

Absolute Faith

As seekers we are considered to be people of faith. An atheist or a doubter will not believe anything that their senses cannot verify for them, whereas a person of faith believes that there are truths and validities beyond the senses. Their faith is the belief in That which the mind cannot grasp, which is beyond the mind. Of course, there is a difference between foolish faith and wise faith. Foolish faith just wants to believe something that pleases, that sounds plausible, that makes a person feel good about themselves, whereas wise faith is based upon the wisdom of the centuries, and the witness and the sayings of people whom we deeply respect.

Still, even if our faith is a wise faith, even if we're prepared to base our life on truths beyond the senses, most of us have a fair amount of an atheistic approach in us still. Compared to the absolute faith that is finally required, we hold on to relying upon ourselves, upon what we can rationalise with our own mind and know with our senses.

It is in this light that we can try to understand a very subtle, difficult, but vitally important point that Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has tried to make to us several times when he has come here in the mornings. He has said, "When I speak to you, it is the Universal speaking to the Universal. It is not an individual speaking to an individual." And then he said something that's difficult to grasp even for those whose first language is English, let alone those for whom English is their second language. He continued, "If you hear me as an individual, then you will only react to my words, whereas if you recognize that it is the Universal speaking to the Universal you will respond to what I say."

What is this subtle, but vitally important, difference between reacting and responding? A reaction comes from an ego that wants to protect itself, that is still relying upon itself, that is not prepared to take total risk. Our ego faith has a certain risk in it, but we still hang on to relying upon ourselves to a greater or lesser degree, so that even when Pūjya Swāmījī speaks to us we're judging his words, wondering what he is saying, how does this apply to me? Instead, Swāmījī wants us to be totally vulnerable, totally open, hearing, no doubt, with the ears and the mind, but allowing the words to go directly into our heart—not the emotional heart, but the heart of our being—that we spend most of our time protecting and don't want to let anyone else into, even God.

Yet this is the essence of the spiritual life. Absolute faith means total surrender. It means total vulnerability, it means total trust in God, knowing that if we put our total trust in God, in a wise way, not foolishly—in a wise way, based upon the scriptures and the words of our *guru-s*—that the universe will give us total protection. In other words, the essence of faith is relying not on ourselves for protection, but on the universe for protection.

It is this shift that all our spiritual practices are meant to bring about. If we continue to rely on our ego and to react to the world, we will always be limited, petty people. If we want to grow, if we want to become spiritual, it is in direct proportion to how much we're able to open ourselves, become vulnerable, and have absolute faith in God.