

Satsanga with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

MUMUKṢUTVAM, THE INTENSE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM

There are some obstacles that block the pursuit of our goal. They are in the form of indiscriminate thinking and behavior, which arises out of our false perceptions. These false perceptions affect our thinking and behavioral patterns and contradict our own selves. As these contradictions get resolved, the mind becomes free and abiding; this is the kind of mind that is required to see what the scriptures reveal. Thus, it is a matter of discovering these qualities within ourselves. We do exhibit them at different times; however, we are not consistent. Sometimes, there is great devotion in the heart; at other times, there is no devotion. Sometimes, the mind is very objective; at other times, it is not. Sometimes, it is very quiet; at other times, it is not. The essential nature of the mind is quietude, devotion, and dispassion; doubts, distractions, and impulses arise only on account of a distorted perception of life. *Mumukṣa* arises as our distorted perceptions get corrected and the mind slowly becomes abiding. The fourth qualification of the *sādhana* *catuṣṭayasampatti* is *mumukṣutvam*.

मुमुक्षुत्वम् - मोक्षेच्छा ॥

mumukṣutvam – *mokṣecchā* [Vedāntasāra, 25].

Mumukṣutvam is the yearning for spiritual freedom.

The word *mumukṣuḥ*, is derived from the root *muc*, to liberate or release. The word *mumukṣā* is derived from *mumukṣuḥ* and it means a desire for liberation. The state of mind in which that desire for liberation is present is called *mumukṣutvam*. It is also called *mokṣa-icchā*, a desire for liberation.

***Mumukṣutvam* arises; it cannot be commanded**

Mumukṣutvam is not something that we can cultivate, unlike the other qualifications. We can practice discrimination, restraint, and focusing the mind, but *icchā* or desire is not something that we can command. Desire arises; one cannot will to have a given kind of desire. I cannot decide that I will have a particular desire after five minutes. We do not have freedom in entertaining desire.

When we are asked to do something, we can do it only if we have the freedom to do that thing. For example, an injunction such as “Don’t drink alcohol” is understandable because we have the freedom or option not to drink. But instructions such as, “Don’t breathe”, or “Don’t be angry”, cannot be followed because we do not have the freedom not to breathe or not to be angry. There are not things that are under our control that we are free not to do them. Similarly, we cannot love a person on command; love has to arise spontaneously. We can help or serve a person on command, but not love them. We don’t have freedom on such matters; they simply have to happen. Similarly, we cannot will a desire; it is that which arises in our minds and has

to happen. In a given situation, different desires and responses arise in different people. For example, four people standing at a bus stop in India show four different responses to a beggar. One gives a coin out of compassion, while the second person demands to know why he is begging instead of working; the third man abuses the beggar, and the fourth does not even notice him.

Different people respond differently to the same situation; their response depends upon the disposition of their minds. To a person with a certain disposition, certain questions arise: What is the purpose of this life? What am I doing here? Why am I born? What am I seeking? These questions occur only in certain minds, not in every mind. In most people, the questions that arise are: Where do I get the next meal? What am I going to cook next? What am I going to do this weekend? What movie am I going to watch tonight? When is the next football game? Thus, our response towards life depends upon the frame of mind we enjoy. We cannot determine our response or desire; it will arise automatically in a given frame of mind.

The desire for mokṣa arises only in a qualified mind

A given situation invokes a desire depending upon the disposition of mind, the *saṃskāras* or inherent pattern of impressions in the mind. When I am hungry, I desire food. When I am in a temple, the desire for prayer arises. As a result of discrimination, dispassion, and the attainment of the six-fold inner wealth, the mind becomes purer and the desires that arise in the mind also change. When we acquire a mind in which the desire for *mokṣa* arises, we are ready for this knowledge. This desire for *mokṣa* or liberation does not happen to everybody. The intense desire for liberation, called *mumukṣutvam*, arises only in a mind that is pure, free from likes and dislikes, impulses, doubts, and questions. Although *mumukṣutvam* is considered to be the fourth qualification that we should cultivate, it is not a qualification that we can deliberately cultivate; rather, it is an indication of the extent to which the other qualifications have been cultivated.

Mumukṣutvam indicates that the only desire in the mind is freedom

What is the nature of the desires arising in a mind that has become pure? The desire for knowledge arises in a *sāttvik* or pure mind, *sattvātsaṅjāyate jñānam* [Bhagavad Gita, 14-17]. Only when the desire for freedom becomes the sole desire is the individual best qualified for this liberating knowledge. Thus, *mumukṣutvam* indicates that the only desire in the mind is freedom, nothing else. Pujya Swamiji gives the example of a fishpond in which the big fish eat the smaller fish and are, in turn, eaten by even bigger fish. Ultimately, only one fish, the biggest, is left. Similarly, a strong desire eats a lesser desire and is, in turn, consumed by a stronger desire. Ultimately, only the strongest desire remains: *mumukṣā* or the desire for freedom.

The insight that it is freedom I am seeking every moment arises automatically. Behind every desire is the desire for freedom. It is the desire

for freedom that prompts me to do something and it is the same desire that also prompts me to not do something. It is the desire for freedom that alone expresses itself through various desires and then becomes the only desire. It is the culmination of maturity to realize that what we are seeking is freedom or *mokṣa*. *Mumukṣutvam* is thus a yearning or intense desire for freedom. This is stated in the first sutra of the Brahma Sutras, *athaṭo brahma jijñasā*. It means “therefore, thereafter, a desire to know *brahman*.” What is “thereafter”? It means that a desire for knowledge or liberation arises after the cultivation of *viveka*, *vairāgya*, and the *śamādiṣaṭkasampattiḥ*.

The intense desire for freedom is the only qualification required for self-knowledge

Mumukṣutvam is the only qualification required to gain knowledge; the one who is qualified to gain knowledge is one who has a desire for the knowledge; the one who will have a desire for knowledge is one who has the *śamādiṣaṭkasampattiḥ*; the one who will have the *śamādiṣaṭkasampattiḥ* is one who has *vairāgya*, the one who will have *vairāgya* is one in whom there is *viveka*. There is a sequence here -- *viveka* brings about *vairāgya*, which enables the *śamādiṣaṭkasampattiḥ* that results in *mumukṣutvam*. This desire arises automatically. The only qualification for knowledge, thus, is the desire for liberation. If the most predominant desire is for liberation, one is qualified regardless of race, sex, height, weight, education, appearance, etc.

Unlike other desires, the desire for freedom keeps the mind focused on the self

Generally, a desire is an expression of ignorance; it shows a certain lack. When there is a desire in the mind, the mind is focused upon the object of desire rather than upon the Self. If *mumukṣutvam* is also a desire, how can knowledge take place? Won't this desire also keep the mind away from the Self? The desire for *mokṣa*, however, is the desire for the very self; it is a desire for the knowledge of the Self and is thus the one desire that in fact keeps the mind focused upon the Self. While every other desire keeps the mind focused elsewhere, *mumukṣā* or the desire for *mokṣa* is the one desire that focuses the mind upon the Self. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad [4-4-6] describes a *mumukṣuḥ* as *athākāmayamānaḥ* -- *yo'kāmo niṣkāma āptakāma ātmakāmaḥ*, he who is without desires, who is free from desires, the objects of whose desire have been attained, and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self. Thus, *mumukṣutvam* amounts to a desire for the self that culminates in the knowledge of the Self, which culminates in freedom from all desire. This is the only desire that can be fulfilled. In life, we cannot truly fulfill any desire although we may entertain various desires. Behind all desires is really the desire for freedom and nothing we can do can give us that freedom; therefore, in reality, no other desire but *mumukṣutvam* can ever be fulfilled.

Mumukṣā or the desire for freedom can be fulfilled because freedom is my very nature. Even the desire for freedom would be an obstacle if freedom were something to be acquired. Since the Self is already free, this desire for freedom can be fulfilled. *Mumukṣutvam*, therefore, is a desire for the

attainment of that which is already attained. It is like the desire of the tenth man to know the tenth man; his desire can be fulfilled because he is himself the tenth man¹.

¹ Based on Vedāntasāra lectures. Transcribed and edited by Malini, KrishnaKumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.