

## The Yoga of Taking Refuge

Over the years when he has come here in the mornings, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has often pointed out to us that while there are four principal yogas, the number of authentic and genuine yogas is much more extensive. For example, he will point out that each chapter of the Gītā is entitled a yoga. And, as a matter of fact, if we wanted to look at it a little more critically, we could say that every time Lord Kṛṣṇa gives us a teaching and says, “will come to Me,” or “is dear to Me,” that that instruction itself is a yoga.

These are all positive practices that will lead to the Divine. However, underlying all the teachings, all the yogas, is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s warning that no one crosses this ocean of *samsāra* unless they take refuge in Him alone. In other words, whatever path we are following, whatever yoga we follow, underlying it all is the necessity of taking refuge in the Lord. Indeed, in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s last teaching verse in the Gītā, He finally tells Arjuna to abandon all his ideas, all *dharmas*, and take refuge in Him alone. He then makes a very powerful promise: “I will save you from all sins. Don’t worry. Don’t grieve.”

The importance of this teaching needs to enter into each one of us. Because in the ultimate analysis it is the only thing that will explain why our yoga and spiritual practices are not as successful as we would like them to be, and it is the only thing that will make them truly successful.

If this is so, then we would perhaps expect to find in our lives situations that are seemingly outside our spiritual practices, but are actually designed to bring us to this point of surrender, of taking refuge. And so in the lives of all of us, from time to time there come situations that we can no longer handle on our own.

It can happen as a very serious illness that we don’t know how to cope with. Finally, all we can do is take refuge in the Lord; He is going to have to rescue us, find a way out. It can happen in a family situation. We can’t handle it. We’ve tried everything we can. Finally we turn it over to the Lord and let it go. It can happen in our professional or business life—an impossible situation. The more we try, the more we realize that we’re not improving things. We take refuge in God. We turn it over to Him, knowing He alone can save the situation. And we leave the results in His hands,

knowing that, if we do this, whatever happens will be for our highest good, in our highest interest.

Each day we should try to take refuge in God, leave things to Him. It should be our underlying practice. But it is very difficult to train the mind to let go; its very momentum wants to keep doing things, keep deciding things for itself, thinking it knows best. So in His mercy God brings us difficult situations, challenges that we cannot handle ourselves. And in that way, among others, He teaches and trains us in the supreme yoga, the yoga of taking refuge in Him alone.