

Want Nothing - II

When we feel a call to the spiritual life, we naturally are attracted to some path or combination that we think will lead us to the goal. Along the way, if we are fortunate, we will have certain spiritual experiences, which we may feel are the purpose of the spiritual life. It is because they have a validity about them, and they are so much superior to our normal level of consciousness. We seldom ask the question, “Why is this experience superior?” We’re only interested in having the experience, not in the purpose of the experience. The purpose of the experience is actually to show us how much superior it is when the ego has disappeared. Because the condition of a spiritual experience is that that which makes us feel separate from the rest of life has dropped away.

Instead of recognizing this and recognizing that the essential part of the spiritual life is to get rid of those things that make us feel separate, we in our ignorance—perhaps in our greed—continue to want more spiritual experiences, which often leads us to great frustration, even anger. It happens because we have thought that the spiritual experiences are an end in themselves, whereas they are actually just pointers.

What they are pointing to is the essence of what we should actually be seeking in the spiritual life. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has given us the secret to the spiritual life, the secret to happiness in just two words. He has said if you want to be happy then want nothing. Why is it that desires are the great enemy? It is because, if we understand it correctly, it is desires that create our sense of separation. When we want nothing, there is no sense of separation. We feel oneness with all things. We can experiment with this ourselves. We can practice wanting nothing. We will find that the ego disappears.

Therefore, if we are wise perhaps we will decide that the spiritual life is not nearly so much about having experiences as it is in doing the hard, often unpleasant work of ridding ourselves day by day of those things that are pulling us away from our true Self within.

If God were something new, something that we had to attain that we don’t already have, then it would make sense to go after Him, to want spiritual experiences. But the truth of all scriptures is that we are already what we are seeking. Therefore, logically, the way to realize that is to get

rid of those things that are blinding us to our reality. That means the grunty hard work of getting rid of those desires that make us feel separate, that make us feel alienated, that prevent us from resting us in our own Self.

Thus, if there is a degree of frustration in our spiritual life—that we're not getting what we want—perhaps we should face the fact that the secret of the spiritual life, the way to God, is, as Pūjya Swāmījī has pointed to us, to want nothing.