

## What We Can Never Know

We refer to ourselves as seekers, sometimes as seekers of the Divine, seekers of God, God-realization, or seekers of Truth—the truth of our being and this world. But whatever our designation, in our seeking we have to use what we have, either our ability to think or our ability to feel.

We can endeavor to understand the truth with our intellect, and if we are diligent, we can come to some degree of mastery over the subtleties of spiritual philosophy, understand at least to a certain degree the subtleties of Vedānta, of the *mahāvākya*-s. But still, at the end of the day, no matter how subtle our understanding, the goal still seems to be out of reach, and our understanding fails the most important test. It hasn't brought about a fundamental change in us. In fact, sometimes any change brought about will be a negative one, in that our ego seems to have been fattened by all our knowledge rather than thinned out.

Strangely enough, this can also happen if we follow the path of devotion. The path of devotion is meant to glorify God and for us to become nothing. However, very often it first leads to experiences. We can enter into certain states. We can feel that we are very close to God, and thus our egos may be fattened by feeling that we are advanced seekers close to the goal.

The truth is that what we are seeking cannot in any way be grasped by either the intellect, no matter how subtle, or our feelings, no matter how refined. Speech and mind turn away baffled, the Upaniṣads tell us. Recognizing this, we may then seek that which is unknowable and unthinkable. But still there is the inveterate habit of the mind wanting to possess something. We will not give up the conviction that someday we will know something.

In this regard, it might be helpful to take advantage of the findings of modern science. They tell us that this world began with a big bang. It was only after the Big Bang that time and space came into existence, and the scriptures tell us that we are That that was before time and space. We can't imagine the Big Bang, let alone what was before. We can't imagine it in any way, but still more unimaginable is that they tell us that when we get down into the finest particles of all, even then everything is coming out of that

Unknowable and disappearing back into it. No wonder the sages said that this world is not real, that it doesn't really exist.

This realization can stop our mind from searching further, and help it to recognize that in the end everything points to a mystery that we can only be connected to by faith. All intellectual knowledge can be helpful, all spiritual experiences can be helpful, as long as we know that they are not ends in themselves. They are meant to be pointers to a mystery that we can never know, a mystery, however, that can be our support and our life through faith.

Our constant choice is to base our life on what we know, or on what we can never know. The culmination of the spiritual life is when we have the wisdom to base our life on That which we can never know.