

We Choose

In his book, *A Call to Liberation*, which is arranged according to topic, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has more talks on the subject of choice than on any other. It may seem to be a bit strange in what is really a text book on the spiritual life, but it must be a very vital subject or there wouldn't be so much space allotted to it.

Many of us might question the necessity of speaking so much about choice, but actually, if we will examine our own psychological processes and the psychological processes of other people in this world, we will discover that most people don't really feel that they have any choice in life, that they are actually the victims of their circumstances. As a result they normally blame everyone and everything else for their situation—it has been imposed upon them, and they have no choice in the matter.

The same thing can happen to us in the spiritual life, when instead of struggling with the outer world, we're struggling with our inner world, with our mind and our emotions. We have certain ideals that we are trying to accomplish, and we seem to be the victims of our own nature. Sometimes we may want to cry out with Saint Paul, who said that the good he wanted to do, he did not do, but the evil he did not want to do, he did. "Wretched man that I am," he complained. So it is with us as we struggle with our mind and emotions. It is as if we are totally bound by them, and that there is no way out, as if we have no choice.

Certainly, it is true that the forces that oppose our higher self, the best in us, are extremely powerful, whether they are worldly forces and situations or inner ones. But Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī wouldn't give so many talks on the subject of choice if we didn't have one. Lord Yama told Naciketas that man is constantly choosing between the pleasant and the good. Lord Kṛṣṇa pointed out the differences between the divine and the demoniacal, and He even pointed out the choice between the lesser gods and Himself.

But then, what do we say to a person who is struggling and struggling and feels themselves to be the victim of either their outer or inner circumstances? This is where we have to discover the spiritual key. The key is not in struggle, but in letting go. It is to let go and let the higher forces within guide us. They will show us paths that we could never have

conceived of. They will not only show us the path, they will give us the strength to follow it. And that path is always from the gross to the more subtle and from the more subtle to the still more subtle. It is a steady increase in subtlety.

In his *Universal Prayer*, Gurudev asks, Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred, and jealousy, which are all gross manifestations, earthy manifestations of our nature. And then he says, “Fill our hearts with divine virtues,” meaning compassion, love, truth, purity, consideration—qualities that are lighter and more subtle. Those qualities are always within us, but they only appear when the ego realizes that it is the cause of all its problems. The grossness of I want—I want for me—results in all our enemies within. If we want to be free from them, the ego has to have humility and know that it is the problem, know that if it gets out of the way the natural forces of goodness, which represent the truth of our nature, will gradually take over and show us the way out.

This is our fundamental choice. We choose to go the old victim way, the way of the ego, or we choose the spiritual way, the path towards God, the path that is fundamentally one of letting go and surrender.