

The Two Keys to Liberation

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has frequently reminded us that as human beings we are body, mind and Spirit. The body doesn't bother us, it is inert, he says. and the Spirit is ever peaceful, ever the same. So whatever problems we have are in our mind. However, he also tells us that our mind is our greatest gift, because it gives us the means for liberation.

The scriptures declare that mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation in a human being. Therefore, it is the mind that we have to understand and we have to work with. In the sixth chapter of the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to sit for meditation and practice yoga in order to purify the self. After listening to Lord Kṛṣṇa's instructions for some time, Arjuna had a real doubt. He said, I think it is easier to control the wind than to control the mind. Lord Kṛṣṇa didn't argue with him, but He answered, "It can be done through practice and dispassion."

If mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation and it is where our problem is, perhaps these two words, practice and dispassion, are the essence of our spiritual life. We practice the higher and have dispassion for, or let go, or renounce, the lower. Positive and negative—both are required. We must practice selfless service, devotion to God, meditation and enquiry. We must practice all the virtues. At the same time we must have dispassion for the things of the world that prevent us from practicing the higher things.

"Do *sādhana*, my dear children, do *sādhana*," Gurudev said. He wanted us to be continuously practicing the higher things. But then, strangely enough, it wasn't those things that he declared to be the highest *sādhana*. Rather he said, "Bear insult, Bear injury. Highest *sādhana*." In other words, we can practice all the well known *sādhana*-s and virtues, but unless our ego is being worn away, unless we are consciously aware that that is our real problem, our *sādhana* will no doubt make us into a better person, give us some relief from our disturbances, but it won't liberate us. And one of the best ways to wear away the ego, Gurudev tells us—the highest *sādhana*—is to bear insult and bear injury. Because it is always the ego that feels an injury. It is not our body and it is not the divine within.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." And in the first verse after the

prayer, he says, “If you do not forgive the trespasses of others, then your Father in Heaven will not forgive you your trespasses.” Thus Jesus emphasized that if we want God’s forgiveness, we must forgive others. We must learn how to bear insult and to bear injury if we are interested in liberation.

Therefore, the key to our *sādhana* is both practice and dispassion. We must practice in whatever way we can the presence of God, but remember at all times that if we want to bring it to fruition, we have to have dispassion for all the things we are clinging to—most especially our ego.