

Freedom in Relationship - Swami Dayananda Saraswathi

Our interaction with the world and with people is inevitable. Relating to the world is not an option, nor is it a matter for concern. It is how we manage and respond to different situations that really counts. We can free ourselves from relating to one thing, but we will simply be relating to something else. We cannot free ourselves from all relationships. But it is a different matter if we free ourselves from a constantly irritating relationship that has proven to be unfeasible to continue.

Generally, we want to free ourselves from a relationship because of our emotional incapacity to deal with it, which may be indicative of a problem. It may be the same with reference to any form of relationship nothing will last. We need to learn how to manage our expectations of others. Also we must know that if others have a problem, it is their problem. Let them manage it. If you can help them manage, please help them. Otherwise, forget about it. In relating, we need to be free. Further freedom is only when there is freedom from agenda.

Avoiding friction in relating. Avoiding friction in relating.

I am now going to talk about what avoids friction in relating. The word agenda is a positive word, not a negative word. It is something to be commented upon because we have agenda. When we are called for a meeting, we have agenda. These are the items we are going to discuss.

With reference to individuals, we have certain expectations. There is nothing wrong in that, but these expectations are not merely expectations; they are definite I have concluded that this person must be like this. And this person must be like this is what I call agendum. It is not proper or correct to make a conclusion like that about somebody. There is no person at all that fits into a category.

Even to categorize a person as a criminal is improper. We can only say, He is a habitual offender. There is a person who is constantly committing crimes; therefore, we declare to the world that he is a criminal. Those are descriptive words and descriptive words are preferable to a single word like criminal. When we say, He is a habitual offender, that means that he is given to the habit of committing offenses. We don't know why; it looks like he is given to this habit. Then we can find out what the causes are. But we cannot say he is a criminal.

If he is a criminal it means that the person's legs, his hands, and his every action must be criminal. But there is no such person. Even when we speak of a criminal lawyer, there again, the person is not a criminal lawyer all the time. The person is not a criminal lawyer to his or her spouse. Criminal lawyer means that the person is an expert in criminal law. People are just people. We cannot bring a person categorically under one heading. We cannot

1 Excerpt from the forthcoming booklet Freedom in Relationship by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, classes in August 2003 at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, transcribed and edited by Sharon Cliff

say this person should be like this. That is what I call having an agendum. It is wrong.

Grant freedom to the other person to think the way he or she thinks.

All individuals are given to perceptions. They are free to have their perceptions. They are free to have their opinions. They are free to think differently and do differently. One should be ready for that. In relating and in marriage, it is so important to understand this.

In an Indian marriage, there is a sentence that states: I give you my heart. Both say this at the same time. Then the next sentence states: Let your mind be in keeping with my mind. Here it means granting freedom to the other person to think the way that person thinks. That is the proper translation. May you approve of my way of thinking as long as it is proper (dharmic), of course. It is not merely thinking; doing is also involved. So may you approve of my way of thinking and acting. That is a prayer for both parties. May each of them approve of the other's thinking and doing and help and validate each other. Thereby, both of them will grow. That is how there is freedom in a relationship.

Let the other person think the way he or she thinks. Even if you know that the person is wrong, it is better that he or she discovers what is right. You need not point it out. Heaven is not going to come falling down. That validation is important, and it is mutual. It is never one-sided. Anything one-sided is not going to work in a relationship. Therefore, at least on my part, I should grant freedom to others to think the way they think and learn from their mistakes, so that I don't commit those same mistakes myself. If they commit mistakes, I should thank them. If

you commit a mistake, that is good because I will learn from you; I won't commit the same one. Therefore, in relating, granting freedom to the other person seems to be the most crucial thing.

We tend to internalize people that are a source of frustration. We tend to internalize people that are a source of frustration. We tend to internalize people that are a source of frustration. One good thing is: the people that we actively relate to are outside. When I say outside, I mean they are outside our physical body and senses. This outside is a confusing word because we are both outside and inside. We are outside New York but inside the United States. Both outside and inside are relative.

There are people that we are actively related to and people that we are not actively related to. But, really, we are related to all of them because they form the contemporary society. We may not be actively involved with any of them, but, nevertheless, they affect us in one way or the other. We all live a connected life. Everybody affects everybody else, and everybody is affected by everybody else. Every person forms one of the members of the community, and each person contributes something and also consumes something. Sometimes we consume more and contribute less; sometimes we consume less and contribute more.

For instance, the Americans form four point five percent of the total population of humanity on this planet, and they consume twenty-five percent of fossilized fuel, oil, gas, and coal. Good or bad, these are the statistics. Also Americans are, in one way or the other, contributing to the wealth of China and also, in a smaller way, to the wealth of India. Therefore, we are all mutually related. Everybody is affected by everybody else.

Even unknown people, who are not actively involved in our day-to-day life, may indirectly affect us in some small way. The people with whom we are actively involved and with whom we need to relate, such as a son, daughter, mother, father, other relatives, friends, employers, employees, co-workers, clients, and business competitors are all external to our body. Whether they are sitting beside us, in the next room, or in a different city let them be anywhere every one of them is external.

These external people do not really affect us physically unless we are sitting near when somebody sneezes or coughs; then, in terms of health, we can be affected. But people who are away from us cannot physically affect us. Then in what way can people affect us? Well, they can affect us genetically; there are a lot of things that we inherit. But we cannot hold them responsible for our genetic problems because they themselves have been handed down their genetics. The original genetic problem is from God alone. We cannot say they are totally responsible for what we are.

People who are external to us can affect us when they become a source of frustration and irritation. If they are to our liking and contribute to our well being, they don't bother us; but if they are not to our liking and they don't contribute to our well being, they do bother us. The person who says, I am not bothered by any of them; I don't care, is constrained to say, I don't care because he or she cares too much. That is an expression of frustration.

We have a perception of people, and that perception affects us.

When we accuse people, they have somehow affected us. More often than not, people affect us emotionally. We have a certain perception of them, and we are affected by that perception. You may say,

My perception is true, but if you were to ask them how they view you, they would have their own perception of you. It is amazing! They think you are impossible; you think they are impossible; and you both feel justified in your perceptions. There may be some truth in the perception, or there may be no truth at all. A person may be viewed in a certain way and feel, I am wrongly viewed. Therefore, there is a response, and then that response is viewed with surprise, and then that in turn is viewed with a certain despair, consternation, or whatever. It goes on building up in each person.

One thing we all know: it takes two hands to clap. Similarly, it takes two people to have these clashes of perception. Both people seem to have a basis for their perception, and both argue that they are telling the truth. So here we have a clear-cut case of lack of communication. There are two perceptions that are entirely different. One person doesn't allow him or herself to understand what exactly the other person's perception is. And the other person doesn't seem to make him or herself understood, even though he or she says, I have given enough time to make myself understood. All this will be there. But the net result is there is no communication.

Both people feel justified in their perception, and there is a permanent source of frustration, an irritant; and that irritant is the person sitting there inside our mind. Sometimes, it is an in-law. Brothers and sisters could also be the irritant. There could be a sibling problem. Even Father and Mother, who are connected to the sibling, could be the irritant. Perhaps the mother was partial to somebody. She was never fair to me; she allowed the boys to get away with everything and went after us girls.

There is a perception in all of this, and there may be some truth in it, but usually it is

the child's perception; then that perception gets confirmed in later experiences. It is like having a wound on our foot. We find that it gets hurt again and again. If our foot had not been injured in the first place, it wouldn't hurt when it hits something; but if it has already been injured and it hits something, the wounded part gets hurt all over again. The wound opens up. Thus, it looks as though the wounded always gets re-wounded and the hurt always gets re-hurt.

There is a build up all the time. And we have a complete set of arguments to prove why that person has always been like this. But whatever it is, whether there is truth in it or not, one thing is certain: somebody outside bothers us. That is the truth. Everyone who bothers us is outside, including our mother, father, son, daughter, and spouse.

Some of these people that bother us are people for whom we have love and affection, like our father, mother, or sister. If it is an in-law, that love, affection, and care may not be there. They are indirectly connected to us; therefore, they need to be dealt with a little differently. We are talking about all the people with whom we are directly connected. There are people with whom we can continue our connection, and there are people with whom we can snap our connection. If the relationship is bothersome, we can snap our connection. But then we cannot snap the connection with our mother, father, brother, or sister. These are all inborn connections. We have love, care, and affection for them.

There may be a wish that is unfulfilled and that cannot be fulfilled. If it is a child's wish, it cannot be fulfilled anymore, unless the person relives his or her entire life and Mother is now more enlightened. If we put the clock back and we become the child and Mother is more enlightened, then everything would be entirely different. But

then, there would probably be some other problem.

There may also be a wish that can be fulfilled. It could be a current-situation wish. I wish my mother and father were different. Their behavior could change; their value system could change; certain habits could change. I want them to change. Thus, I have a wish, and I am convinced that my wishes and my wants are legitimate. However, if I were to consult them, they would definitely have a list of wants with reference to me. They want me to change. They say that my perception is wrong. Mother and Father say, We are always taken wrongly. It is an endless thing.

Lord Krishna advises us to keep the external objects and people external.

What emerges from all this is: we have to help ourselves by seeing that Mother and Father are outside. Lord Krishna gives us some advice. At the end of the fifth chapter of the Gita, keeping in mind what he is going to talk about in the sixth chapter, he gives us advice on how to meditate.

Lord Krishna says, Sparṇ bhyaṅ bahiḥ kṛtvā prapnauḥ s bhyan tarac ri au samau kṛtvā muni mok apar ya a and so on. He talks about how one should do meditation and contemplation. He says, Before you contemplate, make sure you free yourself from these few things, and watch your breathing. Let it be rhythmic (prapa au samau kṛtvā). Then the mind becomes quiet. In fact, you become quiet.

Then he says, Bhyaḥ . Bhya means external to my senses and body. You are bhya to me; I am bhya to you. Your father, your mother, the Sun, the Moon, the stars, and the whole world are external.

(To be continued...)