

Avoiding a Fall

The scriptures contain many stories of great yogis who had reached very high attainments and then had a fall, often because of some celestial nymph. In modern times it can be a terrestrial nymph that can cause a fall. It can also be money and sometimes the most dangerous thing of all, spiritual pride arising from name and fame.

There is also something else that can happen to advanced seekers that was mentioned more than once by Pūjya Swāmī Krishnānandajī. He would speak of seekers who had worked very hard and steadily at their spiritual life for 10, 15, 20, 25 years and then suddenly feel they have gained nothing. What is even worse, they could no longer do any *sādhana*; their spiritual *sādhana*, at least for the present, was finished.

What is the reason for such happenings? It is because we believe that the spiritual life has to do mostly with what we know or what we feel, our thinking and our feelings. We're not aware of the root. We know that we are ignorant, so we have to learn. We are aware of our negative feelings, we have to improve them. But we're not aware of the root or even that there is a root. And, therefore, we can patch up the outer, our understanding and our feelings; we can be so competent that we can become a teacher, but at the root there has been no fundamental change. Wrong identification, like and dislike, come from a root within that the conscious mind is not aware of, and if fundamental changes don't reach the root then sooner or later the superstructure will collapse.

The question is, how do we get at the root to change it? The answers are so simple, so childlike, that we are apt to dismiss them, not have real faith in them. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī, like many great teachers, has pointed to the efficacy of the divine name. He has said that the name of God has the power to go where we can't go—right down to that root.

There is a second method that is vitally important. And that is, no matter what spiritual practice we are following, no matter how deeply we go into the scriptures, no matter what our devotional practices are, always end up with the simple practice of offering it all to God. Let it go. Don't cling to any spiritual practice or experience; offer it back to God. The third method is obedience. It is not an outer obedience, although that too can be important. It is an obedience that comes from the very depths of ourselves.

It is: Not my will but Thy will be done. It comes from an absolute surrender.

So, no matter what else we do, we should never forget the power of the divine name, we should never forget, whatever practices we are doing, to give them back to God—not to hold on to any of them—and finally, at all times: Not my will, but Thy will be done.