

Knowing God by Inference

One evening, at *satsang*, many years ago, when our late revered General Secretary Swāmī Krishnānandajī, was giving one of his regular talks, a lady came in a little late and walked across his view towards the ladies side. Suddenly, Swāmī Krishnānandajī stopped speaking and asked, “Are you so and so?” She answered, “Yes, I am.” Then Swāmī Krishnānandajī said, “I knew it by inference—just like we infer the existence of God.” Pūjya Swāmījī didn’t elaborate on how he knew who she was. Perhaps he was expecting someone important and the word had come that she would be arriving late. Nor did he elaborate in his talk on why we know God by inference, but we can suggest that Pūjya Swāmī Krishnānandajī was referring to the unknowability of God.

Many of us think that we know God or have seen God or have experienced God. But Ramaṇa Maharṣi used to say, “Whatever has a beginning will have an end, and whatever has a beginning and an end cannot be the eternal.” Further, the scriptures all declare that God is unknowable, unthinkable, unimaginable. Therefore, if we analyse it carefully, we will have to come to the conclusion that the only way we can know God is by inference.

Strangely enough, even though we are aware of the scriptural passages that declare that God is unknowable, our minds are determined to know the unknowable. They cannot accept the fact that unknowable means unknowable, and that therefore, if we are going to know the truth of God, the existence of God, it will have to be by inference.

How do we know God by inference? That is an individual process. That unknowable God will prove Himself to us one way or another. If we are a hundred per cent honest inside, if we are prepared to accept the truth no matter how many of our illusions it shatters, we will know by inference that God is the light of our life, that He is present everywhere, even though He can never be tangible in His essence.

What about the tangible experiences we have of God? We give thanks for them, for they are proving the existence of God, the existence of that Unknowable that shines forth those profound experiences into our consciousness. But experiences are not God. They are what God shines forth to help our faith, to lead us to infer His existence.

We have the scriptures as our guide. We have the example of the saints, but above all it has to be a solo inner journey where we ourselves know God by inference, and then He proves it to us continuously through our experience.