

Making a Contribution

As human beings we are a combination of body, mind, and Spirit. A wise person once said that when we are young, as long as we have developed some bodily strength, we can be of use. However, when we reach middle age and the body has become somewhat weak, unless we have developed our mind, it will be difficult for us to make a significant contribution. Then, when we get old and the body becomes very weak and the mind cannot keep up to date the way it used to, unless we have developed the Spirit within, we won't be able to make a meaningful difference.

We develop bodily strength through nourishing our body properly and exercising it. The same is true with our mind. We must give it the nourishment it needs, the education, but we also have to apply that education. We have to exercise our mind in a constructive way in order to make a real contribution. And so it is with the Spirit. We have to nourish the Spirit within with yoga, with selfless service, devotion to God, meditation, and study of the scriptures and enquiry into who we are.

We can nourish our Spirit with our spiritual practices, but how do we exercise our Spirit so that we have true spiritual strength that can make a difference. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī said, "Every day rub away the ego a little bit." We can rub away the ego a little bit by offering service without any expectation of reward. We can rub away the ego a little bit each day by offering everything we do to God. We can rub away the ego a little bit every day by constant remembrance that we are That.

Just as nourishing the body isn't enough unless we exercise it, just as nourishing the mind is not sufficient unless we use our mind constructively, so no matter how active we are in our spiritual practices, no matter how fruitful they seem to be, the only thing that counts finally is whether or not we are wearing away our ego a little bit every day.

Our contribution depends upon the degree that we know who we are and are able to communicate it to others. The knowledge of who we are becomes apparent when we gradually leave behind our present false identification. As we are already what we are seeking, the capacity to make a spiritual contribution is already there. It is wearing away the ego that makes it all possible.