

The Middle Path

The scriptures declare that God is both immanent in this world and transcendental, beyond the world. Many seekers, who dedicate their lives to selfless service, to *karma yoga*, not only can get in touch with the immanent God, but sometimes are totally energized by it. They manifest Godly qualities, especially *śakti*, in their daily life. However, if for any reason they are not in a position to serve, then their contact with God simply may not be there, because their inner spiritual life has not been developed. They may be left somewhat barren.

On the other hand, those who choose the inner life, seek God within, enquire, Who am I? can have very powerful experiences of oneness and other manifestations of the Divine within. But as they dwell within, they frequently find that they lose interest in the without, in what is actually God immanent. The outer is often dismissed as being of no importance. So while in their inner life, they will pray for the welfare of all beings—May all beings in this universe be happy—in fact, there is no urge in them to help a needy soul, even if one is right in front of their eyes. The urge just isn't there, because they have dwelt so much within, that they have lost interest in the without.

However, we didn't see either of these extremes in Gurudev or Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī. Devotees saw in both of them an establishment in an inner peace; they were stabilized, they didn't move. And yet they used every moment of their waking time thinking of others and serving others. There was no part of them thinking of something within and only giving part of themselves to without. Rather, when you were with them, you felt you had, and you did have, one hundred per cent of their attention and care.

What is the secret? It is perhaps that they had gone beyond both the outer and the inner and had recognized and been established in the fact that God is equally in the outer and the inner and beyond both. In that recognition they found the God that they truly were, That which knows both the outer and the inner. Established in That, they were no longer trying to achieve anything, and thus were free to give all their attention to the task at hand. They demonstrated to us the middle path of the spiritual life, where there is no inner or outer but only That.