

Let Us Choose the Natural State

The goal of life has been described in many ways—God-realization, cosmic consciousness, *nirvāṇa*, the Tao, the Kingdom of Heaven, *mokṣa*—but perhaps one of the most useful terms for us as seekers is the natural state. This is what we actually see in those who have reached the goal. They function in a perfectly natural way, but they have two characteristics. They see clearly, and they have a sense of well-being that very often communicates itself to those in their presence.

On our way to the goal it is not uncommon for seekers to have spiritual experiences—sometimes quite dramatic ones such as a vision of a deity or a saint, perhaps a cosmic vision. Or there can be incisive insights, bursts of creativity. But inherent in all these experiences, and recognizable as an afterglow, is the natural state, a sense of clear-seeing and well-being. Inevitably, although we may not recognize it, all seekers have had this experience even if it is hidden in the attraction they find to the spiritual life or to a spiritual teacher.

Why are we not able to maintain a state that is natural to us? The standard reasons given, and they are valid, is that it is because our desires pull us away from that sense of having no needs and wanting nothing; our attachments pull us away. Fear can sometimes do it. But perhaps the most common reason is that we're simply not accustomed to clear sight and a sense of well-being. It creates a certain tension in us, it requires a certain alertness which necessitates finally, until we are finally established in it, a vigilance to maintain. The perverse truth is that we are attached to our little caves, our little cocoons, and we can only take so much of grace, it seems, before we want to rush back into our little holes.

It is important to recognize this, or we will never understand what needs to be corrected. Lord Kṛṣṇa gave us the formula. By whatever means that suits us, we must practice the natural state—by being in an atmosphere that encourages it and by the spiritual practices that invoke that sense of relaxation and well-being within us. Above all, we must have dispassion, perhaps even aversion to remaining in that narrow, selfish, self-centered place that we call ego life.

We think that the spiritual life is either a matter of getting something or having God's grace. In actual fact it is something that we continuously

choose, either consciously or unconsciously. Lord Yama told Naciketas, “Man chooses between the good and the pleasant. The good leads to his highest welfare, the pleasant to his destruction.” To quote Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī: “Let us be wise and choose the good.”