

Not I, Not Mine

The scriptures declare that mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation in the human being. The great sage Vyāsa tells us how the mind is the cause of both. If the mind says I and mine, it is the cause of bondage. If it is not I, not mine, it is the cause of liberation. Lord Yama told Naciketas that man chooses between the good and the pleasant. The good leads to his highest welfare, the pleasant to his destruction. The pleasant, therefore, is I and mine. The good is not I and not mine.

In what way is I and mine the cause of bondage? It entices us to think that we are the center of the universe, the most important thing. We become increasingly greedy: we want to possess as much as we can, to know as much as we can, to be the most important one. It is an intoxicating process, and like everything that is intoxicating it leads to a terrible hangover.

On the other hand, the good, not I, not mine, is the hard and narrow path, the path of dispassion, renunciation, sacrifice. We deny the thought that our happiness is in having more and being the center of the universe. We see that as a pathway to misery, to hell. But before we can have dispassion for it, we have to recognize how intoxicating it is, how seductive, how easy it is for us to justify that path. What could be wrong with knowing more, having more, being more important?

There is nothing wrong with any of these things if we don't claim ownership of them. But almost inevitably it becomes I and mine. So it isn't what we have or know in this world that matters, it is whether we think it belongs to us or whether we recognize that it is all part of God's universe—including ourselves and any recognition of that truth. That thou art, the *mahāvākya* says. We are meant to recognize I am That. I am that Universal, not this individual.

Each one of us has different talents. Each one of us has different capacities. We are not meant to hide our talents, to run away from them. They are meant to be used, especially, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī would say, for the good of others. But we shouldn't be claiming ownership of them, I and mine, when in truth they are not ours at all. Neither do they belong to an I as an individual, nor are they mine. Nothing belongs to me. Gurudev said.

That is freedom—when we claim nothing—not I, not mine. It's all in the mind. It is our choice to claim what we have as I and mine or to recognize that it all belongs to the Universal of which we are an integral part.