

The Essence of the Teachings

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to say that a teacher is his teachings. The Gītā is Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Sermon on the Mount is Lord Jesus. And he used to say that Gurudev's *Universal Prayer*, *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions*, and *Sādhana Tattva* are Gurudev to him. We might add that the talks that Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to give in the Holy Samādhi Hall each morning were him. Whatever he believed and wanted to communicate, he did through those talks.

What is the essence of all these teachings? From an outer point of view, we are instructed to do certain things, to act in a certain way, to live in a certain way. But there is another dimension to it that has a very subtle difference that is demonstrated by the fact that Gurudev's best known aphorism is Be good. Do good. In a sense that too is an instruction to do something—to be good and do good, but it is not like getting up at 4.00 a.m. or eating *sattvic* food or giving away a certain amount of our income in charity. That may be being good and doing good, but we can do those things without changing ourselves at all. The real essence of the teachings of the great ones is that they want to bring about an inner transformation.

However, there are two degrees of inner transformation. One is to take our animal nature and gradually rub it away until we act in a more human way, the human way being to do unto others as we would have others do unto us. Then we are meant to gradually divinize even those activities, to see them from a universal point of view. But there is something deeper still that these instructions are meant to get at, and if they don't, somehow we haven't we haven't got the essence of Be good and Do good and their other instructions. And that is that the purpose of all the spiritual instructions is only one thing finally, and that is to correct our fundamental error of wrong identification.

Our true identification has no location because there is nowhere that we are not. Our false identity is locating ourselves in an individual body and mind, feeling that we are the center of the universe, the subject, and everything else is an object to us. This false identification is a creation of our mind. What has been created can be uncreated. This destruction, or killing, is the purpose of all our spiritual practices. When it is completed we remain as we have always been, our true Self, only without the addition of this false idea that we are the center of the universe.

Thus the essence of all our spiritual practices, of all the teachings of the great ones is to deal with our fundamental error. It is up to us to introspect, to see if indeed our practices are getting down to that level.