

FLY TO FREEDOM, LIKE AN EAGLE STRONG

Swāmi Chidānanda

The morning newspaper had her picture on its front page, alas, not for good reasons. The rising film star had committed suicide and, in a note that she left behind, she wrote she was suffering from a sense of lack of freedom in her marriage.

Political freedom, financial freedom, freedom of speech and other forms of freedom have their place in life but all of them together are inadequate when we do not have inner freedom. Our own likes, dislikes, pride, prejudice, fear and identifications cripple us. Therefore we find the mighty and the powerful in the world also suffering from insecurity, anxiety and worry.

The Upanishads point out that the vision of the infinite truth alone can set us free. Seeing the unbounded truth and letting go of all false identification go together like the two sides of the same coin. The latter part is conveyed by the double negation – not this, not this (*neti, neti*) – in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

An inspiring case of prenatal emancipation is found in the Aitareya Upanishad, where Sage Vamadeva 'negates' all his body-identification during his stay in his mother's womb itself! Identification, which is of the form of thoughts like, "I am this body," "I am an African," or "I am a middle-aged woman" are all mischief of thought. These forms of identification have at best a place in particular contexts and not otherwise. When two people see, for example, the beautiful sunrise, their being a boss and a subordinate has no meaning or relevance. One is not to harbor the thought, "I am the boss," and the second need not think, "I report to him." Generally, alas, we carry some idea or other about ourselves all the time. Thought supplies continuity to an idea unnecessarily.

Vamadeva saw through this trick of the mind (thought) and, through vigilance, rose above the mind. He could therefore say⁵, "I broke free of them and came out fast like an eagle."

*