

The Real Measurement

Over a half century ago, a group of devotees came from Switzerland to see Gurudev. They were probably expecting a solemn sage, but Gurudev spent the morning cracking jokes. They left disappointed. Another time, some devotees came from South India. They stood at the door of Gurudev's office and began to shake. Gurudev said to them with all humility, "Please come in. I am no different than you."

We too have our ideas about divinity. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī was always trying to discourage people from elevating him and putting him on some throne. He was happier sitting on the floor. Lord Kṛṣṇa is considered to be the *pūrṇa avatāra*, the full manifestation of God. In our eyes that means something great, grand. And yet, His miracles aside, look at His life. Born in the middle of the night in a prison, raised by humble village people, He looked after the cows; and when the big battle comes, he works as a charioteer, washing down the horses at the end of the day.

Other partial *avatārs* of the Lord may be quite spectacular in one way or another, but even the Gītā that Lord Kṛṣṇa gave, which is called the essence or the cream of all the Upanishads, is in fact a repetition of much that is in other scriptures—nothing very original or spectacular, and yet it is the scripture that we all bow down to, and we all consider Lord Kṛṣṇa to be a supreme *avatār*.

In our own spiritual life, we like to have a feeling of accomplishment, and this is not bad if it encourages us to keep going. But, in fact, the purpose of our spiritual life is to get rid of all our human pretensions, not to add to them. It is to make us simple, humble, childlike. Each one of us is already a full *avatār* at our core. We are pure divinity. The problem is all the human pretensions that we have assumed.

The spiritual life is not intended to add to those pretensions, but to wear them away one by one. In Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī we have examples of human beings who had worn away all pretentiousness. In our worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa tonight we can think of his life, his simplicity, his childlike playfulness and remember that to be childlike and simple and humble is the real measurement of our spiritual life.