

Go Out Into the Darkness

Ramaṇa Maharṣi would frequently tell his devotees, “You are all realized.” It was one way of stating the eternal Vedāntic truth: That thou art. But then, the question is, “If I am already what I am seeking, why don’t I feel it? Why do I think I am not realized?” The answer the sages usually give us is, “Because of desire, of attachment; you are too interested in things, the objects of sense.” However, even if we have, to a large extent, given up our attachment to the objects of sense, we still care very much about how we feel, what type of thoughts are in our mind. We think our feelings should be a certain way. We think certain thoughts should never enter our mind. And so, in fact, instead of thinking about God, we’re actually thinking about our mind, concerned continuously about our feelings.

Another trap that we can get into is wanting experiences of God. If we don’t have experiences, we feel that there is something wrong with us. If we do have them, we begin to think we’re someone quite special. We don’t recognize that all experiences come and go, and what comes and goes cannot be the eternal.

What then is the eternal? Where is the eternal? It is your ever-present experience, Ramaṇa Maharṣi will tell us. It is the subtlest of the subtle, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī will tell us. This can lead to great frustration, because we can’t grasp the subtlest of the subtle, and yet we want *something*. We don’t want the object of our search to be nothing. Still this is what the scriptures tell us. What we are seeking is unknowable, unthinkable, which means that to find God we have to renounce everything that we can know. That means that God, our happiness, our satisfaction, our true Self, cannot be in any experience no matter how sublime.

If It is not in any experience, then how can It be approached? There is an expression, “Go out into the darkness.” That is true faith. Faith is our relationship with the Divine, a relationship of emptiness, of not knowing. “Empty thyself and I will fill Thee.” Fill Thee with what? It cannot be described, our *guru-s* say, It can only be experienced.

But how can it be experienced if it is not an experience? This is a mystery we will have to discover for ourselves. To discover it we must stop searching for anything that is an object of our mind. Gurudev put it so

beautifully. He said, “Surrender everything unto the Lord.” That means we empty ourselves of everything we possess, everything we know. And then he added, “Place your ego at His feet.” In other words, we surrender the surrenderer. “And be at ease.” It is that ease that is our home, that is ever-present at all times—waiting for us to discover It and to ever abide in It.