

## The Secret of a God-Centered Life

The spiritual life has been described as a shift from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life. As we are already what we are seeking, and as it is the Self realizing the Self, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī once said, “The shift should be the easiest thing in the world.”

Why isn't it easy? It is because, as the scriptures declare, mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation in the human being, and the mind is subject to two divine forces. There is *avidyā māyā* which lead us away from God and *vidyā māyā* which pulls us towards God. Therefore, no matter how much we try to follow *vidyā māyā*, we are also at the same time subject to the downward pull of *avidyā māyā* and *avidyā māyā* has every trick in the book to keep us bound.

One of its favorite ways of keeping us bound is to make us think that we have made great progress. One time a senior member of the Āśram was having some differences with Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī. In his humility, Pūjya Swāmījī went to the man's room to discuss their differences in outlook. Finally Pūjya Swāmījī said something unusual for him. He said, “Whatever you think, it's not spiritual.”

Of course, while 99% of the people who knew them might agree with Pūjya Swāmījī, we can be sure that the other person would be as sure as ever that he was correct. What was lacking in him? His ego had become well educated in spiritual things. No doubt he had spiritual experiences, all of which confirmed to him that his way was correct. He had his ideas about *dharma*, and as far as he was concerned Pūjya Swāmījī was not following his idea of *dharma*. But then, perhaps he was ignoring Lord Kṛṣṇa's last teaching verse in the Gītā when, after explaining to Arjuna all things he must do to follow *dharma*, he tells him, “Abandoning all *dharma*-s take refuge in Me alone.”

This is the key. We can know all about the spiritual life. We can have had many experiences, we can be living according to *dharma* as we understand it, but we are still living an ego-centered life, not a God-centered life. A God-centered life means that we must abandon the ego. The ego is made up of our ideas, a large part of which may be based upon *dharma*. Living a spiritual life means that we have let go of the security of the ego. The ego builds up a wall of security based upon things that it take

a firm stand on. It is not easy to give up that firm stand, but it is the basis of true spiritual life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “Abandoning all *dharma*-s take refuge in Me alone.” Jesus said, “Take up your cross daily”—which means the burden of destroying your ego—“and follow Me.” The shift from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life should be easy and is easy, if we are prepared each day to sacrifice the ego.