

See Nothing Except God

One of the lesser known, but great, saints of 20th century India was a humble *bīḍi* shopkeeper from Mumbāi called Nisaragaṭṭa Maharāj. His guru had told him that he was Divine, and as he said later, “I could see no reason my guru would lie to me, so I believed him.” Thus, after about three years of constant reflection on what the guru had said, he realized the truth, and he became a sage and a guru in his own right.

The foundation of Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī’s teachings were also to constantly tell us that we are Divine. And one time, speaking to small group of sincere devotees, he said, “You would think that you would have the courtesy to believe what the speaker is telling you.” Perhaps we would desperately like to believe, but we find that in our heart of hearts we are unable to do so.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī gives a solution to this problem in his talk, “Practice Your Conviction,” in *Ponder These Truths*. Some devotees had approached him saying that they absolutely believed the truth of the scriptures, but complained that it was not real to them—they didn’t experience it. Fundamentally, Pūjya Swāmījī’s answer was, “You’ve got to practice your conviction over and over again. You have to deny the falsehood that your senses tell you—that you are separate—and affirm the truth of the scriptures that all is one. Ultimately, he says, what begins with intellectual conviction becomes *bhava*, becomes a feeling experience, and then finally *bhava* becomes *anubhava* or direct experience.

But then, the spiritual life never seems to be simple, because does even direct experience entirely solve our problem? It allows us to see the truth directly, but does that mean that all contrary thoughts have been cleaned out of our mind, or can we slip back into thinking that we are separate and forget our divinity? It, of course, depends on the devotees themselves, the degree of their spiritual maturity and the power of the experience that they have had. But we can suggest that the ultimate goal is to be like Gurudev, who once was asked if he had seen God. His answer was, “I see nothing except God.” In other words even having direct experience is just a beginning. We have to keep on practicing, until, like Gurudev, we see nothing except God.

So let our *sādhana* be what it is. The declaration of Nisaragaṭṭa's guru and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī, and, of course, all the other great saints is that we are Divine. "That thou art," the *mahāvākya* also says. Our challenge is to believe it and to practice it until we too see nothing except God.