

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Liberation for a 'Sinner'

Question

You had said that liberation is available to all. However is it fair that a sinner who has hurt others should be able to get freedom?

Answer

Hopefully, the judicial system would hand out an appropriate sentence for his hurtful actions. The law of the land will take care of the judicial treatment. When the free will is abused there will be consequences. I do not believe that anyone can be happy by hurting others. Such hurtful actions produce a sense of guilt.

A violent or hurtful action is prompted by anger, greed, hatred, or jealousy. These negative impulses are the result of ignorance. They are the result of insecurity which again is the result of ignorance. Therefore we say that they can be removed by knowledge. Our focus is not on making a judgment on such a person. We say that hurtful actions are caused by ignorance of the self and this ignorance can be removed by self-knowledge.

Lord Krishna says that if a person who has committed unbecoming acts realizes that what he has done is wrong, and if he resolves to do only that which is right, all the negative effects will be removed in course of time¹. The effects of negative or hurtful actions are incidental, not inherent, and they can be removed. Even a so-called evil person can change and become a good person, because evil is incidental not inherent. With the right understanding, the 'evil' tendencies can go. Lord Krishna says with the raft of knowledge you will cross the ocean of sin, which is the ocean of ignorance. With knowledge, ignorance and its products (e.g., desires, action) can be removed².

¹ Bhagavad Gita verse 4-36.

² Transcribed and edited by Malini and KK Davey.