

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
More on Relationships – 1 of 2

Question

Swamiji, with regard to human relationships, it is said that one should receive like a rock and give like a flower. If this is the attitude one should have, how will the other person realize that he or she is hurting someone?

Answer

Well, if the behavior of the other person is hurtful you can perhaps let it be known that you are hurt, in a manner that does not hurt the other person. Often, when we are hurt, we react and hurt the other person in return. That is how it goes on. It is a good idea to communicate. If you are feeling hurt, it is a good idea to let your feelings be known. If you do not choose to do so right away, you can perhaps express it when the mind becomes quiet, or when the other person is in a position to listen and realize that a given behavior has hurt you, or that a certain kind of behavior hurts you. I think that when you wind up hurting somebody you do become aware that you have hurt him or her; it is quite evident from the expression on their face or from their body language that the person is hurt. One would have to be very insensitive not to know that one's behavior has hurt some other person. However, in case the person does not already know, it is a good idea to communicate that his or her behavior hurts you. If the hurtful behavior continues, you have to decide what to do. You have to determine whether to allow that person to continue to hurt you or put a stop to it by creating a distance. You can decide what to do depending upon the situation.

Question

To what extent should we sacrifice for others?

Answer

We have to learn to sacrifice for others to the extent that we do not hurt ourselves too much. In sacrificing for others, we will have to undergo some hardship, some pain. We hurt ourselves a little bit when sacrificing for others. That is why it is called sacrifice. Sacrifice means that I let go of something to make somebody happy, to help somebody. I let go of something which I would

have otherwise liked to have. It does involve pain. There is some pain, when I go out of my way.

To what extent should I sacrifice? I should sacrifice to the extent that I can bear the pain involved in that sacrifice. I should not hurt myself in the process of the sacrifice. I should not sacrifice to the extent that the pain becomes unbearable, or that my own feelings are hurt.

I should sacrifice using my free will, not out of my helplessness. If I sacrifice deliberately, I will not hurt myself. If I do it out of compulsion or helplessness, I am likely to hurt myself. A deliberate sacrifice will be conducive to my self-growth. If I do it out of compulsion, it will not help me grow.

Sacrifice is an essential part of everyone's life. We always sacrifice for our loved ones and relatives. The more willingly we do it, the more helpful it is. The idea of sacrifice is a *yajna*, an offering. It is described in the Bhagavad Gita as a process conducive to self-growth. I do it willingly only if I have a value for it. When I do it willingly, it is not a sacrifice anymore. It actually makes me happy.

Sacrifice typically has a negative connotation. It usually is taken to be something that I have to do against my will. Sacrifice means reaching out. An act of reaching out, done willingly, is conducive to my self-growth. Even if it is done, not willingly, but with a value for it, it is okay. If it is done out of helplessness or compulsion, it is not helpful¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Jaya Kannan, Chaya Rajaram, Jayshree Ramakrishnan, and KK Davey.