

Let Go Totally

One of Gurudev's best known maxims is, "Change your angle of vision." In what way are we meant to change our angle of vision? One answer is from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life. And how is that done? "Do real *sādhana* my dear children. Do real *sādhana*," Gurudev used to say. And so we undertake earnest *sādhana* in order to shift from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life.

If our *sādhana* is done with great sincerity and regularity, it will bring about changes in our life. It will also bring about changes in our understanding. We will better understand the spiritual life; we will understand more about the Divine. But still, liberation may not be there; we may not have shifted from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life. What is the reason? It is because we are still depending upon the ego to guide us. We're relying upon ourselves and our own understanding. Right at the base, we are reluctant to let go of control of our own life. Perhaps it is out of fear, perhaps it is lack of trust. But there is a core of separation there that simply doesn't want to let go, that is convinced that it knows best.

This may be one reason why the first of Lord Buddha's four noble truths is the existence of sorrow. Normally, that is taken to mean that this human life is a life of sorrow—birth, death, old age, and disease. And looked at objectively, this is certainly true. But this is very often felt to be too negative an approach by many people. And yet Lord Buddha was a great one. Perhaps he had something more in mind when he said that the first noble truth is the existence of sorrow.

What is real sorrow? It is not what we are suffering at the present moment. Real sorrow is the feeling that we can never get out of it, that we are trapped by it. And what is it that is trapping us into sorrow? It is the sense of separation—the ego—no matter how refined that ego is. It is important to recognize that if in a worldly way the ego is wise—it knows how to function properly in this world—a degree of happiness can be found that is for most people quite enough. It is also true in the spiritual life that if we are sincere, work hard in our spiritual life, a degree of happiness and understanding will be there that we may be very tempted to settle for. But it is not liberation, and the seeds of sorrow are always there as long as the ego is alive.

Therefore, Lord Buddha wants us to recognize this fact. There is no permanent happiness as long as the ego survives, even if it is a good ego, a *sāttvic* ego. We must develop in ourselves, finally, a passion that is determined to get rid of the ego, no matter how benign it may be. And what is the essence of that passion? It is to utterly depend upon God instead of depending upon ourselves. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “No one crosses this ocean of *samsāra* unless they take refuge in Me.” And finally He also tells us, “Abandoning all *dharmas* take refuge in Me alone.” We must let go totally. We can take nothing with us, but fortunately the underlying welcoming arms of the Lord are there to support us when we have the courage and wisdom to simply let go.