

Stop Being Mediocre

For well over 30 years, up until a few years ago, visitors and especially inmates of the Āśram had the opportunity of sitting with a great saint, our Vedānta teacher Swāmī Brahmānandajī. He was very quiet, gave no public speeches, but he was full of the truth that was a reflection of his own realization.

Swāmījī would often make very interesting remarks. For example, he might say, “We assume that when you come here you have overcome the bad, now you are meant to transcend the good.” I suppose many of his listeners felt they had a lot of work left to do on the bad, and they were puzzled by what Swāmījī meant by transcending the good. And yet he had something very definite in mind.

It is not likely that any of those sitting in front of him, interested in the highest truths of Vedānta, were very likely to go out and commit any sins that would be considered in the eyes of society to be worthy of punishment or condemnation. On the other hand, there was a certain limitation in all who sat before him. They had their ideas of what the world was and how it should be run, what good was and what bad was. And actually, practically no idea of what it meant to transcend the good, even though in the last teaching verse in the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us clearly: Abandon all *dharmas* and take refuge in Me alone.

This points out a rather interesting fact about most of us as seekers. It’s not that we’re bad. It is just that we’re too mediocre. We have no imagination. For example, the scriptures and our teachers will tell us that God is unknowable and unthinkable. In our imaginations we can’t conceive of something that is really unknowable and unthinkable. We are convinced: “Yes, the scriptures say that, but what it really means is that I don’t know it yet, but someday I will know the unknowable.” Our imaginations won’t allow us to believe that unknowable means unknowable.

Our teachers try to help by pointing to deep sleep. They say that each one of us knows we’ve had deep sleep. And yet there isn’t one person in the whole world who is aware of it at the time. However, something knows it, otherwise we wouldn’t say we had deep sleep. And we don’t think it was somebody else that was present. We know that we were present. Otherwise we wouldn’t say, “I had deep sleep.” It is the total unknowableness of what

is there that our teachers are pointing to. We have to be bold enough to recognize that unknowable means unknowable.

On the other hand, the scriptures and our teachers tell us that God is immanent in all things. He is all things. And somewhere in our fuzzy imagination we acknowledge this. But we are too mediocre. We limit God. We are not absolute enough. There is nowhere where He is not. He is everything. There is nothing separate from Him. There is nothing that He is not. Whether it is something concrete or a thought or a smell or a subtle experience, whatever it is, it is He.

We need to stop being mediocre and allow ourselves to take in the enormity of what it is that we are seeking. Why do we remain mediocre? Because we are still desperately trying to hang on to an individual self separate from God; if we take in the enormity of God there is no place for us. The whole of God is waiting for us. We just have to give up our pettiness and embrace what is obvious.