

Satsang with Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Renunciation

Renunciation is letting go - a letting go of that which is a burden to me and causing unhappiness to me. Therefore, Vedanta teaches us to let go of that which is the cause of unhappiness. We hold on to many things thinking that they are the cause of happiness. As we discover the nature of things, we find that what I thought was helpful to me is not helpful and what I thought was useful to me, is not useful. As a result, when I recognize the lack of usefulness of anything, I do not continue to hold on to it. Renunciation is a progression of letting go which takes place in the wake of this discovery. It also happens when I grow out of something; when I recognize that something is not necessary and let go. I then grow into my own inward satisfaction so that my necessities reduce.

I have certain necessities right now and therefore I need things. But then there are many things whose true nature I have not recognized, and therefore, I may be still holding on to them as necessities. Also, as my necessities reduce on account of my inner growth, inner maturity or inner satisfaction, I find that more and more things are unnecessary. In understanding the true nature of things, I discover not only that many things are not necessary, but also that when my own necessities reduce, things become less and less necessary.

In Pujya Swami Dayanandaji's language, 'progress' is to convert luxuries into necessities. A luxury is something you can do without and a necessity is something you cannot do without. A luxury is something which is nice to have, and which you are happy in having, but then it is something that you are also okay with not having. However, as luxuries come you get used to them and in course of time, before you even realize it, they become a necessity meaning that you cannot do without them. Gradually, more and more things become necessities and the dependence on these necessities also grows; the more necessities I have, the more dependent I am.

This movement in the direction of dependence would be called '*samsāra*'. And a movement in the direction of freedom would be called '*adhyātma*', the spiritual life. One way of life is that of progressively walking into bondage and making the bondage more and more intense. The other, is a way of progressively being released from this bondage. As I grow within myself in my own purity, I discover more and more inner satisfaction and then things that are necessities slowly become luxuries. Growth along the spiritual path is a process of converting necessities into luxuries. When my needs reduce I need fewer things for my own satisfaction and then any more things than I truly need, are luxuries. This is the process of converting necessities to luxuries to the extent at which everything becomes a luxury.

Lord Krishna describes a wise person as one who is happy with himself, by himself: '*ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*,' [BG 2-55]. He does not require anything other than himself for his satisfaction; whatever else he has are luxuries. Many things are required for the satisfaction of the many necessities of an ordinary person, but all that a wise person requires for his satisfaction is he. He has discovered freedom from everything and therefore everything is a luxury for him. Similarly, to the extent that we discover satisfaction within ourselves, to that extent our needs automatically drop off. Renunciation is a process of this discovery of inner satisfaction and the resultant letting go of our needs.

Renunciation need not necessarily be equated to the life of a *sannyāsī*, a renunciate or one who has given up everything. It is possible to practice this renunciation in day-to-day life by making our lives as simple as we can. Firstly, we will find that we may not really need the many 'needs' that we have taken for granted. Secondly, we must lead a way of life that helps us grow in our inner maturity. Inner maturity also means an inner satisfaction, by which we become more and more self sufficient. Upon discovering this self sufficiency, we require less and less help. Thus we can initiate a process of discerning more sufficiency within ourselves and to that extent our needs will become progressively fewer. This is the process of renunciation. With

this, our life becomes a process of emotional maturity or inner growth, or a life of progressively discovering freedom¹.

¹ Summer 2003 satsang, transcribed and edited by Chaya Raj, Jayshree Ramakrishnan and KK Davey.