

Satsang with Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Dealing with our emotions and others

Question

Is it possible to be detached and emotional?

Answer

It is possible to be detached and emotional. We are emotional persons. Every living being has an emotion. Everybody wants to be loved and accepted, not rejected. When I am rejected I become emotional. When somebody hurts me, I become emotional. Emotional I am! I am a loving person and therefore, I want to be loved. Being emotional means being able to love somebody. By that the person grows and the person finds self-respect. That is giving love.

What is attachment? When I do something, I usually demand something in compensation. That is attachment. “This is what I did for you. Therefore you do this for me.” It is possible to love without this kind of attachment. Usually attachment is thought to be when I am concerned about somebody, when I am worried about somebody, etc. That is ok. That shows that we are concerned about the person. That is all right. Attachment is usually when there is demand, when somebody can make me unhappy, when somebody can hurt me or when somebody can make me feel bad. That means there was an expectation. Attachment brings about that kind of disappointment.

Detachment means the ability to give without any expectation. It is very difficult, but that is what detachment is. Here, my giving is not inhibited by my expectations. Our giving is generally inhibited. The giving generally happens according to some kind of a calculation in terms of what we can gain in return. Our goodness is inhibited by these expectations. To the extent that these expectations are fewer, to that extent there is freedom in expression of our goodness.

Being detached does not mean that I do not care for someone or that I am indifferent to the pain or suffering of others. It only means that I do not have likes and dislikes. You can have care and you can have concern. It is all part of being emotional, part of your love. Therefore, detachment simply means letting go of expectations. It is

being able to do what I like to do without inhibition and without putting any value of expectation. It is self-less action.

Question

Why does anger erupt? Why does jealousy erupt?

Answer

Anger erupts whenever I am frustrated with myself. It erupts whenever I feel helpless. I feel helpless whenever I cannot have my way! I want to have my way, and expect the world to conduct in a particular way to meet my expectations. Unfortunately, they have their own expectations, and they want me to conduct in a way that meets their expectations. That is why there is a clash or conflict between these two expectations. Whenever my demand or expectations is not met, I feel angry because I feel rejected, helpless, and not in control. When somebody fulfills my demands, agrees with me and follows my way, then I am happy with myself. I feel accepted.

Jealousy erupts on account of a feeling of deficiency in me. Jealousy happens when someone is better than I, when someone is more accomplished, and when someone is smarter than I. I feel jealous if someone has more of whatever it is that I value. If wealth is valuable to me, then a wealthier person will make me jealous. If knowledge is valuable to me, a more knowledgeable person makes me jealous. The person who makes me jealous may not make you jealous, and vice versa, because we have a different set of values. When someone triggers inadequacy in me, I find myself insufficient, and I feel jealous. Thus anger and jealousy are on account of me -- all that others have to do is to push some buttons that are already there.

Question

What do we do when we feel depressed?

Answer

Depression comes as a result of buildup of thought. Sometimes we have cultivated a thought pattern; every occasion is taken as a reason to feel dissatisfied with

our self. When this sense builds up, it becomes sadness and later on, depression. This is called self-dissatisfaction. What to do about it?

We must learn to accept ourselves as we are. When we call ourselves useless, what we mean is that we find others more useful. We compare ourselves to others. There is a story told by Pujya Swami Dayanandaji about a locomotive engine. The piston in the engine kept mocking the nut because the piston was moving while the nut was not. This made the nut feel bad; so one day it started turning in order to do something, and the engine fell apart. Which is superior—the piston or the nut? They are different from each other; but there is no superiority or inferiority. This is a human problem. There is no need for me to be somebody else. There is no need for me to compare myself to others. Remind yourself that you are of God, and by rejecting yourself, you are rejecting God. It is not what I do that matters. What matters is that I do something, that I contribute something. When you feel depressed, do an act of goodness. You don't have to do big things. Small favors are all right. You will feel good. You will respect yourself. You will discover your self-worth.

Question

How can we reduce hypocrisy?

Answer

Hypocrisy is behaving in a manner other than what you are -- pretending to be someone else. This usually is because a person is ashamed of himself or herself or is insecure or wants some kind of a gain. One needs to address the sense of shame, the sense of inadequacy, or the sense of greed to become free from hypocrisy. Everyone has some amount of these traits in them. In the Vedāntic view, one needs to free oneself from these traits in order to feel secure. It is important to remember that one is secure without having to resort to these actions. This is discovered by paying attention to various aspects of self-growth and gradually promoting inner growth.

Question

By deciding to be good to others and achieving success because of that, is it possible that we may get proud of our goodness? How do we get over this defect?

Answer

Whenever we do something, let us ask ourselves what the motivating factor is. Is it genuine goodness or some ego-gratification? If there is some desire for ego-gratification, then there will be some pride. To feel happy about your work and to feel respect for you is all right. Pride happens when you compare yourself with others; it happens when you feel someone else is not as good as you. If you find this happening, simply watch out and remind yourself that doing good for others is a privilege. If someone is not good enough, he or she does not have that privilege; they deserve your sympathy rather than your arrogance.

Question

How do we teach patience to teenagers?

Answer

By making them see the destruction caused by impatience and anger. Also, by showing them the virtues of patience.

Question

What can be done to the second generation so that they can improve their thinking?

Answer

They don't think they need any improvement; you think that they need some improvement! What is wrong with what they are doing now? They don't think they're doing anything wrong. You have to help them with their judgment.¹

¹ Transcribed and edited by Anjali Bhat, Aparna Modi, Jayshree Ramakrishnan and KK Davey.