

The central teaching of Vedanta is to realize that the innermost spirit is one with *Brahman*, the Absolute. This unity is expressed by the Upanishadic Great Utterance or *Mahavakya*— *Tat Twam Asi*. *Tat* means “That” and refers to God. *Twam* means “you” and refers to the individual soul. “You are That.” In Shakespearean English it would be “Thou art That.” The Upanishads teach the art of understanding this profound fact through a process of awakening. I will relate to you an episode from the *Ramayana* that will give you some insight into that mystic process of bringing forth the energy of the soul.

Hanuman, who was a great servant of Rama, was endowed with truly immense power as a young monkey. But he began doing destructive things because he did not know how to handle that power. As a result, a sage cursed him, saying that he would no longer be aware of this power until he had to perform a mission for Lord Rama, and at that time someone would remind him of it. So Hanuman did not know that he possessed this immense power for a long time.

When Sita was kidnapped by the demon king, Ravana, Lord Rama asked monkeys to search for her. A vast number

of monkeys came to the seashore and were informed that Sita could be found by crossing the ocean and entering into an island called Lanka. But then, how would they cross that ocean? This dilemma began to worry Hanuman and these great monkeys as they sat there together on the beach. They did not know anyone powerful enough to cross that ocean.

There was a great, elderly personality among them

named Jambavan. He began to tell everyone about Hanuman’s birth as the son of the wind god and about his amazing powers. Even as a child, he would leap into the sky in order to devour the sun, thinking that it was a piece of fruit. He had such power that he could even bound into space. As Hanuman listened, his body started growing taller and taller until finally he stood up and shook off his old passive personality. His entire body became radiant and filled with dynamic energy. He appeared as if he could swallow the whole world. Thus, it became easy for him to leap across the ocean.

The symbolism behind this story is that the spirit inside you is like Hanuman. Its immense energy has been misused due to ignorance. That is why everyone is caught in the world-process and is unaware that the power he has latent



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before which the ocean becomes a little pit of water,
and before which the greatness and grandeur of all
worldly values pale into insignificance.**

within himself is the power of God. The intrinsic reality within you is *Brahman*, the Absolute—but somehow that awareness has faded.

A fictitious ego develops, declaring, “I am this body.” Because of this, there is a great deal of misery and tension in life. Living becomes painful at every step because one forgets one’s essential nature due to ignorance and misuses the tremendous latent energy that is part of his nature.

The Upanishads try to help you recollect what you essentially are. As you study the Upanishads and reflect, you begin to understand that the real Self is not the ego. When your mind develops the illusion, “I am the ego personality—the body, mind and senses,” you are constantly threatened by so many things, and you cannot live in peace. The world of senses, concepts, and intellect is constantly changing. Hence, there is no security in these things.

As long as you identify with your intellect, mind, senses, and body, you will be restless. You will also feel that you are just a tiny, helpless personality floundering in the gigantic world.

Burdened with helplessness, you cling to the little ego and live a selfish life. Any thought of breaking down the walls of such selfishness seems like a mountainous task.

However, when you join in *satsanga*, you listen again and again to the teachings of the scriptures and gradually begin to reflect upon their meaning. In order to be sensitive to the Divine teachings, you must possess a different type of ear. Ordinarily ears are constantly tuning into those conversations that are of worldly value. When you discipline yourself well, you develop a subtle ear—one that begins to listen to the deeper meaning of the scriptures.

Once you begin to listen in that way, you begin to recognize your true potential and realize that you are not just the body, mind, and senses. Like Hanuman, you realize that the power you have within you is be-

yond all imagination. It is the power of the soul that made you come into the world as an embodied human being. It is this power that mysteriously drew matter together in such a way as to create your body. As the innermost Self, you are forming your body as well as your circumstances. You have become the director and the actor in the drama of your life.

As you begin to understand this point, you find that you are not dependent upon conditions and are not a slave to circumstances. Spiritual power begins to unfold deep within you. As a result of this power, you develop patience even during circumstances that threaten your mental peace. You develop compassion even when confronted by situations that provoke bitterness in your heart, situations in which, without reason, you are insulted or hurt by someone. Such spiritual power precludes any development of ill will in your mind.

When this occurs, you realize that you are becoming a spiritual hero, with power to overcome the aberrations of the ego. You discover that you are growing just like Hanuman. Physically, of course, you remain the same size. But your astral body grows to gigantic proportions. You realize that there is a personality within your before which the dazzling sun becomes a mere glow worm, before which the ocean becomes a little pit of water, and before which the greatness and grandeur of all worldly values pale into insignificance. Then you realize that Hanuman within you is growing taller and mightier, and when this happens, you will be able to leap across the ocean of the world-process and enter into the Absolute Self. This is the message of *Tat Twam Asi*.

By constant reflection on the subtle meaning implied in *Tat Twam Asi*, an aspirant discovers his identity with the Absolute, and having leaped across the ocean of the world-process becomes one with *Brahman*!