

Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Seeking and Emotional Maturity

Question

What makes a person go towards Vedanta? Does every person become a seeker eventually?

Answer

Every person is already a seeker. We are all seekers of happiness. But that seeking gains direction when a person is exposed to Vedanta. What makes a person go towards Vedanta is really God's grace! What else can you say? It is said that a love for Vedanta or the love of non-duality is due to the grace of God.

What brings you to Vedanta is your good *karma*. It is evidence of the fructification of all the good things one might have done in the past. It may be a friend who brought you here, or a relative. But it was you who took the decision to come. Many people who come here ask others to come, but they don't come. That you came here, however that may have happened, can only be said to be by the grace of God. And then, being exposed to the teaching of Vedanta makes you a seeker. Although we are seekers already, the nature of our seeking becomes clearer to us. Vedanta brings that to our attention.

The beauty of Vedanta is that it addresses the very fundamental need that we have. It takes as a basis our simple day to day experiences and shows us certain patterns, such as how our lives have a certain agenda. The teachers of Vedanta help us realize the basic facts of our lives, which we ourselves may not be able to see. This is like the law of gravity; it was always there, but somebody had to make us understand it. Vedanta brings the fundamental laws of life to our attention.

Lord Krishna says [Bhagavad Gita, 2-47], "*karmanye vādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana,*" you have the freedom to perform actions, but not the freedom to determine their outcome. It is a simple statement, which signifies the basic facts of life. Also, Lord Krishna says, [Bhagavad Gita, 3-9], "*yajñārthāt karmanō'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ,*" whenever an action is performed in a spirit other than as a *yajña*, it becomes a binding action. There are certain laws governing our lives. When we know the laws, we can live life in keeping with those laws. If we do not know the laws, it is possible that we may be violating them unknowingly.

And we may get punished for that too, without our knowing why, like a child who doesn't understand why he has been punished by his parents. Often, we cannot understand why this happens in our lives. Vedanta draws our attention to the basic laws of life or realities of life. It is important for us to know these laws or realities so that we can live our lives in keeping with them. Violating a law always brings about some punishment or pain.

When you violate a law you get violated in turn. For example, if rub your back against the bark of a tree, your skin gets hurt. Similarly, when you rub against the law, it is you who that gets hurt. Therefore, in order not to be hurt, it is important that you should know the laws. Following the law not only prevents us from being hurt, but is also beneficial to us. Therefore, the exposure to the teaching of Vedanta enables us to learn the right attitudes and values. We might not change externally and may continue to live life as we know it, but our priorities and responses change. A complete transformation comes upon us as we begin our inner growth.

In some ways, the journey towards Vedanta is like being on a road without a map. You want to get somewhere, but don't know where or how to get there. Vedanta provides you the map. Until then, we don't even know what we are searching for. Vedanta not only tells us where we are going and what we are looking for, but also shows us how to get there and find it. Vedanta is like an operating manual for life.

Question

Detachment from desires is said to be the key to emotional maturity. However, developing this detachment seems to require emotional maturity. In this apparent 'Catch 22,' how does one develop emotional maturity?

Answer

It seems like a 'Catch 22' that you need to be emotionally mature to be detached and detachment is necessary for emotional maturity. Therefore, in order to acquire emotional maturity we follow certain rules. For example, we live in accordance with the values, such as truthfulness and honesty. The practice of these values will, in course of time, bring about detachment. The values and basic rules are always given. If I am emotionally mature, I would follow the rules without being told. For this reason, I start following the values whether I like it or not so that, in course of time, I will learn to become emotionally mature. It is like learning to swim – I can't plunge into water if I don't know to swim and

I can't learn to swim unless I plunge into water. What am I to do? A person could just stand there thinking "I can't just jump into the water. How am I going to learn to swim?" The teacher standing right behind pushes him into the water forcing him to fend for himself. In course of time, he does learn to swim. Similarly, you have to 'plunge' into following the values. You will then slowly acquire the facility to develop both detachment and emotional maturity¹.

¹ Arsha Vidya Gurukulam Memorial Day 2006 Camp *satsanga*. Transcribed and edited by Jaya Kannan and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.