

## What is Our Perspective?

Sometimes when describing the spiritual life, teachers will say, “In the beginning a mountain is a mountain. In the middle, it no longer seems to be a mountain anymore. But in the end, the mountain is a mountain once again.”

This, of course, refers to our inner perception, but it even has some validity in the outer life if we look at someone like Gurudev. In the beginning, during his youth and his period in Malāya, Gurudev was very active, very outgoing, very service-oriented. And then when he returned to India and ultimately to Swarg Āśram, he became withdrawn, inward. Then finally, sometime during the 40’s, he became very outward again, tremendously devoted to training his disciples and to building an institution that would benefit mankind.

However, what the saying really refers to is our inner view of reality. Now, the world seems very real to us, and we are convinced that we are this body and mind and that it is real. Then we’re told to discriminate between the real and the unreal, and in Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī’s words, “It is the invisible that is the reality; the visible is not real.” And so our *sādhana* becomes a matter of changing our perspective on what is real.

But then, when we see someone who is established in the Reality like Gurudev or like Swāmiji, there is nothing odd about them. They have a body which they are functioning through. They refer to I; they describe what they did when they were younger. Outwardly, there is nothing strange or different about them at all; they are perfectly normal. But, of course, there is a tremendous difference between them and us. They have a different perspective. In other words, in the end, the mountain becomes a mountain once again, but we’re looking at the mountain from a different perspective.

Why is it important for us to understand this? There are two reasons. The first is that during the period of our *sādhana*, often we’re convinced that we have to get somewhere, get something, to unite with God—and usually that it is something far off and almost unreachable. On the other hand, if we are being blessed by spiritual experiences, we can very often feel that we have arrived, or if we haven’t arrived that we are just on the

edge. In both cases the mountain is no longer a mountain—we're lost in some inner world, some inner idea of reality.

However, the final discovery is that we've always been what we are seeking. We discover that we are not what we had previously thought ourselves to be—a body and mind. We're also no longer trying to locate ourselves in some experience that we think is God. Somehow, we're exactly the same but also incredibly different.

Therefore, as seekers we must both recognize the radical change that has to take place and yet recognize how natural it is. It is like walking a razor's edge. And that is another reason we must always be alert, aware, and constantly vigilant.