

## Our Fundamental Good Fortune

Over the years, when he has come here and spoken to us in the mornings, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has often reminded us of our great good fortune to be in Śivānanda Āśram. Swāmījī has spoken of it as being the fruit of Gurudev's austerities. He has reminded us of what an ideal place it is for *sādhaka*-s, how everything required for *sādhana* is supplied—a bed to sleep in, food to eat, teaching, places of worship, a wonderful library, opportunities for service, living with other like-minded individuals.

Swāmījī finds no end of things we can give great thanks for. And it is not a form of boosterism. Swāmījī can be very quick to point out limitations and difficulties, but it is important to remind us that there is something more here than the little pleasantries and difficulties of daily life. We're in a place where flows living divine waters or a holy stream. We are, of course, beside the Ganga and in the foothills of the Himālayas, but it is something more than that: the special presence of God and Gurudev. Ultimately this means that all the little pleasantries or difficulties have relatively no importance.

The scriptures remind us of the same truth. They remind us of our great good fortune to be born a human being, a greater good fortune if we have within us a desire to find God, and a still greater good fortune if we have come in contact with a realized saint. These reminders are required because even if we recognize their truth with one part of our being, the irritations and sometimes the tragedies of daily life can make us totally forget our fundamental good fortune. We concentrate on the irritations rather than our basic situation.

This does not mean that we're meant to take a booster attitude, always saying, "Oh, how fortunate I am." That's just the other side of the coin of complaining. We're meant to see something deeper, something hidden to normal sight. We're meant to recognize, whether we're in the ashram or not, how great is our good fortune to be born a human being, to have an interest in God, and to have come in contact with a realized saint.

This is no denial of the difficulties and tragedies of life. We can all go through periods of bad health, financial misfortune, bereavement, even disgrace. It can happen to any of us. But that doesn't change the underlying

fact. Our basic approach to life is meant to be deeper than the joys and sorrows of our ordinary life.

Why is this? Because God-realization means the recognition of our fundamental nature, that at a fundamental level we are all one with the Divine, that we want for nothing. And so, that being the truth—and it is confirmed by all the teachers and the scriptures—there could be no more effective *sādhana* than in the midst of the ups and downs of each day, the ups and downs of our life, to constantly remind ourselves of our fundamental good fortune. There is nothing pollyanna in this. It is a reflection of the truth of the scriptures and the teachings of our *guru-s*.