

In All Things Give Thanks

Traditionally we are called seekers after truth. What truth is it that we are seeking? The knowledge that all is one, that there is no second. But that knowledge is not meant to be just a head knowledge. Necessarily that truth may start out as an intellectual conviction, but it is meant to transform us. It means, as seekers of the truth, that we live according to the truth.

Why do we have to live according to the truth that all is one? Because according to Vedānta we are bound by our likes and dislikes, *rāga-dveṣa*. According to the Judaic-Christian tradition we are bound by judging things as good and evil. When everything is one, where is the question of likes and dislikes, of good and evil?

Does that mean that we don't discriminate between the good and the pleasant? No, we must discriminate; we must choose the good over the pleasant or else we will continue to be bound. We will not be able to enter into the truth. We may understand it thoroughly intellectually, but we won't function according to the truth.

Therefore, spiritual teachers give us practices that help to lead the truth down from our intellect into our emotions and even deeper into our being. One of those teachings was given by Saint Paul in one of his letters in the New Testament, a teaching that if followed forces that truth down from our intellect into our very being. Saint Paul wrote, "In all things give thanks, for it is God's will for you."

That hits right at the heart of our likes and dislikes, of our judgment of good and evil. It means that if our partner gets cancer we give thanks for it. If our child is on drugs we give thanks for it. Impossible, we say. The answer is, Most difficult, agonizingly difficult, but in the state of all being One without a second, there is no difference between what we call good and what we call evil, between what we like and dislike. All differences disappear.

If we want to become God, we must become like God. We must see no differences and yet still discriminate between the good and the pleasant. This is the fundamental stance that we as seekers are meant to take. Right at our root we are meant to see all as one and yet discriminate.

We are able to discriminate, we are able to understand the truth, but it isn't down to the root of our being. The root of our being is still firmly rooted in *rāga-dveṣa*, likes and dislikes, in judging good and evil. If we are going to be true seekers of the truth, we need to recognize that we have to become that truth. To become that truth, it has to penetrate to the depths of our being and cleanse us from all likes and dislikes and judgment of good and evil. It is the real challenge of the spiritual life and the real significance of the teaching: In all things give thanks, for it is God's will for you.