

Freedom from the Known

The four *puruṣārthas* or aims of the Vedic way of life are *dharma*, righteousness, *artha*, wealth, *kāma*, satisfying legitimate desires, and *mokṣa*, liberation. We have quite a good idea of the first three aims. We also have ideas about *mokṣa*, but each one will probably define it in a different way, sometimes as liberation from the rounds of birth and death.

However, during one of his morning talks, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī asked the rhetorical question: “What are you to be liberated from?” After a pause he said, “Yourself!” J. Krishnamurti wrote a book entitled, *Freedom from the Known*, and Lord Kṛṣṇa said, in effect, to Arjuna, Liberate yourself from all *dharmas* and take refuge in Me alone.

We tend to think that liberation is gaining something new, but the suggestion is that it is *from* something—to be liberated *from* ourselves, *from* the known, *from dharma*. How could this be? For the simple reason that is declared to us by the *mahāvākya-s*, but that perhaps we don’t really let in: we are already what we are seeking.

Our problem is that we have accumulated so much information, so many ideas, that we find it almost impossible to become simple enough to declare with the *mahāvākya-s*, This Self is Brahman, I am Brahman. Therefore, the great thing needed in the spiritual life, the great shift from a worldly way of looking at things to a spiritual way of looking at things, is to give up the idea that we need something new.

What we need to do is to rid ourselves of the false. That is why the essence of the Vedic way of life is sacrifice. It is giving up what we have accumulated, so that ultimately we discover what we have always been, our original face, as it is sometimes expressed.

Jesus said that unless we become as little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Liberation means simplicity, childlike simplicity, taking refuge in God and allowing Him to express Himself in our daily life.