

We Are Already What We Are Seeking

The great and unique feature of the Vedic religion is the firm declaration that we are already what we are seeking. “That thou art,” the scriptures declare. And Gurudev put it in very plain and unmistakable English: “You are not this body, not this mind. Immortal Self you are.”

Of course, this teaching is not totally unique to the Vedic way of life. Jesus said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within.” He also said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is amidst you.” But the vast majority of the followers of Jesus think that the Kingdom of Heaven is some state after death or they try to create certain situations here on earth that are more loving, more spiritual than our present way of life. There is fundamentally no relationship to the declaration that you are already what you are seeking. And if we were honest about it, we would have to admit that most followers of the Vedic religion are not doing their spiritual practices with the understanding that I am already what I am seeking.

The reason is that we bring to our seeking our old nature. We are seeking *mokṣa*, liberation, as an object, even if it is an object in our own mind. We are unable to accommodate ourselves to the truth that we are already what we are seeking; thus the purpose of all our spiritual practices is to get rid of the conviction that we are the body and mind. Yet to truly realize this fact is the turning point of the spiritual life. What makes it so difficult is that there is nothing concrete to find, there is nothing the mind can grasp. Our *guru-s* tell us that it cannot be described. The scriptures say that the mind and speech turn away baffled.

How then do we access this mystery? We must be aware of what we are doing within. When we are doing our spiritual practices, is our success with them the measurement of our progress? “I know much more than I did a number of years ago. My mind is better concentrated. My *japa* is now repeating itself.” If that is the measurement of our spiritual life, then, in fact, we are using our spiritual practices to strengthen our ego rather than to wear it away. How then should our spiritual practices be done? The simple way that is most often used is to offer everything to God. In doing this there is an implied affirmation that I am nothing and God is everything.

Ultimately, if we keep up this practice of offering everything to God and affirming our own nothingness, we will become aware of a certain

space within, a certain indescribable peace that is also the witness of all our experience. It is not a witness the mind creates, but a witness that is eternally there, whether we are in the waking, dream, or deep sleep state. But our most important immediate task is to change the direction of our spiritual practices. The goal is not something we are going to newly attain, but a discovery of what we have always been.