

Part of the Whole

The fundamental declaration of the scriptures is that God alone is, one without a second. It is from this fundamental truth that the *mahāvākya*-s declare, logically, that That is what we are. So then we have a double truth, God alone is, and we are That.

The scriptures also declare that our fundamental error is wrong identification—losing our memory of who we really are and identifying with a body and mind. Even this would not be too bad but there is a very strange peculiarity about this false identification. We create a false subject, a false “I” that somehow feels itself to be the center of the world: “I am the subject and everything else is an object. Therefore, I seem to be, in fact I am, very important.” We can’t see ourselves in any way as part of the whole. We feel ourselves to be a separate center.

Therefore, another peculiarity arises: Whatever is happening, it’s all about me. I am what is most important. Whatever else is happening in the world and around me, I relate to as how it affects me. In some peripheral way we may recognize that others are in the same position and that we are just an object to everyone else, but mainly our moment-by-moment experience is that I am the center of the universe and I am dealing with a world out there.

When this realization dawns on us, we begin to see and understand how this cannot be a satisfactory position to be in. If everyone thinks that they are the center of the universe and therefore very, very important, then everyone is looking after themselves first as being most important. This inevitably brings about clash and quarrel and no one is totally satisfied because no one can get everything to be the way they want it to be.

The universal point of view as compared to this individual point of view is that I am part of the Whole, no more and no less important than anything or everything else. This is the truth, and therefore one way of looking at the spiritual life, and indeed the only way, is that it is not all about me, it is all about God or the Whole. Therefore, if I am going to get rid of the present unsatisfactory position I find myself in, then gradually, bit by bit, I have to leave this position that I am the center of the universe, the most important thing, and recognize that my true position is as part of the

Whole, and that my satisfaction and my true life is functioning as part of the Whole rather than functioning as an individual.

This is the change in the angle of vision that Gurudev wants us all to have. “My life is not about me. My life is part of God, part of the universe.” For the ego, for this sense of being the center of the universe and so important, this seems to be very undesirable. The ego even thinks that the spiritual life is all about it: “I, the center of the universe am going to realize that I am the Whole.” Whereas the truth is, the Whole alone exists and any thought of a separate individual is simply illusion.

Therefore, our task, in whatever way we undertake it, is to move from this conviction that it’s all about me to the clear recognition that it is all about God. My life is not for my sake. It is for God’s sake, for the sake of the Universe. It is in this light that we can understand Gurudev’s and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī’s emphasis on selfless service. It is not just some high moral stand, it is in accordance with the truth. The spiritual life is a call to the truth. And in that truth we find our salvation and the total satisfaction that we are all seeking.