

# Search for freedom

An Article by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

A *mumukṣu* is a seeker of freedom, *mokṣa*. The desire for *mokṣa* is natural to all. It is not a cultivated desire. A desire for a television is cultivated. If one does not know anything about television, one does not have a desire for a television set. If one knows that on certain days movies are telecast, one develops a desire for a TV because it is cheaper to see movies in television and the whole family can sit and watch together. Similarly many desires that we have are cultivated. But a desire to eat is not a cultivated desire. That is something natural. Nobody has to teach a person to eat when he or she is hungry. Even a baby cries when it is hungry. An urge to eat, an urge to drink, these are all natural urges. So too, the urge to be free is also uncultivated like these natural urges that are uncultivated. Everybody is a *mumukṣu* because every one has a desire to be free being small and insignificant. It is more than a desire; it is an urge. 'I am small' is a conclusion and I want to be free from that conclusion. If that conclusion is real then it is knowledge. If it is knowledge then 'I am small and insignificant' is a fact. There is no way of freeing myself from being small and insignificant.

Suppose this sense of smallness is only a conclusion, the truth would be just opposite. If I am already free from being small and insignificant and I am the only significant thing in this world, then my urge to get rid of insignificance and to be significant is very natural. The urge to become significant stems from the conclusion, the notion, 'I am insignificant'.

If I am insignificant in reality, there is no *mokṣa* possible. Then the urge to become significant becomes meaningless. A cultivated desire can be meaningless like a desire to go to the sun because one will become ashes even if one goes a little nearer to the sun. It is difficult to survive in summer in many parts of India like Rajasthan. What to talk of approaching the sun. A lame person's desire to climb Everest is a meaningless desire. He should give it up and he can give it up. He can have some other desires. A deaf person cannot have a desire to become a telephone operator. Such a desire is a meaningless desire and it can be given up. A cultivated desire is something I can dismiss, saying that the grapes are sour because I cannot reach them! I can turn my attention to something else. I can either dismiss or grow out of a cultivated desire. If there is a natural urge, it is not in my hands and I cannot dismiss it.

The urge to become significant and complete is a natural urge and I cannot dismiss it. If I cannot dismiss it, the only thing I can do is to fulfill it. We do see in life that there are means of fulfilling the urges that are natural. Hunger is a natural urge and there is a means for fulfilling it. Food is available in the creation. Thirst is a natural urge and there is a means for fulfilling it. Water is available in the creation. The urge for fresh air is natural and there is air for fulfilling it.

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So too biological urges have their means of fulfillment.

When these natural urges can be fulfilled, the fundamental urge to become free from being small and insignificant, the love for freedom to be someone significant must have a means of fulfillment. The urge to become significant is there in all and hence there is a lot of pressure inside to become different. Everyone wants to be special. Everyone wants to be loved and specially recognized as someone special. In other words everyone sets himself or herself up to prove to be somebody. It is very natural. You cannot complain that a person is ambitious. The urge comes from the fact that 'I am small and insignificant'. This urge being very natural, it has a means of fulfillment, but the means that one follows does not seem to be appropriate because it is never successful.

The pursuit of money and pleasures that we follow does not seem to remove this insignificance significantly. The more we gain them the more we desire for them. Any experience that gives some pleasure has got to be repeated. If it is repeated then one gets bored. Monotony is the result of repeated experience of anything. So one turns one's attention towards something else. Even if the pursuit of money and pleasures is fulfilled, one wants something else like power. One is ready to spend any amount of money for the sake of power. Mere money alone is not enough. Power seems to make one significant. If I am a moneyed person without any power I cannot accomplish anything. It is proved by the people who have money.

Thus we find the means we follow do not fulfill that fundamental urge. At the same time we cannot dismiss it. Because it has not taken our permission before coming. That is why one cannot tell an angry person, "Do not get angry". He will get more angry, if he is told so. Because he has not decided to be angry. The situation is one of helplessness. My urge to become significant being natural, I cannot dismiss it. The means that I follow, that are known to me, are incapable of fulfilling it. This helplessness is to be seen.

Unless one sees this helplessness one cannot seek help. People think that they themselves can fix up problems. They do not seek help when they need to. Their situation is like that of one given to alcohol. As long as one thinks that one can stop alcohol at any time, one has no way of getting rid of it. Only when one thinks, 'I do not have any power over alcohol', one has a chance to stop it. This is the first step. When one discovers that one has no say over alcohol, one can seek help. Similarly when a person discovers this helplessness which is something one has to discern, then the person becomes a *mumukṣu*. The discovery is in this form: I am not going to solve the problem with the means available with me. Through the gain of 'what is not yet gained'

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like money, pleasures and so on, there is no way of fulfilling the natural urge to be free from being small and insignificant. The freedom that I want is also something that is not yet gained. If the gain of what is not yet gained is not going to help, then what is the solution? We cannot say there is no solution because the desire to be free is a natural urge and there must be a way out.

What one wants is really not 'a thing' but freedom. Freedom is not a thing. Happiness is not a thing. Freedom is not available as an object somewhere that one can go and buy or claim it. Freedom is located exactly where bondage is. Bondage is definitely not in my nose or eyes. The nose is limited. The eyes are limited. But nose itself does not have a sense of limitation or a complex. Eyes have no complex. 'I am not good' is the complex. 'I am not significant' is the conclusion. The sense of bondage is centered on 'I'. The problem exists centered on 'I'. I am wanting. That is the sense of bondage, in the sense that I do not want to be a wanting person. The freedom does not lie outside the place where this sense is. One cannot therefore pick up the freedom by going to a place and keeping it with oneself like one goes to Nepal and picks up *śāliḡrāma*, a type of stone, from River *Gaṇḡaki*. The one who keeps that freedom is a bound person. He continues to be bound. 'I am bound' is a sense. It is a sense because I do not feel so in sleep. In a moment of happiness also I do not see myself as 'I am bound'. If that sense of bondage is centered on 'I', then the freedom also is centered on 'I'.

If the gain of 'what is not yet gained' is not going to make me free from this natural urge to be free, then one thing is left out. My helplessness is not that bad, really speaking. I do not see all the doors are closed against me. I still find one door is open. It can be perhaps 'gain of what is already gained!'

We have many daily experiences of this type of gain. You want to take your room key from your pocket. You first put your hand in the pocket. It is not there. You search for it everywhere in vain. Then you put your hand again in the pocket and find the key. There is a joy born of gain of the key that was already gained. Here you can touch the key. It is not gained until you touch the key. But with reference to the self, *ātmā*, it is always gained. You need not touch. You need not go through a new experience. Because the one who goes about experiencing everything and who invariably obtains in all experiences is *ātmā*, 'you'. You are the only significant thing being the *satyam* of everything. You are the whole that which cannot be improved upon. Therefore what is already accomplished also can be accomplished, if the accomplished is not known as such. But here the pursuit is entirely different; it is one of knowing for which you require a means of knowledge. All the means of knowledge at our disposal like

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senses and mind are good enough for throwing light upon everything else. But they cannot objectify the self, *ātmā*, as the limitless whole. In fact Brahman, the limitless, is not sitting upon you, *ātmā*. The limitless is you, Brahman is *ātmā*. How are you going to know it? It is purely a recognition in the form of a *vṛtti*, thought born of a means of knowledge. That means of knowledge is *upaniṣad*.