

Satsang with Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Courage ¹

Question

Swamiji, you have said that people require courage to face their problems and deal with their minds. Would you speak about how we gain this courage?

Answer

The courage I spoke of was with reference to the pain experienced because of our problems. We usually deny the problems themselves and undergo the pain. We don't want to face the problems because to do so is very unpleasant. As children also, we denied our problems. This denial is kind of escape from something that is unpleasant and is the route we generally take to manage the problems. That is why diversions become so important to us.

In this society, diversions are not only very important, they are many and varied. Entertainment and sports are nothing but diversions. If you analyze the commitment of a normal person, it is not really a commitment to work with what is happening right now, but is a commitment to entertainment and recreation. And, in order to have entertainment and recreation, of course, you have to earn money.

Therefore, earning money becomes a secondary priority, which of course it should be, but work also becomes secondary, recreation and entertainment becoming the main objective. This is because recreation and entertainment are used as primary escape routes—and this has always been so.

Recreation can be either classical or non-classical. Classical recreation means that you have to stay with yourself and, if you can learn how to do this, perhaps then you can enjoy children, family, friendship, books, thinking, meditation, and so on. There are variety of things to entertain yourself—and usefully, also.

To enjoy these various forms of recreation you need to be able to be with yourself to an extent. You need to be able to enjoy yourself. Otherwise, you require something unfamiliar, different, exciting, or bizarre to absorb yourself. This is the reason music becomes louder and louder—to drown out the mind because there is so much noise inside.

It takes a certain culture and depth to be with yourself. When this is not possible, recreation becomes very important. Holiday recreation is a case in point. If we just look at the psychology of people, it becomes very obvious how people commit themselves to various forms of recreation.

If you have a house on the waterfront, a boat, and perhaps a mobile home, then you made it! Then there is fishing, hunting, skiing, motor racing, football, baseball; sports also being a kind of recreation. There is a whole economy built around such activities. There is also lot of money involved in music—so many centers of entertainment, theaters, cinemas, discos, and so on. It is a huge industry. These numerous forms of recreation, along with holiday traveling may consume more than half of the entire economy—all because of a commitment.

Recreation is not an ordinary thing; it is a commitment. You work the whole week and then, on the weekend, you do not want to stay at home. You want to go out because to be at home means that you have to be with yourself. Therefore, you have to go out. Any classical form of recreation such as literature or music can thrive in a culture where people can be at home. Only then does one have the inner

leisure to listen to classical music and read. This absence of inner leisure is prevalent all over the world.

Not to escape is to face ourselves, which we are not used to doing. Facing ourselves means that we have to have the patience, however painful at times, to look into ourselves and see what is happening and what has happened. More often than not, what we see is very unpleasant.

Therefore, it takes courage in the sense of a certain commitment and a readiness to face this unpleasantness, which is not a big problem once I am willing to change. The willingness to change is what requires the courage.

¹ Published in Arsha Vidya Gurukulam 3rd anniversary souvenir, 1989.