

The Significance of Obedience

Every student of the Gītā has their own favorite passage or chapter. Of course, the most spectacular chapter in the Gītā is Chapter 11, when Lord Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna the divine eye so that he can see His universal form. Indeed, it is so climatic, that many commentators say that the Gītā should end at this point. But, of course, it doesn't. It goes on for another seven chapters.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī constantly quoted from the Gītā, but even though he once gave a series of lectures on Chapter 11, he seldom referred to it. One of the many verses he did refer to and one of his definite favourites, was right at the end of the Gītā when Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna if he has understood and Arjuna responds, “Destroyed is my delusion through Thy grace. *I will act according to Thy word.*”

It is not that Chapter 11 is not extremely significant and necessary. Indeed, all our spiritual practices are meant to take us towards that experience, the experience of confirmation of the fundamental truth of Vedānta that Brahman alone is without a second—which means that who we *think* we are doesn't exist. We are a zero. But seeing the truth and becoming a zero are two different things. Therefore, the Gītā doesn't end at Chapter 11. In some ways, we could say it is a beginning.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī once said that the spiritual life doesn't begin until you know who you are. Chapter 11 revealed to Arjuna the truth, but he had to become that truth, which means to conform his life to it. That process of conformation can be done by total devotion or constant enquiry, but Jesus said, “Take up your cross daily and follow Me.” It means deny your ego daily and follow Me, the Universal. Thus Arjuna, having seen the Universal, having got rid of his delusion, in order to confirm himself in that truth said, “I will act according to Thy word.”

This is symbolic of our spiritual life. We are meant to see the truth that God alone is without a second. But the important thing is to get rid of our ego, which means that we have to consistently day after day conform ourselves to the truth that we have seen. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī said, “Each day wear away the ego a little bit,” and there is no better way than each day following the Lord in a spirit of surrender and obedience.