

Discrimination Is Different than Judgment

The fundamental teaching of Vedānta is that Brahman alone is without a second. In other words, there is nothing here, or anywhere else, except Brahman. So, it follows that we are That. We cannot be anything else, if Brahman alone is. Why then, isn't that obvious? Why do we see differences?

The standard answer is that it is because of desires or because of ego. However, upon examination, we find that these are not two independent things. They rise and fall together. And then, there is such a thing as *sattvic* ego, and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has said that there is no way to God except through a *sattvic* ego. There is also such a thing as good desires, *subheccha*, which lead us back to God. Therefore, the simple answers of desire or ego need to be understood in a deeper way.

In addition, perhaps there is something even more fundamental than ego and desire. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to say that the wheel of *samsāra* only has two spokes: *rāga-dveṣa*, like and dislike, or perhaps love and hate or attraction and repulsion. In other words, the reason that *samsāra* causes us to lose our vision of the oneness is not necessarily because of the ego, which allows us to objectify things and to reason, nor is it because of desires, which sometimes can be neutral or even positive, but rather it is our inveterate habit, which we carry on unconsciously, of continuously judging things and either liking them or disliking them, agreeing with them or disagreeing with them. We react to life emotionally.

The moment we like something we want to possess it; when we dislike it, we want to be rid of it. In either case we lose our perspective of oneness. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that for a sage *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are the same, a clod of earth, stone or gold are alike. It's a perspective on all our experience that is our natural state here and now. Oneness is our natural vision. Seeing things with differences is the result of like and dislike. In the Judaic-Christian tradition it is judging good and evil. It's wanting and not wanting.

We need to recover our perspective based upon the truth of the scriptures that all is one. As Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to say, we must discriminate between *avidyā māyā* and *vidyā māyā*—those things that take us away from the Truth and those things that attract us back to the

Truth—without ever forgetting that all is Brahman. Discrimination is different from like and dislike.

We can discriminate without considering one thing good and another thing evil. We discriminate and make a judgment about whether we should embrace or avoid. We don't need to like or dislike which binds us to *samsāra*.