

The Wholeness of You by Swamini Saralananda

This is the sixth part of the serial article, continuation from October 2021 newsletter.

The Posture Of This Book

Spirituality is the posture of this book. What if one could just glean the possibility that I am an ultimately good, decent, loving person, free from all the things I don't want to be. Perhaps if I seek to know, I can discover something far better about myself than what I have always taken myself to be. Maybe I am wary of believing any of this. Yet the more you are alive to yourself and you are ready to come out from under any form of a numbed delusion, you will be seeking. I make the attempt in these pages to strike a deep chord in you, somewhere that will resonate. The proof of the pudding is only in the eating.

Is it All in My Head? Subjective vs objective

Most of us have a quaint feeling that life is something 'out there' happening to us. The truth is, you are your life, you make up the reality of your own life. It is the condition and disposition of your mind that heavily influences how you interpret and then relate to the world. A very interesting book titled, "The Three Pound Universe" talks all about the brain. The title points to the fact that it is your mind which is the world you live in. It is your mind where you live, in your own private universe. The outer world presents me with all kinds of experiences but I choose the what, where, and manner of how I respond. This reminds me of a time, when a close friend had told me they had seen an excellent movie and when I went to see it, I walked out in the first ten minutes. Therefore, no two people ever interpret and live in the same world. Life is only whatever I experience within my own mind in every given moment. Although we can say that many things do "come at me" without my choosing, still, every one of us will have our own unique way of interpreting, then responding. From that I create my own private, subjective world and my own unique life.

We All Live In Two Worlds

Based on this, we can say that we all live in two worlds -firstly, an objective, public world of common things, and secondly our own world of subjective interpretations. We can all agree that water is wet, it rains now and then, sugar is sweet and fire is hot.... no problem. But then by means of my likes and dislikes, my complexes, prejudices and fears, I

carve out of that public world my own private subjective world. "I hate when it rains, I think people are mostly selfish, I'm afraid of dogs". The logic is simple. All through the day my mind may be engaged in the public world, but my subjectively colored interpretations will determine what kind of responses I make. My responses to the world are what determine the quality and course of my life.

A simple example: A man and woman are sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office and a third lady walks in. On a table there is a vase sitting with some very fragrant lilies in it. The lady entering, just being friendly, says "Oh, aren't these beautiful, they're so fragrant!" The other woman looks up at her with a sad, face tears begin to well up in her eyes; she looks down and says nothing. The man just nods his head indifferently, he has no interest in flowers. So here are three different experiences of one same object. The sad woman has been reminded of her mother's funeral two months ago where there was a large bunch of these lilies filling the room with their fragrance. The cause of the individual responses is not the point, this just demonstrates how each of us experience our own unique responses to things. In every waking minute what goes on in the mind is painting the moving picture of my life.

It's very useful to recall some of the instances we all have, quite often. For example: when someone looks at me the 'wrong way' and I question, Did I do something wrong or do they not like me for some reason. Most of it has no basis in truth, but I do suffer anywhere from minor discomfort up to maybe some very debilitating pain. There are so many 'misunderstandings' like this that crowd my life.

'Mango Man', An Experience

I want to share this one personal anecdote from not very long ago. In the small town where I grew up, there has been a homeless man moving around the town for the last few years...somehow people came to call him "Mango Man". His appearance was like some kind of a 'Big Foot' (a frightful mystery part human.) He was heavily covered up in dark coats, his hair un-cut for many years, hung down in matted dread locks long enough to pass his knees. His face was also covered with hair, and you could hardly see anything of his face except some eyes peering out. He would always walk very slowly and most often be seen just standing, looking out at the street; and yet once in a great while I could swear that when I would look at him from my moving car, there was some eye contact.

Mango man's nails had not been cut for years, they curled around in strange shapes and sometimes he would be holding a stick. There was so much to wonder about him. He was

so heavily covered up in the hot tropical weather. Where did he get his food and water? You never saw him eating or drinking, only once in a while he would be sitting on a bench. There were so many questions one could ask about how he could possibly live like this.

I like to think of myself as compassionate but realized that this man brought out negative judgment in me. I knew I would never want to be near him because I was sure he would smell very bad. I heard that he was deemed harmless and was released from a state mental ward because he said he would rather be out in the open rather than cooped up inside. He would sometimes sit on a bench near where I shopped and I would see him there and think that he was such a pathetic sight and a little bit scary. He was an object of 'an unknown' and I had some fear. I decided one day, that this was not how I wanted to feel about another human being. So, I went back into the store and bought a sandwich and a cold drink. I decided I would go and say hello and give that to him.

That day he was holding a small, broken, black umbrella to have a little shade from the hot sun. So, I had to bend down and look under it to see his face. I was totally amazed. First of all, he did not smell. Secondly, he had the most beautiful eyes and face even though it was covered with so much hair. He did not look very old and I simply said, "Hello, I brought this sandwich for you." He slowly reached out and took it, putting it down on the bench and said in a very soft and sweet voice... "Oh, thank you."

I couldn't resist in the surprise of the moment and I spontaneously said to him, "Hey, you're really handsome under all that hair." No response, no smile. Then I asked him if I could buy him a better umbrella, and again just a soft, sweet, "no." Although I have always given a lot of lip service about not judging others, I felt so happy that I was able to discover him as just a soft, odd human being and not some, strange ominous individual. But I also felt regret about taking so long to do this.

This homeless man has given me one of the most inspiring lessons of my life. That beautiful, handsome face under there was not a boogey man, even if he looked like one from a distance. A flip side paradox of this is that once in a while people have taken me wrongly to be some kind of an unfriendly person and I had no idea what I had done. They were projecting something on to me and probably they did not even know why. That's how our subjectivity works, it takes over because it comes out of the unconscious part of our mind which is not known or understood for most.

To be continued...