

## The Fundamental Error

The fundamental teaching of Vedānta is that God alone is. It actually isn't necessary to add anything more. However, our minds are not satisfied with the simple truth. So the teachings go on to say "He or It is larger than the largest, smaller than the smallest. It is inside and outside, transcending everything, immanent in everything. It is all things. It is existence absolute, consciousness absolute, bliss absolute." If we want to describe its nature in simple language, it is the sense of existence or I AM.

Why is this simple truth not immediately evident, immediately realized? The scriptures tell us it is because of a fundamental error. We have identified ourselves with a name and form. And so instead of remembering the simple I AM, we have become lost in the feeling that we are an individual body and mind. The peculiarity is that I AM is a state of bliss and peace, whereas I am the body and mind is a state of the pairs of opposites and the three *guṇa*-s, a state of pleasure, but also pain—altogether an unsatisfactory state. Why then do we stay in this divided state and not return to our original state of peace and bliss?

There is one way of explaining it, which we can verify by our own experience. In the garden of Eden, the serpent hinted to Eve that if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she would become like God, and it is a fact that each one of us in our heart of hearts feel that we are the center of the universe. It is the peculiarity of the subject- object relationship within our minds: I am the subject and everything else is an object to me; therefore, I am the most important thing of all. So if we want to know why we're having difficulty in realizing our true Self, it is important to recognize how much we are in love with being the center of the universe, rather than being just a part of that ocean of bliss in no way distinguishable from the rest of the ocean.

Gurudev tells us, "You are not the body, not the mind, Immortal Self you are. Change your angle of vision." "It is your birthright," Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī tells us, "you are made for it." But only if we're willing to give up our false idea that we are the center of the universe.

This idea is totally false, but it is very intoxicating. The ego is drunk on the wine of self-importance. It has to realize its foolishness and be

prepared to renounce this insanity, to renounce error, to renounce ignorance, so that we can rest in the peace and bliss of our own true Self.