

Being Good and Doing Good

In the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa makes it quite clear that none of us can cross the ocean of *samsāra* unless we take refuge in Him. And in the 18th chapter, He tells us the price we have to pay. We have to abandon all our *dharmas*, all our ideas of right and wrong, and take refuge in Him alone. On several occasions, Lord Jesus made clear to his disciples that unless they became like little children they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

This has relevance to devotees of Gurudev Swāmī Śivānandajī, because some of his devotees consider that his best known aphorism, Be good, Do good, is somewhat childish. They want to bypass being good and doing good and do the higher practices. However, we can spend a whole lifetime on meditation, study of the scriptures, devotional practices and discover that we haven't changed that much. Perhaps it is because we haven't really learned the deep significance of being good and doing good.

Even to make our spiritual practices fruitful, they have to be built upon a foundation of being good and doing good. That is why Gurudev made the vows of non-injury, truthfulness and purity in thought, word and deed conditions of membership in The Divine Life Society. That is why he said that *ahimsā*, *satyam*, and *brahmacarya*, are the foundation of yoga and Vedānta.

However, Be Good, Do Good has an even deeper significance. We are doing our spiritual practices in order to make God real, to realize Him. But the fact is that we are already what we are trying to realize. God can never an experience. Why? Because all the scriptures declare that He is unknowable. He, of course, from that unknowability shines forth states of *sattva* which we can equate with the Divine, but He finally is beyond all experience.

When that is realized, and when we realize with Gurudev that there is nothing here except the Divine, then how do we live our life? As we saw with Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānanda, being good and doing good—a constant striving for higher and higher levels of being and doing. But it takes a childlike approach to be humble enough to know that the essence of the spiritual life is to have faith in the scriptures when they tell us that we are already what we are seeking—and that our purpose here is to express that unknowable Truth in being good and doing good.