

The Ultimate Purpose of Our Spiritual Life

One of the interesting discoveries of the spiritual life is that, while we may think we are following a certain religion or spiritual path, each one of us has in fact our own individual path that we are being led along. However, no matter what path we are on, Ramaṇa Maharṣi used to say that it has to end up in the enquiry of “Who am I? Why is this?,” because the scriptures tell us that our fundamental error is wrong identification. Therefore, by logic, our fundamental spiritual practice should be an enquiry into who we really are in order to correct that fundamental error.

As we enquire into who we are, we are helped by the truths of the *mahāvākya*-s: You are That. I am Brahman. This Self is Brahman—the Ultimate. But unfortunately, the same scriptures that tell us that we are the Ultimate tell us that God is unknowable and unthinkable, which means that we’re actually seeking for something that the mind can never grasp. Therefore, the first thing we have to conclude in our endeavor to correct the fundamental error that we have all made is that we can never know ourselves as an experience. Experiences are knowable. We are the Unknowable. We are That which knows the experience.

We may say, “I am divine, and I know it because I see it, I feel it.” But there is something that knows that experience. And we can never grasp that something with our mind. However, our mind can come to certain conclusions. First of all, that I am the witness of all experience. I am not anything I experience, be it God or man, but I am the witness of it. I am also the witness of the three *guṇa*-s, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, and it makes no difference to me which one is present. At the same time, I have choice. Lord Yama told Naciketas that man is constantly choosing between the pleasant and the good. Who is choosing? I am choosing. No, no, the intellect chooses. But, in fact, it is I who decide whether to go along with the intellect or not.

So I choose and I am the witness. But I can’t separate myself from what I am witnessing. In fact, if I try to say I am the witness and I am witnessing something, there is something actually unknowable witnessing that. Which is what I really am. But what I really am is not separate from what I know. The unknowable and the knowable are one. The transcendental and the immanent are one.

To begin this enquiry, it is first necessary to be good and do good in order to refine the mind. And what is it that we do when we discover that we are the witness, that we are not the slave of the three *guṇa*-s, that we have choice, that we are not separate from what we know? We be good and do good.

So perhaps that is why, when we open our eyes after meditating here, we see **BE GOOD** and **DO GOOD** in bold letter before us. Because one way of understanding the spiritual life is that it is be good and do good in the beginning, it is be good and do good in the middle, and its ultimate purpose is to manifest in this world be good and do good.