

Satsang with Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Accommodation

Question

What steps can we take to accommodate a person that we don't like?

Answer

First try to understand why you don't like that person. Perhaps the person has acted in a manner that has hurt your feelings, and therefore you don't like the person. There can be several reasons, may be a certain kind of behavior, or certain personal traits etc. If a person has behaved badly you need to ask yourself if you can forgive him. One way to deal with him is through *kṣama*, forgiveness or accommodation. You need to accommodate the person because otherwise your dislike will come back repeatedly when you see, or think about the person. For the peace of your mind, you need to understand why you don't like him and if you can forgive him.

Question

By doing that wouldn't I be analyzing the other person rather than analyzing myself to change myself?

Answer

No, we are analyzing ourselves to understand why we react negatively towards the other person. Sometimes it is necessary to analyze the other person also. We say that a person who causes pain to others is in pain himself. That person could be hurt himself, not by you, but by someone else. Essentially people behave in predictable patterns. If I understand under what circumstances I find myself hurting others, or getting angry, or being intolerant, then I can understand that a similar cause may be present in the other person making him to act in a certain way. You may find that the other person is helpless. Usually a person acts in an unbecoming way out of helplessness, even though he may think he is acting deliberately. He is under the control of anger, or jealousy. If you can recognize this in the other person and forgive him, it will be for your own good.

Two values are very important in our relationships with people: *ahimsā* or non-violence, and *kṣama* or accommodation. I am committed to not hurting others and to forgive them when they hurt me. Usually we hurt others and end

up feeling guilty, or someone hurts us and we feel hurt. Hurt and guilt are the cause of a lot of sorrow. If I am alert and watch my behavior, perhaps I can prevent my behavior at least at the level of words and actions, and avoid hurting others. If I can forgive others, I can avoid the feeling of guilt.

This attitude is based on *pratipakṣa-bhāvana*, which is deliberately taking an opposite position. When I dislike someone, it is because the mind has taken a certain position of emphasizing the wrong behavior of the person; I become angry and resentful. Such a negative feeling can be neutralized if I deliberately ask my mind to emphasize a right behavior of that person. Attachment arises because we focus on a positive aspect of a person and aversion arises when we focus on a negative aspect. All these feelings arise because of taking a certain position. We need to deliberately take an opposite position to neutralize such negative feelings¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited Malini and KK Davey.