

The Self Is Whole and Complete

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2017-06-12

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3323>

Q: I hear teachers say that the Self is non-dual, free and empty and that objects are not real. My question is: why would I want to realize the Self if there is “nothing” there to be experienced?

A: First of all, the essential nature of awareness is permanence, fulness - the ever changeless present, self-conscious, limitless existence, which, by the way, is not “empty”, but “full” full of “Itself”. All objects are not-real in the sense that they did not exist in the past and they will not exist in a future time. They come and go. They are at the most “apparently real”, whereas awareness is ever-present and therefore the only “real” factor in existence.

Furthermore, only “something” full, limitless, whole and complete can accommodate all apparent objects of the universe without being modified, expanded... without becoming bigger or smaller or having its existence compromised. If the self was indeed of the nature of emptiness, it would modify with the appearance of objects... it would be ‘no-more’ empty because of the occupancy of all objects filling it.

With the appearance of the world taking up some of its empty existence, the self would lose its supposed “empty” status by developing the status of “occupied”. The only way to support such notion is by denying the existence of the universe. But since the universe can be experienced, how can we deny it? And furthermore, why to propagate such teachings and all codes of conduct that goes with it, if nothing exists?

But I understand your confusion because some schools of thought propagate the idea that the Self is of the nature of emptiness, nothingness, the void etc. They attach negative notions to It. That’s why some people, once influenced by these strange ideas, will try very hard to remove the world of thoughts and objects from their mind. They will make much effort to keep their conscious mind empty, imagining that by doing so they will reach the “empty” Self.

But the Vedanta scriptures clearly assert that the Self is of the nature of fullness and limitlessness, regardless of the presence or absence of the world of apparent objects. Thoughts and objects do not alter, diminish or expand the self because the self is always ever whole. It pervades and sustains all past, present and future universes without altering its essential nature as wholeness and limitlessness. BTW, I am talking about You and me, the only self, there is.