

Three Renunciations

The scriptures declare that that Brahman alone is without a second, and the four *mahāvākyas*, the great sentences, describe the nature of Brahman and our relationship to It. They declare that Consciousness is Brahman, or as Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to say, Brahman is pure Consciousness. The *mahāvākyas* also declare That Thou Art, which means that we are that One alone without a second.

Our task, therefore, is to claim that truth, to know that truth, so the other two *mahāvākyas* are meant to be our response: I am Brahman and This Self is Brahman. When this is the fact, verified by the scriptures, why isn't it our experience? It is, of course, always our experience, but there is something peculiar about the mind that blocks its recognition of it—something that we have to recognize and deal with.

The first thing is the very strange peculiarity that when all is One without a second, without differences, our mind feels that we are the center of the universe and that everything and everyone else, including God, is an object to us. We also feel that objects should serve the subject, be of use to the subject.

The problem is that when we all think that we are the subject fights and quarrels and lack of harmony are inevitable. Thinking we are the center of the universe, we also suffer from a second grievous problem and that is, whether we like to admit it or not, we all think that we know best. The fact that most of what we think comes from our conditioning doesn't occur to us. If we believe it, we think that it is correct, that we know best. We don't see that what we know is mostly an accident of birth.

The third thing is that in spite of feeling that we are the center of the universe and know best, we feel a terrible sense of lack. We feel isolated, and, therefore, we are filled with desire, a desire to fill that hole in ourselves, to complete ourselves. Indeed we would like to possess everything so that we want nothing.

Knowing who we are cures all those problems, but we have to be willing to give up the problems. Indeed, we have to hunger and thirst not to be the center of the universe, but part of the universe. We have to hunger and thirst to recognize that true knowledge has nothing to do with how

much we think we know. We have to hunger and thirst to be rid of all desires whatsoever, to feel in Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī's words, total satisfaction.

If we thus want total satisfaction, if we want to recognize who we are, then we must want to give us the feeling that we are the center of the universe, the feeling that we know so much and we have to renounce wanting things, because, in fact, we already have everything we are seeking.