

How to Teach the Value of the Values Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati's talk to teachers

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Animals live instinctively, meaning that they do not have a free will. Therefore, they do not have to deliberate before making a choice. What is freewill? Freewill is that because of which we deliberate before we do anything. What is instinctive behavior? No deliberation at all. You just behave, which is what Swamiji would call a one-step response. So, whatever occurs in the mind, you do it. Whatever instinct comes, do it. That is the one-step response.

Unfortunately many human beings also live doing that only. Whatever instinct comes, whatever impulse comes, whatever desire comes, whatever thought comes, they do. In that case, there is not much difference between a human being and an animal. So what distinguishes a human being from other creatures is the freewill which gives him the freedom to deliberate and make a choice. So number one, there is freewill which gives me a space, a freedom to deliberate, and secondly we have an "internet" with which we can judge what is right and what is wrong. Two things are there. Not only freedom is there, but also an "internet" is there.

If you are driving a vehicle and you come to a bifurcation, you have the freedom to take whichever route you want. If you don't know which route to take, in the same way that many people do not know what is right and what is wrong, then that freedom is of no use. So not only you should have the freedom to choose, but also the awareness of understanding what is

right and what is wrong. However, we should have cultivated that intelligence. To know what is right and what is wrong requires education, which we should have. Thus, when the road bifurcates, I should have the education of knowing which road leads to my destination. So making a choice requires me to have the knowledge of what the destination is and also the knowledge of what is the path leading to that destination. All of this intelligence we have, except that we have to use that intelligence in first understanding what the destination is and second in understanding what is the path leading to that destination. Then only what is right and what is wrong is known. So, that which leads me to my destination is right and that which deviates is wrong. Thus, we have freewill and we also have the intelligence of determining what is right and what is wrong. Freewill is given to us; intelligence has to be cultivated. So we have to educate ourselves in understanding what is right and what is wrong.

In human life there is something right and there is something wrong. When freewill is there, then there is something right and something wrong. When freewill is not there, then everything is right. So whatever a cat does is right. PujyaSwamiji gives an example. Suppose you have a couple of bananas in your home. You place them near a window and a monkey comes and takes them. Is it right or wrong? Suppose somebody puts bananas near a window and you come and take two bananas when nobody is watching; would it be right or

wrong? When a monkey takes two bananas, it is right because a monkey behaves instinctively. It is a programmed feature, like a toy's program where you press the button and the car starts running. You press another button and it stops. The car has no freedom, it is programmed. That car runs and perhaps collides with something; it is not wrong because there's no freewill. If I drive a car and collide with something, it is wrong because I have the freedom not to collide. This means that when a monkey takes away those bananas, it is not called stealing. Whereas if a child takes away the bananas, we say he or she stole the bananas because a human being has freedom of choice and at the same time the intelligence to understand what is right and what is wrong. Not just the freedom, but also the intelligence.

Why is it wrong? Why do you think that for a human being taking away bananas is wrong? Or when nobody is watching, taking away a pencil, why is it wrong? Or when somebody is doing lessons, looking at the notebook and copying, will it be wrong or right? It is wrong. Why would it be wrong? I would not want my bananas to be taken away like that. So if I take somebody's bananas it is not right. Our awareness allows us to use our intelligence to decide what is right and what is wrong. Otherwise, if the awareness was not there, we would not know what is right and what is wrong. So, a monkey does not have the full awareness, only one-way awareness. A monkey doesn't allow its bananas to be taken away, but does not feel guilty when it takes away another's bananas. But, a human being has a two-way awareness. Therefore, stealing becomes wrong because I do not want something that belongs to me to be stolen. So freedom of choice is given, but the intelligence to decide what is right and what is wrong has to be cultivated. We do need education as far as understanding what is right and what is wrong. That is not given to us.

When we teach the value of values, it is difficult to explain to a child why a value has a value. It is easier to explain to an adult, because whenever we violate a value it creates a sense of guilt in our mind. This is so because we are self-conscious beings. That is another faculty. We are self-conscious beings, conscious of ourselves. Therefore, whenever we deliberately do something which is wrong, we know that it is wrong.

So, suppose it is wrong, what is wrong with that? Suppose stealing is wrong, let it be wrong; what does it matter? Does it matter? If I steal and I know that nobody knows what I did, what are the consequences? I know that I did something that is not right, why should I feel bad about it? Because I am a self-conscious being, I have an expectation about myself. What is the expectation? That I should be honest, that I should not steal, that I should be correct. I have an expectation. If that expectation was not there, then there would be no guilt. I have an expectation of myself that I should be right. I should not steal. I should be honest. That expectation I have of myself. Therefore, when am I happy with myself? Am I happy with myself when I'm honest or when I am dishonest? When I deliberately do something that requires dishonesty, I become unhappy with myself. That is a very important thing to know.

I may have performed an act of dishonesty such as stealing, because there is some material advantage in that. But as a result, it creates in me a sense of guilt because it is quite contrary to what I expect from myself, meaning that I was not able to live up to my own expectation of myself and when I cannot live up to my expectation of myself, I feel unhappy with myself. I feel dissatisfied with myself. I feel I am not good enough. I'm not worthy. This is the main problem. My own dissatisfaction with myself, the judging of myself as not worthy, is the cause of my sadness.

To be continued...