

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
On Past Birth

Question

How is it that I do not remember my past birth?

Answer

Not being able to remember our past birth is a blessing because it is of no use to us now. In fact, even in this life, we do not remember many things that happened in our childhood. Even though what we remember is less than what we do not, the past does not go away from us completely. We continue to retain the *samskāras* or impressions from our past. The actual events are forgotten, but the results of these events come with us. For example, if we had undertaken a spiritual journey in a past birth and gained a certain maturity, this comes with us. It is not a matter of just one birth, but of countless births. We would go crazy if we remembered all that happened in the past. Remembering those events may also continue to influence our lives today. It is for our own mental health that God has granted this provision of forgetting our past births. Even though we retain our own dispositions from the past, we start afresh in each birth.

Question

Why do our scriptures talk about past births?

Answer

Karma or past births etc. are talked of, to resolve things and get answers in this life, so that we can deal better with situations that we face. We are all born with certain dispositions, which are the cumulative effect of past births. Our entire pattern of thinking and the decisions we make are

dependent upon our *samskāras*. Therefore, depending upon their own *samskāras*, different people decide differently in a similar situation.

Even though our freewill is also influenced by our past *samskāras*, we still have the freedom to follow the injunctions of the scriptures. The scriptures guide us like road maps and show us the right path. This enables us to overcome the effects of the past¹.

¹ Satsang transcribed and edited by Chaya Raj, KK Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.