

Returning Home

The scriptures tell us that our fundamental error is wrong identification. We, who are pure Spirit, the Ātman, have in some inexplicable way identified ourselves with an individual body and mind. Why this has happened is not explained, except they use an analogy: The eye cannot see itself. It sees everything else, but not itself. Therefore, as it creates and shines through a body and mind, the Self identifies with the body because it is the closest thing at hand, the most intimate.

When the Self does this, it goes from a situation of oneness, where there is no second, to being a subject with everything else being an object to it. Whereas before, it didn't feel itself to be anything, but was everything, when it identifies with a body and mind, it feels itself to be the centre of the universe, totally separate from everything else. This is a very lonely position, so it longs to feel oneness with other things, to possess them. However, in the final analysis, it can possess nothing. Everything remains outside of itself. Even if it owns things and has them in the palm of its hand, they are still separate from itself, and at any moment they can be taken away.

Thus the scriptures and the saints tell us that there is only one solution. We have to give up this false identity and reclaim our true one. And there is no miracle that will do this for us. As Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī says, "One in a million may know it suddenly, but you shouldn't think you are that one in a million." And Ramaṇa Maharṣi said simply that when he took this birth he must have had just a little more to do and that is why his realization came suddenly and permanently.

Thus the way back is more of a journey than a sudden elevation. It requires steady work. It requires accepting full responsibility for whatever position we are presently in. It is we who have made the decisions that have put us here, and it is we who will make the decision to get back to sanity. But help is always available. Even to be in an ashram like this one is a blessing. The vibrations go right into your bones. To live here is an even greater blessing as long as it is recognized.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī tells us that if you want to become God, become like God. There is no way to God except through a *sāttvic* ego, through being good and doing good. And as Pūjya Swāmījī has also said,

our task each day is to wear away our sense of separation a little bit. Being in the company of saints or in a saint's abode, repeating God's name, doing good to others—simple things—will lead us back to where we came from—an abode of perfect peace and happiness—even amidst the turmoil of this world.