to explain Brahman, first 'is' and the second 'knowledge,'. For better clarity we use the abstraction, so we say knowingness, knownness, knowableness; it is the 'knowing principle' and like is-ness, it is formless. It pervades everything as pure, unconditional consciousness. These two 'conceptualizations' in the form of words used to indicate, not define Brahman, are not two different adjectives for the one substantive, a 'something' called Brahman. Formless isness and formless consciousness are one and the same Brahman. "Brahman is isness-consciousness. Consciousness-being-ness is Brahman". Consciousness IS. All these expressions are called Brahman. Admittedly this is very subtle, we are not used to thinking in such abstract, absolute terms for anything formless; this is why perhaps the words seem to be 'straining' here.

If we say, "The tree is." that 'involves' existence, the 'is' of it. And then, is it an unknown or known 'is'? It is Existent. It has to be known to you or you can't say the tree exists, and that is the known-ness aspect. And so, both the 'is' and 'known' has to be there in order to know anything, whether it exists or doesn't exist, like the barren woman's son. It will always depend on consciousness-is, isness-consciousness; you can't have one without the other.

Our Typical Thinking Does Not Work Here

We cannot do our usual kind of thinking here in terms of distinguishing things one apart from another. The being-ness and the conscious-ness are one-same, not two. Two words are used only for the sake of our limited-mind ways-of-understanding and analyzing things by breaking them down into parts and facets. Brahman has no parts, so how to explain it in the usual way we explain most everything else? It is Infinite so how to de-fine-

note, define it. Yet the teachers have to make the attempt somehow, so they bring words and use them in an enigmatic, paradoxical way and when those words reach the target of understanding the teacher is aiming at, he will remind us of the limitation of these words.

No Ordinary Teaching Of This Limitlessness

It is a magical kind of teaching like how the 'guru' of the rope-snake man made the snake disappear. Once he said and showed "this is rope", they did not go on talking about the particulars of what kind of rope or snake it was and where could it have come from, blah blah.... the guru's job was done.

The other word used for Brahman is limitless-ness. If Brahman is formless-Being-ness, the essence of absolutely all things, then that means it is everywhere, all at once and not limited by any form whatsoever. It has no divisions of even two things, so it has no limits in time and space. There is nowhere it is not. It is limitless. So, at the same time it is, pure formless existence, limitless consciousness, present in absolutely everything, since it all 'amounts' to only one indivisible infinity, then that has to mean that it is Absolute Fullness-without-lack. If it is absolutely Full, a limitless Whole without depending on anything outside itself then that fullness is not conditioned, never disturbed by anything. It is not affected by want; it 'knows' no lack.

Brahman Is Never To Be Equated To Emptiness

And it cannot be said to be a void of emptiness because it pervades and includes, it spans, everything. It cannot exclude me, not even in this very moment when I am still ignorant and would even deny that this makes sense. The rope was rope even when being taken for a snake. So, pervading everything as IS-ness, which is also knowing-Consciousness, it can never be said that it is nothing-ness, emptiness, the Void. In fact, we have to say it is Everything-ness. It is the essence of all there is. And if nothing is lacking, by virtue of what 'infinite, formless, existence-consciousness is', that means that the 'third' non-separate aspect, to be understood about Brahman is Absolute Fullness.

To be continued...

“One can seek what one does not have and one can seek what one thinks one does not have. If one thinks one does not have a given thing and one considers it desirable, one cannot but seek.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati