

Listening With Our Entire Being

The basic declaration of the scriptures is that God alone is and we are That. This means that our moment-by-moment experience should be one of oneness, of non-separation. But for most of us that is not our experience except in rare moments and in deep sleep.

The scriptures tell us that the reason for this sense of separation is because of our desires. Therefore, one practice that we can follow in meditation or any other time is to imagine that we have not a single desire. We're all full. There is nothing we want. This practice lets us get a sense of our oneness; our sense of separation disappears.

Actually there is no harm in having desires. It is quite natural to have them. The problem is our identification with the desires. If we see a desire simply as a desire, but refuse to identify with it, then it has no power over us, no separating power. A very real example of this is a lustful desire. If there is anything that we identify with, it is lust. We feel that it is we who are being lustful. But, in fact, lust is built into our being by the Creator; otherwise the species will not survive. If then, we see lust as a universal factor, we will just watch it and not identify with it. Not identifying with it, that lust has no power to make us feel separate from the rest of the universe. Instead it becomes an opportunity for a spiritual practice.

There is another very simple practice—we would never think of it as being a spiritual practice—that we can actually practice all day long and it will tremendously benefit us. And that is to really listen. Most of us only half listen. And even when we do listen, we listen with our head, which at the same time keeps judging what we are hearing and keeps thinking up replies. We're not really listening.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī more than once has come here and said, “When I am speaking to you it is the Universal speaking to the Universal.” Or sometimes Swāmījī will say, the Impersonal is speaking to the Impersonal. He says, “If you hear me as the Universal, then what I am saying will go into you and do its work. But if you hear me as an individual, then you will distort what I say and it won't have its proper effect.” How then do we listen in an impersonal way, as the Universal? Put simply, we stop listening with our discriminating mind and listen with our entire being. We could say, we listen with our body rather than our head.

We should also listen to God with our whole being. Our whole attitude as we move around during the day should be one of constant receptivity, of constantly listening. When we listen with our whole being our sense of separation fades away.

So, in addition to our formal spiritual practices, we should become aware of very simple things that get right down to the heart of our problem—our sense of separation. We are not separate. The idea of separation is only an idea in the brain caused by identification with desires, caused by attachments. When we listen with our whole being, it starts to undermine that normal pattern and thus it is a spiritual practice.