

Surrender and Action

Although Gurudev felt that it was dangerous for seekers to change *guru-s*, he would always invite other teachers to the Aśram and encourage his devotees to be open to all teachings—to gain knowledge from wherever they could. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī can go even further. He has sent devotees to other *guru-s* and has occasionally even suggested that someone else would be more suitable for the devotee than himself.

Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmījī know that we are seldom totally satisfied with our *sādhana*. Usually, the problem is our own impatience and misunderstanding although occasionally a change is necessary. But the change should normally be in the practice that we are doing. Perhaps we have shut ourselves off from parts of Gurudev’s teachings. Perhaps our understanding isn’t broad or deep enough yet.

Most teachers say that the fundamental of the spiritual life is selfless service; we have to start breaking down our innate selfishness. But then, we also need to understand the spiritual life, understand where our bondage is, what our fundamental problems are. And so whether it is listening to teachers or studying the scriptures, we must constantly be making an effort to deepen our understanding. But then, once again, no matter how much we deepen our understanding, someone like Pūjya Swāmījī will ask us, “But what about your life?” In other words, our concentration has to go right back to what we are actually doing in our day-to-day life. We thought that the doing of selfless service was not enough, so then we turned to study and understanding, but now we are told that the test is what you are actually doing. It seems to be circular.

Finally, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us, that no one crosses this ocean of *samsāra* without taking refuge in Him. And in his final teaching in the Gītā, he tells us to abandon all our ideas of right and wrong, of salvation and *sādhana*, and simply take refuge in Him. But then, what does that mean? It means that we have no more personal ideas of what is right for us because this whole world, including ourselves, belongs to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But when we have recognized that, what do we do? We learn more about the spiritual life, we do more selfless service, we do all our other practices but with a different *bhāva*, with a clear foundational understanding that everything in this universe including ourselves and our effort belongs to the Lord.

We cannot stay in the emptiness of total surrender, total taking refuge. As Lord Kṛṣṇa points out, by our very natures we must act. But we're not meant to act with a residual feeling that we are the doer. Rather we are meant to act from the underlying ground that all this is Brahman alone. We then act as we feel prompted to do—sometimes selfless service, sometimes worship, sometimes study, perhaps time for each one of them each day. But the taking refuge is underlying all our practices and actions.

It is a taking refuge where there is nothing left to give away because we have not only, in Gurudev's words, surrendered everything unto the Lord, but we have placed our ego at His feet—we have surrendered the surrenderer. And from that perspective we live our daily lives as prompted by That to whom we have taken refuge in.