

Accommodating Others

By Pujya Swamiji

Vedanta is a teaching about oneself in which one discovers that the real meaning of the word 'I' is the Self who remains unchanged from childhood to youth to old age, and whose nature is pure awareness that is absolute contentment and love, free from any sense of limitation. To appreciate yourself as such, you require a mind that is prepared for assimilating such knowledge. For the one with an unprepared mind, Vedanta becomes the calculus for a person still learning addition and subtraction. In Vedanta, the preparation required is a mind that has in relative measures what it seeks to discover in the absolute. If the Self is absolute contentment, then the mind of the seeker must be relatively content. If the Self is absolute love, then the seeker must be a relatively loving person, who happily accepts people and things as they are.

To gain such a mind means to develop certain values and attitudes to be clear about them in terms of understanding their importance. Accommodating others is such a value. In fact your anger is due to lack of accommodation. You want the entire world to behave according to your desires. It is your own expectation of others that brings anger to you. You want the world to follow your dictates. Better understand one thing to help you develop a value for accommodating others, the other person behaves in a given manner because he

cannot behave differently. How should you expect a behaviour other than the one he has? That is all he is capable of, "He could have done better", you say; then he would have done so. What right do you have to demand that the other person act differently, in the manner you want him to? Does he not also have the right to ask you to behave in a different manner; because if you change, then he need not change, he has the right to ask you to let him live as he is. At least he doesn't want you to change; he wants you to let him live as he lives. What is wrong in that?

In fact, only by accommodating others, allowing them to be what they are, you gain a relative freedom in your day to day life. If you analyse it, everyone interferes in everyone's life. Everyone causes a global disturbance by his actions. You only need a large computer to figure it all out. Ordinarily you just look at things from a small perspective, and you find one person looming large before you whose influence seems to be so much. In fact you are never free from anyone's influence nor from all the forces in the universe in so far as your physical body is concerned. Nor can you do an action without affecting someone. You cannot even make a statement and get away without affecting another. Therefore no one is really free, we are all inter-related.

Even the Swami is not free. Once I went to the zoo here and passed two people. One said to the other, "Did you see the new one?" People always make comments. I try not to disturb people, but I disturb them even by my dress. I wear these clothes because in my country they are the traditional dress of a renunciate, and so I want to appear the same in this country also. I have made a decision, and that decision definitely will affect someone. If I get disturbed by other's comments, I allow them to disturb me. But if I reverse the process and give them the freedom to be what they are and think what they think, as long as they don't step on my toes. Then I am free in this world. To the extent that you give freedom to others to be what they are to that extent you are free. I just see myself as free, and I give you the freedom to have your problems. Therefore, I don't fight with you. My freedom is only the amount of freedom that I give to you to have any opinion you have asked about me. When a person sees my clothes and asks, "What is all this?" I smile away, I say to him, "Halloween has come early this year". I need not change his opinion, even though it may be wrong. I give him the freedom to be what he is. It doesn't disturb me; that is the only freedom I have.

Then you should accommodate people as they are. If someone makes a comment about you, allow him to have his comment. If the comment is not true, you usually try to justify your actions and prove him wrong. That is silly, if you are objective; you can see if there is any validity in his criticism of you. If he has put you down for his own security, give him the freedom to do so, and then you are free. What

tightening can you do to a bolt when the threads are not there? By changing yourself totally in this way, you gain the relatively abiding contentment and freedom that everyone wants.

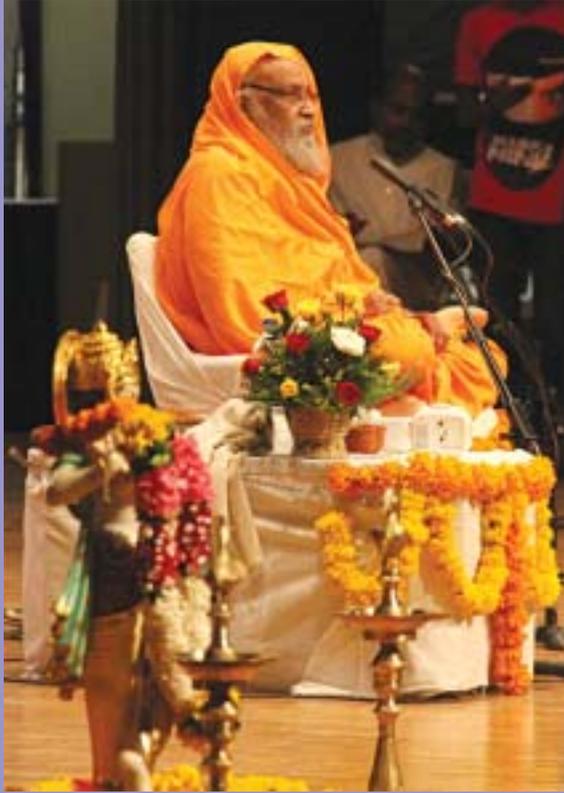
Thus you have come to terms with yourself psychologically; that is what we call yoga-sadhana. You cannot circumvent psychology; you have to come to terms with yourself as a personality. It is not an exhaustion of vasanas or impressions; it is just understanding certain problems that are there. Look back in your life and see what were the situations, the people and events that had really disturbed you. What you find are mere memories but leftovers of reactions. A reaction is not what you do consciously. You cannot consciously get angry, for anger is not an action but a reaction that takes place because you have no say over the matter. These reactions create a great impact on you and become part of your psyche. They are things that create a personality out of a person. In fact they are false, born because of a lack of alertness on your part and having no real roots in the mind. Memory alone is not pleasant. Unpleasantness is there only because of the leftover reactions which have become as though real. People might have caused some disturbance in you. Or you had disturbed some people for which you carry around certain guilt. In the seat of meditation recall them all and let them be as they are. Thereby you free yourself from all the reaction that you have had.

When you look at the blue sky or the stars, or the birds and mountains, you have no complaints about them; and you are pleased and happy. You see the rocks on the riverbed; they did not do anything to

please you. Yet you are happy because you don't want them to be different. You accept them as they are, and therefore, you are pleased. The river flows in its own way; it doesn't bother you. You don't want the volume of water to be greater or the flow to go in a different direction. In fact you seek out natural spots because they do not invoke the displeased person that you seem to be, the angry, hard-to-please person. The demanding chord in you is not struck by them. You are one with the situation, and accommodating self, without the world doing anything to please you.

Thus, you are a pleased person with reference to a few things. See how pleased you are, and bring that person to bear on

all the situations and people that had displeased you and whom you had displeased at one time or another. Then look at yourself just as you would when you look at the birds and the mountains. Accept others as you accept the stars. Pray for a change if you think they need to change, or do what you can to help them change. But accept them first. Only in this way can you really change as a total person. Otherwise you can study any amount of Vedanta, but it won't work. You will only have a feeling that there is something underneath. You want to change others so that you can be free, but it never works that way. Accept others totally, and you are free; then you discover love, which is yourself.



Bhajan by Pujya Swamiji

रागम् - हंसध्वनिः
तालम् आदि

महागणपतिम् मनसा स्मरामि
महादेवमुदं शिरसा नमामि

मतङ्गाननं माहेश्वरं हरम्
तपत्रययुत भवरोगभैषजम् - महागणपतिम्
शतकोटिविघ्न परिहार चरणम्
शान्त्यादिसर्व कल्याणगुणदम्
हृदन्तरं निखिललोकगं शिवम्
परं पदं प्रततम् - महागणपतिम्
ब्रह्माण्डान्तर्गत-भूतस्थम्
यजुरादिवेद शिखरस्थम्
नितान्तशुद्धान्तकरणस्थम्
प्रशस्तं तटस्थं समस्तं तम् - महागणपतिम्