

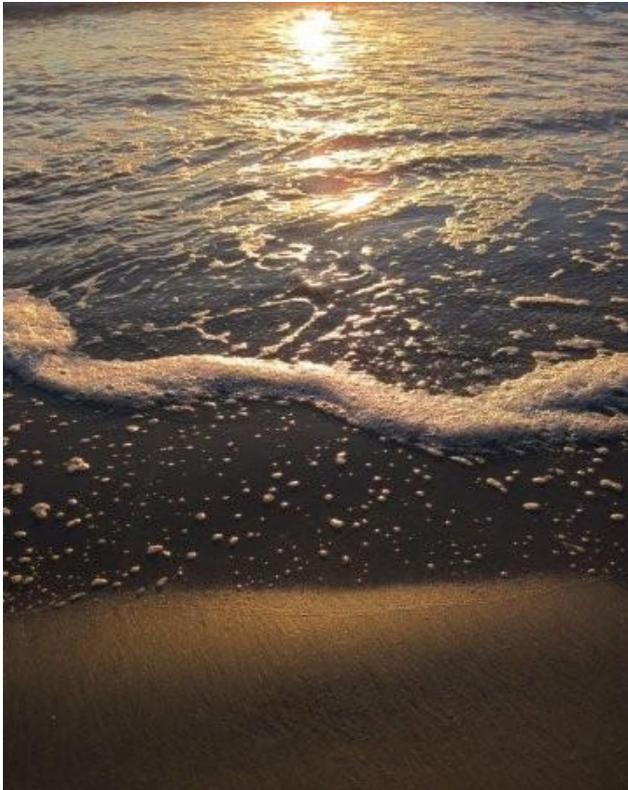
Sat Chit Anand

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Knowing and not knowing

“If you understand it, it is not God” [St Augustine]



In possession of Truth, one day I saw the Truth shining like a bright star. It was very small and I could see it fully. 'How great I am, I can see the Truth fully', I thought. 'Let me go and possess it', I decided. I began my journey in possession of Truth. As I journeyed days and days my enthusiasm grew greater. I felt I was closer to it and the day to possess it is not far. But as I walked further I found a great change. The closer I came the bigger the star grew. I journeyed and journeyed until I was surrounded by it. I lifted my head to the sky and found myself under the radiance of the star. I could see neither its beginning nor its end. I stood there motionless without knowing where to go. Whichever side I saw I found its radiance. When I started it was smaller than me, now

it is bigger than me.

When I started it was outside of me, now I am inside it.

I started in possession of it, now I found myself possessed by it.

I never knew the Truth appears small when we are far away from it.

[Brother Martin of Saccidananda Ashram]

The goal of religion is divine union. It is for this purpose that we were created. Our deepest longing is to know the Divine, and ultimately to enter into union with the Divine. “God himself, in creating man in his own image, has written upon his heart the desire to see him. Even if this desire is often ignored, God never ceases to draw man to himself because only in God will he find and live the fullness of truth and happiness for which he never stops searching. By nature and by vocation, man is a religious being, capable of entering into

communion with God. This confers on man his fundamental dignity.” [Catechism of the Catholic Church] As St Augustine said: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

We are given glimpses, but these peak experiences cannot be sustained. You must leave them and return to ordinary life. We ascend the mountain where the view is glorious, but we have to come back down to the valleys of life. In the same way, God both reveals himself and hides himself. We see this with Moses on Mt Sinai. God reveals himself to Moses but doesn't show his face: “no-one can see my face and live.” [Exodus 33:20] Jesus reveals his true nature on the Mt of Transfiguration, shining as brilliant light but also overshadowed by a cloud. [Luke 9:34] God is not an object of knowledge as we might know other things, but rather a faith knowing which is both a knowing and a not-knowing. This kind of knowing has inner authority but not rational authority.

Buddhism teaches the necessity to go beyond the rational mind so that we can experience “don't know mind”, because in the not knowing is the knowing! Buddhism is honest about the theology of darkness, our inability to know. In the Bible, desert imagery is used to represent absence, darkness, silence, not knowing. Faith is required as there is no certainty. Mountain top imagery is used to represent presence, light, speaking, knowing. There is a striving for certainty as this makes us feel comfortable. We need both – there must be an integration of both: light and darkness, knowability and unknowability, disclosure and non-disclosure. Good spirituality accepts paradox and seeks a balance between the opposites. It is the middle path: light is needed and darkness is necessary.

“God's eternal mystery cannot be captured or controlled, but only received as freely as the breath of life, the breath of Spirit – the one single thing we have done since the moment we were born and will one day cease to do in this body. God is as available and accessible as our breath itself, and no religion is going to be able to portion that out, control it, or say who gets it ... Let your breathing in and out, for the rest of your life be your prayer to – and from – such a living and utterly shared God. You will not need to prove it, nor can you, to anybody else. Just keep breathing with full consciousness and without resistance, and you will know what you need to know.” [Richard Rohr: Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality, pg 131]

Knowing ignites the fire in our hearts, and not knowing keeps it burning. Thus the love affair between the lover and the Beloved continues. “O eternal truth, true love and beloved eternity. You are my God. To you do I sigh day and night. When I first came to know you, you drew me to yourself. Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you, but you called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I burn for your peace.” [St Augustine]

*You have seduced me, Lord,
and I have let myself be seduced;
You have overpowered me:
you were the stronger.
There is a fire burning in my heart,
the effort to restrain it wearied me ...
[Jeremiah]*

OM SHANTI, MAY PEACE AND LOVE BE WITH YOU, LEELA

Spiritual Retreats anytime

<http://www.satchitanand.co.za/programme.htm>

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