

Abide in that Mystery

The fundamental teachings of Vedānta could be reduced to six words: God alone is and That thou art. In fact, we could reduce it to three words, because if God alone is, automatically it means that we too are That.

Ramaṇa Maharṣi had one glimpse of this truth and it never left him. Millions of others also experience this truth. For many it is something that they will occasionally remember as an experience they once had. They realize that it was something significant, but they have never followed it up. Most human beings who have had that insight or experience, however briefly, feel at least some inclination to follow it up, to want to investigate further, to have the experience repeated or even abide there. And yet it doesn't seem to be quite that simple. What is the underlying situation?

Vedānta tries to explain it by saying that there are two fundamental forces in this manifested world. One, the power of *avidyā māyā* that takes us away from God, and second, the power of *vidyā māyā* that is constantly trying to attract us back to God. And what is their fundamental nature? *Avidyā māyā* tells us that happiness is in wanting things, wanting to be someone. *Vidyā māyā* tells us that happiness is in being no one, having nothing, wanting nothing. What we really want will be the measure of how much we respond to an experience like Ramaṇa Maharṣi had.

The experience of most of us is that we are in the midst of a constant battle between these two forces. Sometimes we are filled with a great overwhelming desire for renunciation, for the Highest. Other times we are simply not interested. We want what we want; perhaps we are determined to get it. This battle between these two forces is what all the Purāṇas are about. It is a battle that the good in us never seems to be able to win, because the good always carries with it the seeds of the force that wants to go the other way.

What then is the solution offered? It is the recognition that there is something within that is superior to both *avidyā māyā* and *vidyā māyā*. And that is a mystery that we can never know with our mind, but is the witness of both these forces. Take refuge in Me, Lord Kṛṣṇa says. He is that mystery from which both *avidyā māyā* and *vidyā māyā* spring.

How do we take refuge in that mystery? By faith alone. By knowledge alone. By devotion alone. It is a question of letting go and trusting in that mystery. It will guide us in our day-to-day life if we want nothing except to abide in That. It usually takes years to train ourselves in that abidance, but finally it is the only solution.