

True Conversion

The word conversion doesn't have too good a connotation. It suggests converting from one religion to another. That almost always, to some degree, means aggression, resentment, sometimes even fighting. However, the truth is that we all need to have a conversion, although we don't need to change our outer circumstances. We need to convert the way we see life.

As children, we are trained to see life from the point of view that we are a separate individual. Even if our training is that God is the most important thing in the world, it all has to do with how it affects us as an individual—how it will affect our purpose in life, how it will affect our happiness, how it will affect our next birth, how it will affect our salvation. But that goes against the fundamental truth of Vedānta—that we are that One that is without a second.

Therefore, true conversion does not mean changing from one religion to another, but converting from the wrong idea about ourselves to the truth about ourselves. The interesting thing is that the truth about ourselves is not in some far off place or somewhere deep, deep within, although the truth about us is also in those places. Rather the truth about us is here and now. We don't recognize it because we are so caught up in a conviction that our true identity is this body and mind. We don't recognize our true identity that is hidden everywhere and yet seen everywhere. We don't recognize that there is nothing else except That.

Sometimes we complain that we know this truth, but no matter how much we know it and believe it, we don't see it. It isn't our daily experience. That is why the Vedic way of life emphasizes ways of living that can gradually convert our attention from what is false to what is true. And one of those beautiful ways is expressed by the word duty.

The body and mind is a victim of *samsāra*, of likes and dislikes. It wants to do what it want to do when it wants to do it. Duty says that you are part of a higher purpose; you utterly transcend the body and mind. Duty means that you live for the Whole rather than for an individual. Therefore, to live a life based upon duty means that we are constantly concerned with what is the right thing, rather than what we might prefer to do, or not do, at any particular moment.

Duty is an expression of our true nature. Therefore, if we dedicate our lives to duty, it means that our true nature is expressing Itself, and ultimately, in Its own time It will reveal Itself to us.