

The Razor's Edge - II

The spiritual life has often been compared to a razor's edge. As seekers we are walking a razor's edge and we should be very careful not to tip one way or another. To borrow a word from Lord Buddha, we have to be awake. To borrow another word from Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī, we have to be ever-vigilant.

Lord Kṛṣṇa said that yoga is neither in sleeping too much nor sleeping too little; it is not in eating too much nor eating too little. We have to find a balance. And when Arjuna told Him that it was easier to control the wind than to control the mind, Lord Kṛṣṇa said that it can be done by practice and dispassion. In other words, by a perfect balance between the positive and the negative. The positive is what we do in a positive way for our spiritual life, and what we call the negative way is a giving up those aspects of our life that should be renounced.

To keep this balance is most difficult. All the great religions want us to do it, but we tend to fall on one side or the other. For example, the heart of the Christian religion is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. On the other hand, Jesus taught a very positive path: You shall love the Lord God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, with all thy strength. And then He added a second commandment: You shall love your neighbour as thyself. It is this positive aspect that is more characteristic of the Christian religion than the sacrifice. They have built hospitals, founded educational facilities, done much charity, demonstrating the love of God for us.

On the other hand, in the context of the Vedic religion, Lord Kṛṣṇa made it clear that he was constantly doing good although He had no need to do so. The emphasis however is on sacrifice, on renunciation, and just as Christians can feel that they are fulfilling the whole religion by doing good, so in the Vedic tradition we can feel that we are fulfilling the whole of religion through sacrifice or renunciation.

We tend to go to one side or the other, even though we're obviously meant to find the razor's edge between the positive and negative. We saw this in Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī—doing good, always being open, learning more, being active, while at the same time they demonstrated total renunciation, total letting go, always giving up their comforts for the good of others.

Thus in our own spiritual lives we must remember these examples and not be carried away by either the positive or the negative. We should try to incorporate in our own spiritual lives a perfect balance between the two, so that we can successfully walk the razor's edge.