

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Separating the Self from the non-Self

Question

Ramana Maharishi asks us to abide in our Self. When I attempt it, I am not able to control my mind, which has zillions of thoughts. How do I come out of these shackles?

Answer

Yes, it is not easy. It is a process. First of all, I need to accept myself as I am. I need to develop a comfort with myself as I am – with my virtues as well as my limitations. It would be possible to be with myself only when I have developed a comfort with my own self. When I am not comfortable with myself, I will have lots of conflicts, which result in lots of thoughts. Therefore, being with oneself is not something that we can do right away. It is a result of a process of living life based on a graceful acceptance of our own self. To the extent that we can accept ourselves, discover a comfort with whatever we are, and recognize that everything is in order, to that extent is there an absence of conflict within myself; to that extent can I be myself. First, the non-Self is to be accepted as it is. Then I can create a distance. What being myself means is being able to create a distance between the Self and the non-Self.

Question

What do you mean by 'looking inside' and how should one do that?

Answer

'Looking inside' is not in terms of physical space. It does not mean you turn your eyes inwards and look 'inside'. That is not the point. 'Inside' is in terms of the truth. Looking 'inside' an ornament means looking at the truth of the ornament. You look at the gold rather than the shape and form of the ornament. Thus, 'looking inside' implies examining the essence of myself, the truth of my Self.

Usually, the mind looks outwards and seeks external gratification and pleasures. Vedanta points out that you yourself are the source of gratification and asks you to look within yourself instead of seeking gratification from external sources. It asks you to understand that you are the source of happiness or gratification.

Question

When discriminating between the person and the personality, memories of the past seem to provide a definition of who we think we are. How do we address this aspect of the personality?

Answer

We look upon memory as part of a personality because a memory is different from the person. To create a distance between the person and the personality, we need to understand that we are talking of distance not in terms of space, but in terms of understanding. What we mean when we talk of creating a distance with the body is that we need to recognize that the body is a dwelling place, and that I, the person, am not the body. Because of past memory, we may fall into the habit of identifying with the body and we need to be alert to this and again create a distance.

Question

In the guided meditation session, I could not make an appointment with myself. All I saw was just black emptiness. I saw the dark idol of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Is this a mental problem?

Answer

When I say that the meditation is an appointment with myself, there is no suggestion that I have to visualize myself in my eyes. An appointment with myself means just being with myself. Perhaps it looks like you attempted to be with yourself by trying to visualize your self, and instead, the idol of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti appeared in your vision. This could be because you have never seen yourself very intently. It is quite possible that that idol or image of the Lord has created an impression in your mind and you see that idol when you close your eyes. It is the nature of the mind to retain impressions that have a significant impact on it.

The reason why we have these pictures or these idols before us is so that these impressions can be retained in our mind. Meditate on them if you want to. You can meditate on Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti in your mind. When we talk about an appointment with yourself, however, we do not mean that. You don't have to visualize anything. It is not that I need to visualize myself, but basically be myself. In meditation, there is no need to visualize anything. If something comes to your mind, you need not pay any attention to it; just let it go.

In reality, I am already with my Self. It is my mind that should come to my Self. My mind is occupied with lots of activities and agendas and

therefore, always with something else, thinking of something else. We want our mind to think of our own Self. In an appointment with myself, I make my mind think of my Self. I already experience my Self. I do not have to create an experience of myself because I am my Self. I know myself because I experience my Self all the time. What we want to do is to understand that experience. We erroneously take ourselves to be *jīvas* or the limited beings.

In our guided meditation, do not try to visualize anything. Recognize that appointment with myself means keeping my mind to my Self, freeing it from other preoccupations or agenda. Already I am experiencing my Self. When my mind is with my Self, I can appreciate what my true nature is. So, appreciation of my true nature is the purpose of our guided meditation¹.

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