

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Divine Guidance

Question

Can we communicate with our *ātman* and get divine guidance?

Answer

This question presupposes a duality that I am different from *ātman*. When we say 'my *atman*'; what is implicit is that 'I am different' and 'my *ātman* is different.' *Ātman* means 'I', it is not 'my or our *ātman*', rather it is, 'I, the *ātman*.' Don't think that *ātman* is located in some place, such as the body or the heavens etc. *Ātman* is not an entity that is different from me. Is *ātman* somewhere, some place? What is the nature of I? I cannot communicate with 'me' because I am that. I can communicate with something that is other than me, so the question of communicating with me does not arise. The Self is *saccidānanda*, ever-existent, ever-shining, ever-full.

How do I communicate with my own self? We can receive guidance from our self to the extent that as our mind becomes purer, our thoughts too get closer to the reality. We always get messages from our heart, but the filtering medium is our mind. The self always expresses itself through the mind. The message that you hear will depend upon the disposition of your mind. The mind has the capacity to distort the message. When the mind is under the influence of *tamas*, then the message you get is dullness; you don't want to do anything. When your mind is under the influence of *rajas*, then it gets the message to do this or to enjoy that. When it is *sāttvik*, you are happy, satisfied, and you are urged to know and discover. If the mind is under the influence of *rajas* or *tamas* the message gets distorted.

The message I get is that I am incomplete and that is because of the distortions of the mind when it is under the influence of *rajas* and *tamas*. When the mind is predominantly *sāttvik* the message is that I am happy, complete. Therefore, to get the proper message it is necessary for the mind to be *sāttvik*, free from attachments and aversions, free from impulses and reactions. In an abiding mind the messages are closer to the true nature of our self. The water can be pure but if the filter is dirty, it makes the water impure. The self is ever pure but if the mind is impure, the message also becomes impure. Therefore the

purification of the mind is important, and the message received will be closer to our true nature.

Regarding divine guidance, while it is true that *paramātmā*, or God, is our true Self, because of ignorance, we look upon God as different from our Self. Prayer and worship presupposes a duality between the Self and *Īśvara*. As long as I see *Īśvara* as different from myself, I seek the help and grace of *Īśvara*. How can we communicate with *Īśvara* and can we receive divine guidance from *Īśvara*? The answer is yes, we can communicate with our prayers and receive divine guidance by securing His grace. Let Him guide us by giving us the right kind of thoughts. There is a prayer in the last verse of *Īśāvāsya* Upanishad, “O Fire, please lead us to the right path!” Or the *Gāyatrī-mantra* where we pray, “May the Lord guide our thoughts, elevate our thoughts, inspire our thoughts!” The grace of God is obtained by praying to God, worshipping God, serving God, and by pleasing God¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Malini and KK Davey.