

Dual Awareness

In one of his best known songs, Gurudev Swāmī Śivānandajī says, “Enquire, Who am I? Know thyself and be free.” It would be our normal understanding that when Gurudev says, “Know thyself,” he means by that to know thyself in the highest sense – as one with the Divine. But ultimately, that is where the mind cannot go. It bows down, knowing its inability.

On the other hand, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has said that there is no way to God except through a *sāttvic* ego, and the Gitā tells us that everything in this creation—which includes ourselves in manifestation—is made up of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Therefore, to know ourselves also means that we have to be able to identify what in us is *sāttvic*, what is *rājasic* and what is *tāmasic*.

From one point of view. *Tamas* is that part of us that doesn’t want to move, that is lethargic. *Rajas* is that part of us that is restless, that is always wanting to move. But what we are really concerned with is developing *sattva*, and *sattva* can be understood from a number of different points of view. Certainly it can be understood as the silence and stillness that is closest to that which is transcendental. But at another level, it can be understood as something that combines both stability and constant openness to change.

It is not the stability of *tamas*, although sometimes it can look like it. It is not the changeability of *rajas*, although sometimes it can look like it. It is a different quality altogether, a divine quality. It is a quality that is anchored in the knowledge that One alone is without a second. Therefore, everything is our own self. There are no differences. It is immovable. But, as the scientists tell us, everything here is constantly changing. No moment is the same as the past moment. Everything is different. No two snowflakes are identical, no two fingerprints are identical.

Therefore, we need this dual awareness of the absolute oneness of all things and at the same time the absolute diversity, with nothing being the same from moment to moment. That is *sattva* in its true sense as it reflects the Divine—the stable consciousness of the oneness of all things, and, at the same time, infinite variety with everything constantly changing. That dual awareness is our goal.