

Satsang with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
More on the Mind

Question

How do we know the Self since knowing takes place in the mind and it is because of the Self that the mind knows?

Answer

The knowledge of the Self does take place in the mind because knowledge takes place where ignorance is. Ignorance manifests itself as various notions or misperceptions of me and knowledge takes place when these wrong notions are removed and the right understanding is established. We talk about the five *kośas*, notions, and each notion is replaced with the knowledge that I am *saccidānanda*, I am Brahman. Since ignorance is in the mind the knowledge has to take place there.

Question

Is our mind conscious?

Answer

The mind is not conscious. The mind becomes conscious when it receives the reflection of Consciousness. For example, a bulb by itself does not glow. It starts glowing when it connects with electricity. Similarly, the mind by itself is not conscious. When it unites with Consciousness, the mind also glows with consciousness. Everything becomes as though conscious in association with Consciousness.

Question

Does Ātmabodha, Self-knowledge, require purification of the mind?

Answer

Yes, the first verse of the text, the Ātmabodha, begins as follows:

तपोभिः क्षीणपापानां शान्तानां वीतरागिणाम् ।

मुमुक्षुणामपेक्ष्योऽयमात्मबोधो विधीयते ॥ १ ॥

tapobhiḥ kṣīṇapāpānāṃ śāntānāṃ vītarāgiṇām,
mumukṣūṇāmapekṣyo'yamātmabodho vidhīyate.

This awakening to the Self is recorded for those whose *pāpa* has been neutralized by strong effort, whose mind is tranquil, from whom

passion has departed, and who seek perfect freedom [Ātmabodhaḥ, 1].

Tapobhiḥ kṣīṇapāpānām, those in whose minds the *pāpa*, that is, the impulses of likes and dislikes, which cause distractions resulting in sadness and sorrow are removed. When these impurities are removed, *sāntānām*, their mind becomes quiet or tranquil, poised. *Vītarāgiṇām*, in that mind there is *vairāgya*, freedom from passions or likes and dislikes, and *mumukṣūṇām*, in the minds of whom the desire for *mokṣa* has arisen. That is the mind that is required for self-knowledge, Ātmabodha. *Mumukṣūṇāmapekṣyo'yamātmabodho vidhīyate*, this text called the Ātmabodha is composed for this kind of aspirant-student.

Question

Do we acquire *punya* and *pāpa* due to mental *karma*?

Answer

Any deliberate action or *karma* is performed at the level of the body, speech as well as the mind. When we perform a mental prayer, it does bring rewards or *punya*. When I plan to hurt somebody, it is a mental action which has its appropriate result. Therefore, any deliberate action, whether physical, verbal or mental, will bring about an appropriate result.

Question

But Swamiji, we cannot control the mind or our thoughts. Therefore, how can we be responsible for what occurs in our mind?

Answer

What thought occurs in my mind is not *karma*. It is what I do with that thought. Only when my deliberation is involved, when my freedom is involved, does it become *karma*. The occurrence of a particular thought by itself is not a problem because I can let it pass. What I do with the thought can be a problem¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Malini, Jaya Kannan, Jayshree Ramakrishnan, and Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey.