

Total Surrender

In recommending the repetition of God’s name, teachers will tell us that in ancient days man was much stronger and, therefore, he could undergo *tapas* to a much greater degree than modern man is capable of. Thus God, in His mercy, has given us His Name, an easier way of attaining Him than through the extreme austerities of ancient times. God has also improved our intellect, if we can accept the evidence of literature and science, and so not only can we use the devotional approach such as repetition of God’s name, but our intellects are more developed. We can better understand the subtle nature of truths such as That thou art.

Jesus too wanted to point out the difference. He said that up until his time men had only reached the Kingdom of Heaven by violence. In other words, by extreme austerity. He was pointing out a new way.

What is the new way? The old way was that I, the ego, am going to attain God, and while it was very difficult, it was possible. The ego would push itself, push itself, push itself, until finally it exploded and disintegrated—and God was what was left. However, it was a very difficult path, and thus the great teachers who came along showed an easier path. Lord Kṛṣṇa said to take refuge in Him alone. Jesus said, “Follow Me.”

The essence, therefore, of the new path is one of surrender, of letting go of the ego rather than trying to smash it. What it really is is a shifting of our identification from the body and mind to identification with the Spirit, with Consciousness. We are told to be the witness, to be *guṇātīta*. But even then, essential as this is, we are still left with a very subtle ego.

Therefore, Gurudev pointed out something else that is required. He said, “Surrender everything to the Lord.” That means everything about ourselves just as a prospective *sannyās* does during the fire ceremony—everything. Then he said, “Place your ego at his feet, and be at ease.” In other words, ultimately the key is to surrender the surrenderer. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī spoke of Gurudev and the extreme austerities that he went through, but, he said, that ultimately Gurudev knew that whatever progress he made depended entirely upon the Lord. Gurudev had not only surrendered, but he had placed his ego at the feet of the Lord.

If we examine it, we recognize that Gurudev's *Universal Prayer* is composed from this angle of vision. We offer worship to God and remember that He is all in all in the first stanza. The second stanza asks Him "Grant us" spiritual qualities, meaning there is nothing we can do on our own, and the final stanza is "Let us," permit us, make it possible.

Thus, in this modern age, we first of all give up any idea that the ego can attain God. But then, we also have to go beyond any idea that I can take a position of surrender, letting everything go, being at ease, whatever it may be. Because the ultimate truth is that God alone is and, therefore, we must place our ego at His feet—recognize that finally everything is totally in His hands.