

A New Angle of Vision

All seekers are following individual paths. All seekers come into the spiritual life for different reasons. For some it is because they have had an attraction to it as long as they can remember. For others, it is reading a book or meeting a teacher. For still others, it may be a result of misfortune. Each one also has their own individual spiritual goal that they may envision as God-realization, heaven, a better birth, or just being a good person.

However, no matter what the goal or the reason for coming into the spiritual life, there seems to be a common factor that happens to each one of us. Inevitably, somewhere in the middle of our spiritual life we have the feeling that we are no longer making any progress. Some seekers can finally become so frustrated that they leave the spiritual life altogether. Others remain in the spiritual life outwardly, but something within has died. The old fire is no longer there.

What can we do in a situation like this? First of all, recognize that we are not unique. This is common to all seekers. Second, question the reason that this happens to all seekers, because the reason seems to be quite simple. The reason is that we are human beings, and human beings believe themselves to be the subject, the center of the universe, and everything else is an object to them. And so their goal too is an object to them that they are going to attain.

We do this in spite of the fact that we're constantly told that God alone is and we are That. It is because we don't actually face into this truth that we continue to seek something outside ourselves, something new—even if it is inside ourselves—instead of recognizing that we have always been what we are seeking. There is nothing new to gain; our purpose is to live what we already are.

This is the change in angle of vision that Gurudev wants us to bring about. And, of course, it is easier to say than it is to do. Why? Because it means leaving behind all our old ways of thinking and doing and venturing forth into an unknown way of being. It is leaving the familiar and venturing forth into the unfamiliar, even though that unfamiliar is who we are.

This is the great blessing of being in an *āśram* (hermitage) situated in an environment where over the centuries thousands and thousands of

similar seekers have sought God. Some people come to an *āśram* or attend a retreat to get a boost, and there is nothing wrong with that. But the real purpose of being in an atmosphere like this is to get a new angle of vision. And if we're going to get a new angle of vision, one thing is required. We have to be open to what is new and be prepared to leave behind the familiar.

It is a great challenge. But life worth living is accepting the challenge. No one was ever victorious by staying where they are. We must welcome life as it is and venture forth into the glorious Unknown.