

It is Our Own Self

After spending so much time telling Arjuna what he should do to follow *dharma*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the last teaching verse of the Gītā, invites Arjuna to abandon all *dharmas* and to take refuge in Him alone. The reason is quite clear, because earlier He had indicated that unless we take refuge in Him alone, there is no way we can cross the ocean of *samsāra*.

In this invitation to take refuge, to surrender, Lord Kṛṣṇa is consistent with all the great ones. They all say in their own way to follow Me, depend upon Me, take refuge in Me. But who and where is this Lord that we are to take refuge in? Each one of us has our own image of the Lord, but ultimately the scriptures declare That *thou* art, meaning that the Lord we are finally meant to take refuge in is not other than our own self.

But what self are we meant to take refuge in? Is it the self of our mind that thinks that we are the body, that thinks we were born in a certain place, we will have a certain history, and then we will die? Obviously, it is not that self. Indeed, that is the self that we are meant to give up our identification with.

Is it the self of our feelings? Sometimes we can feel one with nature, even one with God; we feel expanded, something more than the body and mind. This is obviously a better self to take refuge in, to depend upon, because we often can *feel* God's reality and His guidance. But then, when the scriptures declare That thou art, the That we are meant to identify with is not the God that we can feel or think about. Rather it is That which is beyond knowing—unknowable, invisible, unimaginable. It is that which we really are, but what we can never grasp with our mind or our feelings.

We have to believe the scriptures, and, above all, we have to practice it. Taking refuge means, as Pūjya Swāmījī has said, we must jump from the ladder to the terrace. We cannot stay on the ladder and be on the terrace at the same time. Therefore, just as we are meant to leave behind our mental identity, we are also meant to leave behind any feeling identity we may have and take refuge in That which we can never grasp. It is our true Self.

We will discover that it is nothing new. We have *always* been That. It is simply a question of where our mind places us. Abandoning all *dharmas*, abandoning taking refuge in any idea of ourselves, abandoning any feeling

about ourselves, quietly, humbly, with faith, take refuge in That which we can never know—which is the Lord Himself and is also who we are finally.

