

Seeing No Differences

In reading ecstatic spiritual literature, there is one claim that frequently repeats itself and that is, “There are no differences here!” Does that mean that the mystic, who is ecstatically declaring that there are no differences here, doesn’t see any differences? He sees all the objects just as before, but it is all his own self. It is so much his own self that he can’t even claim it as his own self, because that would mean a subtle separation.

But, what does it mean to function in this world seeing no differences and yet all the objects are still there? It means that that which separates has disappeared. There is a factor in us that feels that it is the center of the universe. It is the knower. Everything else is the known; they are objects to this knower. It is that subject-object relationship that disappears. Therefore, oneness alone is, and yet all the objects are there.

To move towards that vision, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Be *guṇātīta*.” Rise above the three *guṇas* and the pairs of opposites. In other words, be the witness of all the objects and forces of this universe. But then, we have to practice it in our daily life and constantly remember it. We need to watch our mind and be aware when we are not witnessing and are thus lost in the objects.

One time a follower of Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī, who was quite outspoken, was criticizing one of the other religions. Pūjya Swāmījī said to him, “The next time you go to Delhi, I want you to spend one hour in a mosque, one hour in a church, and one hour in a temple. When you come again, tell me your experience.” The next time the devotee came, Pūjya Swāmījī asked him if he had followed his instruction. He answered that he had. “What did you find?” Pūjya Swāmījī asked. “There was no difference,” the devotee answered.

From an objective point of view that was a foolish answer. There are no two mosques that are the same, let alone a mosque, a church and a temple not having any differences, but the devotee found no difference at a different level, at a more profound level.

“No difference amid differences.” This is what the sages say, and this is the purpose of all our spiritual practices—to find that place within where we see no differences and yet the differences are still there. We could call it

a form of dual awareness, but it really is not. It is seeing the One—indeed, *being* that One—without a second.