

Through the Eye of Faith

If you ask a seeker to go back over their life, most will be able to tell you times when God seemed very real to them. For the more mystical types, there may be many times, but still, while these experiences might be a few times or many times, most of us also experience what we might call dry periods or natural periods where nothing really seems to be going on.

Most of us are dissatisfied with this. We think the goal is God-realization—and we are correct—but we equate that with certain spiritual experiences we have had. We are seeking for something that we can know, an experience no matter how subtle, where we will feel that we have found it. We have sought and we have found.

But that is not what Ramaṇa Maḥarṣi indicated to those who listened to him. He said that whatever has a beginning has to have an end; therefore, it cannot be the eternal. Even the experience that Arjuna had in Chapter 11 of the Gītā, he dismissed as only being in Arjuna's mind. It's not that the experience didn't have great significance, but it was Arjuna's experience. In fact, if it had been the final answer then the Gītā could have ended at Chapter 11, but Lord Kṛṣṇa continued to teach Arjuna through seven more chapters before Arjuna finally said, "I have recovered my memory, I will do as you say."

What this suggests to us—and it is perfectly scriptural—is that we're actually seeking for something we already have. Our problem is that we want to know what we already have as an object. It is as if the eye demanded to be able to see the eye. Of course, if we put a mirror in front of the eye, then the eye can at least see a reflection of itself, and this is what spiritual experiences do. God shines forth in our consciousness as an experience to encourage us and to lead us along the way. But no experience can be God, because there is something that knows the experience, and it must be greater than all experiences.

All experiences are just different facets of that Reality. That means that we should be searching for something that is always with us, but something that we can never see as an object, because scriptures tell us that it is unknowable. This search is a search of faith. It is faith that believes the scriptures, when they tell us that One alone is without a second. It is faith that believes the scriptures when they tell us that we are That now. It is

faith that wakes up in the morning when we're really very dull and grumpy and recognizes the presence of the unseen God.

Brother Lawrence developed the practice of the presence of God when he was scrubbing the cooking vessels. The God that we are seeking is the God unseeable except by the fire of faith, the God that is always present, always has been present, and always will be present. We have to have the humility to recover our memory and then do our duty as God gives it to us.