

Satsang with Swami Veditamananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Sannyäsa and gāhastha

Question

Can a person become spiritually mature without becoming a *sannyäsé*?

Answer

Yes, very much. It is best to become a *sannyäsé* after one is spiritually matured (emotionally matured). Because becoming a *sannyäsé* means we are closing all the doors of gratification. Therefore, a *sannyäsé* has neither justification to gratify his senses or gratify his ego nor any means. A *sannyäsé* means one who has given up all the resources. He has no resources to perform any action or *karma* by which he can satisfy his desires. If the desires remain and the person becomes *sannyäsé*, he is in a very precarious condition, because he has desires on one hand and no way of fulfilling the desires and that's a very tragic situation. The same applies for ego gratification as well. There are still desires to satisfy my ego, I still want recognition, name and fame and stuff like that. Again, a *sannyäsé* doesn't have the means to fulfill that.

Ideally a *sannyäsé* is a one who has taken the life of poverty and chastity. A *sannyäsé* takes vows; e.g., he gives immunity from fear to all the beings, which means, that he won't compete, he won't demand, he won't ask for any favor, make no demand from others. Therefore looking at the vows a *sannyäsé* is required to take, it means that he has given up all the means of fulfilling the desires and so it is

better that one becomes a *sannyāsē* when one has gained mastery over one's desires or one can manage one's desires. In Pujya Swami Dayanandaji's language, a *sannyāsē* can manage his likes and dislikes. He is no more under the spell of likes and dislikes. Even if you have likes and dislikes, but you do not come under their sway, then you can manage them. Then you are emotionally independent.

So, one should gain that much maturity before becoming a *sannyāsē* and that maturity is to be gained when one is *gāhastha* or active. *Gāhastha-āçrama* is meant to gain this maturity, which is spiritual maturity.

Theoretically a *gāhastha* can gain *mokça*. There is no reason why he has to become a *sannyāsē* necessarily. But the reason why *sannyāsa* is prescribed for aspirants is to give them a conducive way of life. For that knowledge, he should approach the teacher. Then seeking knowledge is his only priority. And therefore he requires a lifestyle which is conducive to that. He requires a lifestyle which is free from all other demands, no other agenda, and no other preoccupation. In that way, life of *sannyāsa* which is free from all demands, responsibilities, duties, is the most suitable lifestyle for one's dedicated pursuit of knowledge. That is the reason why *sannyāsa* is prescribed.

But, if in the householder life also you can create for yourself an atmosphere where you are free from other duties, demands, responsibilities and you have the support of the rest of the family, then it is possible; that they support your pursuit, that you can live by yourself or you can live in solitude in your own home and then pursue things, it is possible. So if you can manage to live the life of a *sannyāsē* in the house, meaning a life of non-involvement, then it can work. But, it is difficult not to involve in duties and responsibilities and have the leisure, leisure of the

mind, a mind that enjoys leisure. You can have leisure, provided there are no demands on you. When you are free from demands, then you enjoy the leisure.

That is why a *sannyäse* supposedly enjoys leisure because he has no agenda other than his pursuit of knowledge. So, that way *sannyäsa* is a suitable way of life, but even *gāhastha-āçrama* can also be, if you have the maturity and if you have the support in the home.

Transcribed and edited by Nirmala Krishnamurthy and Ravi Venkat