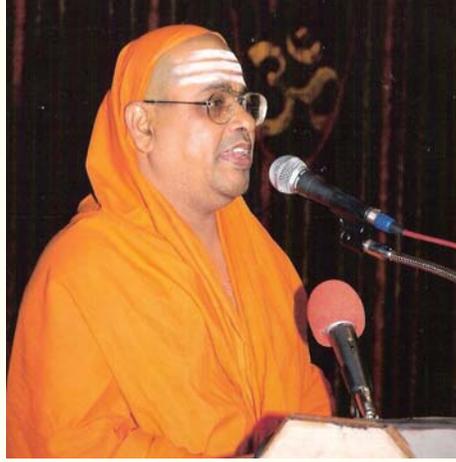


## Turning Adversity to one's advantage

**A series of talks by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati  
June 21 - 27, 2009 - 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm**

*Text of Sri Swami Paramārthananda's introduction to the above topic  
at Kamarajar Arangam on June 21, 2009*



There is a samskr̥t verse which runs as follows:

vipado naiva vipadaḥ sampado naiva sampadaḥ |

vipad vismaraṇam viṣṇoḥ sampad samsmaraṇam hareḥ ||

The message given by this verse is: 'what we consider as adversity is really not adversity and what we consider as prosperity is really not prosperity. On the other hand, forgetting the Lord at any time is the adversity, and remembrance of Lord at all times is the real prosperity'.

The idea contained in this verse shows that no event can be labeled as adversity purely based on the nature of the event. But it depends upon the mind-set with which we confront the event or situation. If there are four different people facing the same

situation, depending upon the mind-sets, the four people will see the situation differently.

One may look upon the situation as terrible, and the same situation another person will say it is ok and a third person may say it is wonderful. From this it is very clear that situation remaining the same, it is the mind-set which determines the status of the situation.

We have got a beautiful example in the Rāmāyaṇam to show how the mind-set determines our perception and the response. In the Ayodhya khāṇḍa, there is an emotionally charged situation when Rāmā had to go to the forest in exile. And different people perceived the situation differently and responded differently. In this situation Kausalyā also faces separation from her son Rāmā. Putra viyoga, separation from the son, is the situation faced by Kausalyā. And

Sumitra also faces a very similar situation of putra viyoga, separation from her son Lakshmaṇa. And we find Kausalyā is totally shattered by this situation. She goes through unbearable emotional pain and she is not able to contain herself. Vālmikī graphically describes the internal turmoil faced by Kausalyā.

And we also see, Sumitra facing a very similar situation. Lakshmaṇa has opted to go to the forest voluntarily. Lakshmaṇa is not bound by the boon to go to the forest. But he voluntarily decides to go to the forest; not that he wanted to escape from Ūrmiḷā. Ūrmiḷā was a good wife. In fact, he wants to serve Rāmā and decides to go to the forest. Sumitra is totally unperturbed by this situation. She happily accepts the separation from her son. There is a famous verse quoted often how Sumitra advises Lakshmaṇa :

The second trait of a sātvik mind is: it avoids the trap of reaction which is the other extreme of inaction. There are many people in adverse situations; they are emotionally overpowered by the situation and pressurized by emotional turbulence, they take to thoughtless and impulsive action which may lead to disastrous consequences. Impulsive and thoughtless action is like taking a medication without diagnosing the disease. An intelligent doctor will give the medication only after thorough diagnosis of the disease and how painful the disease is. Similarly all adverse situations are like diseases and if we impulsively and thoughtlessly respond, it is like treating the situation without diagnosis. This is what we call as reaction. And a sātvik mind avoids the trap of reaction. It avoids one extreme of inaction and it avoids the other extreme of reaction.

Thirdly a sātvik mind is one which takes to deliberate action after thoroughly studying the situation and exploring the various remedies available. Seeing the long term consequences, a sātvik mind takes to deliberate action. This is the third trait of a sātvik mind.

And finally a sātvik mind has a positive attitude towards all situations including adverse situations. And, by positive attitude, what we mean is an attitude based on the fact that all adverse situations contain certain benefits in a hidden form. This is the universal truth or fact. All adverse situations, however adverse it might be, they all contain hidden benefits, just as medicine can be extracted from even a snake's poison. Even a severest adverse situation has got hidden benefits if only we are willing to process and tap the benefit.

Based on this awareness, when I approach adverse situations, it is a healthy and positive attitude. And it is such a mind which can turn even adversities into one's advantage. Thus these four traits are unique to a healthy mind set. They being: 1. it avoids inaction, 2. it avoids reaction, 3. it takes to deliberate action, and 4. it has got a positive attitude towards even adverse situations.

And enjoying such a sātvik mind-set is the greatest wealth that a person can possess. And any education and any amount of training are worth the effort to attain this healthy mind set.

Then the final question is: if such a sātvik mind set is the greatest wealth, then what type of education and what type of training is required to develop such a healthy sātvik mind-set, and that is the billion dollar question. No doubt the sātvik mind set with these four traits is the greatest asset one can have.

The question is what type of education and training is required to build such a healthy mind- set. And for that alone we have got Pujya Swamiji amidst us to give us the necessary education and training. No doubt I have been given an opportunity to introduce the topic; I don't want to turn this opportunity into an adversity by hanging on to this mike. Thank you. Hari Om.