

A Different Kind of Transformation

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Tony: Hello, James. I recently bought a book called *Final Truth* by Ramesh Balsekar. I read the book and now see it as one of the most “deep” and “philosophical” books on Advaita. But then I read Balsekar had some sex scandals and preached a “do whatever you want, you are not responsible” philosophy and I’m shocked. Anyway...

James: Ramesh had a lot of *bhakti* for the truth and he also had a good intellect, so perhaps when he was inspired he did write some good books. It was the same with Osho and many others, so you could say that they knew the truth. But for those of us in the Vedanta *sampradaya*, we do not give a person any special credit for knowing the truth – only for living it. Even then you do not get credit, because if it is real knowledge, not just intellectual knowledge, you cannot help but live it. So I would say that while he may have been self-realized he was not self-actualized. There is a world of difference.

Tony: I saw an idea in the book, and it resonated with me so much. In my opinion, it even explains (for some level) why there is *maya*, or why the appearances exist, or why there is “creation,” in the first place (or why there seems to be creation). The idea is this: the formless consciousness can be experienced only through the multitude of sentient bodies with names and forms, just as light can be seen only through refracting agents. It is thus not that the multitude of names and forms exist independently of consciousness, but that consciousness can express itself only through these forms.

So the other way of saying it is that God, or *Brahman*, or Consciousness experiences himself through us. We and the universe are God looking into himself.

I don’t know if it’s directly related, but *Brihadarnanyaka* II 5.19 has this verse:

“He transformed Himself in accordance with each form; that form of His was for the sake of making Him known. The Lord on account of *Maya* (notions superimposed by ignorance) is perceived as manifold, for to Him are yoked ten organs, nay, hundreds of them. He is the organs; He is ten and thousands, many and infinite. That *Brahman* is without prior or posterior, without interior or exterior. This self, the perceiver of everything, is *Brahman*. This is the teaching.”

What do you think? I wanted to know if traditional Advaita accepts that idea above or not.

James: Yes, definitely traditional Vedanta accepts this view. You cannot experience awareness directly as an object, because it cannot be objectified, but you can experience it as this world and the experiencer of this world because awareness is everything that is.

However, there is a belief in the spiritual world that you need the creation for awareness to be known. But you don’t. Awareness is self-knowing. It does not require media, i.e. a body and mind

and a world, to be known. It requires a body and a mind to be known as objects, but it is not limited to objects. It is the unseen, uncaused cause of objects – when *maya* is operating. Without *maya* there are no actual objects. With *maya* there are no actual objects either, only apparent objects. But when *maya* is operating, the apparent is taken to be real.

If it is self-knowing and you are it but think you don't know who you are, then you need a means of knowledge to reveal it. Vedanta is such a means. If you expose your mind to it, it will remove the ignorance and then there will be no need to experience it at all, because you are it.

In the *Upanishad* verse, it is important to know that the “transformation” that is spoken of here is a special kind of transformation, not what we ordinarily think of as a transformation. Normally, we think that when one thing becomes something else it stops being what it was. When you turn milk into cheese you cannot get the milk back. It has become cheese. But awareness “becomes” in a different way. It appears “as” the world without in any way losing its original nature. So what we are experiencing here is actually pure consciousness appearing as the world, as subject and object. So are we experiencing anything? Yes and no. From the standpoint of the individual, yes. From the standpoint of awareness, no.

~ James