

## Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of God and *Guru*

Gurudev's opening salutation in his *Universal Prayer* is, "O adorable Lord of mercy and love." He is speaking from his own experience. He is also speaking to the longing of our hearts. We long for a loving, adorable Lord, because we so often feel that need. We feel that only a Lord of mercy and love can meet our sins, meet our wrong doing, and the scriptures are full of stories of how to the Lord our sins are as nothing.

This is what so often devotees saw both in Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī—adorable *guru-s* of mercy and love, all-forgiving. Indeed, sometimes so forgiving that it annoyed some devotees who were of a little stricter nature. On the other hand, the reality is that Gurudev could be very firm. If he felt that someone was working against his mission, he didn't hesitate to send them away. Nor did he hesitate to discipline people. Often the discipline would be very kind, but it was discipline nevertheless.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has also proven himself to be very patient, very longsuffering, but finally, seemingly unforgiving. A group of people came to the Āśram one time wanting Swāmījī to reinstate someone. They said, "Swāmījī, you are all love and forgiveness." But Pūjya Swāmījī didn't move. What is this seeming paradox between all-forgiveness on one hand and rigid firmness on the other?

Our problem is that we don't discriminate between real sin and imagined sin. All the things that we think are sin, God and the *guru* can dismiss as nothing. But there is one sin that most of us cannot see even though we say it. And that is the sin of maintaining our sense of separation. Gurudev had an institution that he was building. His disciples were meant to sacrifice their own self-interest for the sake of the institution. Why? Because that was their fundamental training for forsaking their ego, their sense of separation. When it becomes obvious to a *guru* that the disciple may bow down, may worship, may do everything, but is not prepared to give up that sense of separation, that control over their own lives, then the *guru*, to fulfill his responsibility, has no alternative but to be as firm as the situation requires.

Thus, what we think is wrong with us and what the *guru* sees are frequently—perhaps most often—two different things. Our challenge is to

see ourselves from the point of view of God and *guru*—and then do the needful.