

Satsang with Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Reshaping the Mind ¹

Question

Swamiji, what are some ways to reshape a mind that is judgmental and critical, a mind that you have referred to as a proofreader's mind?

Answer

The problem here is that everyone wants to operate in a controlled situation. We want to have every situation under control so that it is easy for us to operate. To control a situation is to make things predictable. Only then do we feel we can operate. If we think we have no control, we cannot act and we panic. This is a psychological problem for many people.

For such people, every situation has to be edited and controlled, even love. And once that control is gone, they cannot operate. If their plans are disturbed, they become panicky because they do not know how to operate without some kind of framework. This is due to a childhood problem and causes them to deal with everyone in a judgmental way.

When we judge people, it is easier to deal with them. Thus, the saying "Call a man a dog and then kick him." We operate from a standpoint of judgment. We can always relate to a judgment. But if we do not judge people, dealing with them becomes very difficult because we remain open, a situation that makes us feel very vulnerable and therefore uncomfortable. Because we always want to be very sure, we judge people, categorize them, label them. Then it is easy to deal with them.

In everyday situations, we may sometimes have to do this. But fundamentally, if we judge and then label people, we have a problem. A judgmental person is a person who is not very sure about how to handle people as they are and finds it very difficult to do so.

Those who are judgmental are also highly judgmental about themselves. Therefore, they judge others and then behave accordingly. They usually fulfill their own projections and then project their opinions, their judgments, upon others. People who judge others are always very sure that they are correct, which is another problem because they will not revise their opinions. They fall in love with their own judgments, as it were, and therefore do not want to revise them. Only in this way they feel secure. Those who keep revising their judgments are not judgmental, really speaking.

In certain situations where you have to do something, you act, but you do not judge the person for good. This means you are open. To people who are judgmental, this openness is vulnerability. So they keep on judging.

Being critical of others is a problem caused by some kind of jealousy, some kind of intolerance. The whole problem is based on a particular way of looking at oneself. If I am very insecure with myself, then I always seek secure situations outside, some framework within which to operate. Criticizing others amounts to low self-esteem.

How do I correct this problem? By looking into my self-esteem. Why do I have such a low self-esteem? What is it that I don't have? In this way, we have to conduct an inquiry on self-esteem itself. Instead of trying to improve the self-esteem, we ask ourselves, "What is this low self-esteem?"

There are certain things, of course, which will help develop self-esteem, but first we must question the low self-esteem, “What is esteem, and on what basis do I estimate myself?” Upon analysis, the low self-esteem will simply fall apart. Therefore, this analysis must be done constantly. We can also begin to give the benefit of doubt to the other person and to allow that person to be what he or she is. A person is a dynamic person and, therefore, can always change. Also, our perception may be wrong. More often than not, it is our own projection. We simply project and judge from our own standpoint. We have definite ideas about what is right and wrong and these we project upon other people.

If we understand these things, we have a certain basis upon which to deal with people as they are. People are not always the same; they are continually changing. If we are ready for surprises, we will not be surprised. Nor will we be disappointed.

The proofreading mind is one that is always trying to find some defect in the other person. This is what is meant by criticism. The other person may have some virtues, but the one who criticizes always tries to find his or her defects. In fact, one who criticizes finds only the defects. To correct this, we should look only for the virtues and then any criticism that arises is more balanced.

There is no necessity whatsoever to criticize. Criticism is nothing but intolerance, stemming from our own problems.

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