



LIFE SITUATIONS
Attitude towards negative people
Extract from 2/9/93 Satsang

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Om Shri Paramatmane Namaha

Q: In my work I would like to be good and to do some good, but there are people who disturb me. How can I learn to cope with this?

A: How can you remain relaxed, peaceful and, undisturbed by others and work in a normal job? It is only through a spiritual way of life that such a quality develops in us. Through following the spiritual way of life, you understand your relationship with the world. When you get disturbed or angry, you think that someone has made you angry, but this is not the case. The truth is that you have the seeds of anger in you and the other person presented the opportunity for the seeds to germinate. The remedy is now to get rid of those seeds or impressions.

No one has control over the behaviour of others. You may ask one or two persons to speak kindly or gently but you cannot ask the whole world. If you evolve from within and that element of anger is eradicated, then you are not disturbed by any behaviour. To achieve that, the only path is to follow spiritual practices - meditation, selfless service, self-analysis (seeing your good and bad points) and praying to God to make you better.

As an example, I will describe an experience that happened to me. About 20 years ago I was teaching in Jammu Kashmir at one of the universities. It so happened that there was a demonstration at the university and the students surrounded the whole department. They would not allow any teacher or official to leave. The root cause was that they were copying from each other in the examinations and I had put a stop to the copying. I told them: "Either proper examinations or no examinations at all. It is part of my duty as a professor to see that the copying does not happen." Before that other teachers had tolerated the copying and some had perhaps even helped in it. When I put a stop to it, the boys became annoyed, they hurled abuses at me, and called me bad names. Finally, after several days, the Vice-Chancellor and the Head of Department intervened in the matter and tried to settle the dispute. During the meeting of professors and heads of departments, statements were made by the students and other remarks came from the side of the professors. The Head of Department, who was my boss, said that he could excuse most of the students' actions but there was one thing that he could not excuse - the fact that some students had insulted Professor Sharma. He insisted that they should beg my pardon. But the problem for the students was that they did not want to beg my pardon in public. Therefore, some students asked if they could talk to me in private and the leader of the students asked me to tell him which of the students had insulted me.

My reply was: "Nobody has insulted me. No one could insult me". When I said no one could insult me, everyone was surprised. Even the professors who had spoken on my behalf and my Head of Department were very surprised. Several professors said that they had heard very bad remarks being made to me and wondered how I could say that I was not insulted. I told them all, that the insult depends upon my feelings: "I am not so shallow a person that they can insult me. It is, in fact, impossible for them. They have not got the power to insult

me. Feeling insulted or not insulted depends upon me. They are uneducated boys and that is the reason they have come to the university. Naturally, they do not know the proper manners and language and it is for us to teach them those things. If they were perfect in every way there would be no need for them to come to the university. Also, what should we professors have to do if all the students were already cultivated and educated? In fact, because they make the remarks that you say were insulting, I am happy that I shall have a chance to correct and improve them. I thought they would need my help and for that reason I am employed at the university."

My explanation was sincere and truthful from my heart. I really loved the students, every one of them, and it was not only through my mind as a politician but through my heart. Everything changed at that very moment, and those students, who had not been ready to accept their fault, openly begged my pardon. But I told them not to worry: "You can do such things and I will see that you finally put a stop to them."

You probably already know how we have to develop from within. We should not try to make this world better but we should try to make ourselves better.

Q: My question was how to learn to cope with it.

A: The most useful method for enabling one to learn, is this very meeting that is now taking place here. Such meetings and discussions are very important. In India they are known as *Satsang*, which literally means 'to be with the Truth'. When you are in the presence of a person whom you consider truthful and discuss questions of truth and spirituality, you are said to be having *Satsang*. But you cannot always have an opportunity to be with somebody who is more evolved than you are. When you cannot be in the company of such a person, the next best method is to read good books (by spiritual people). This will also help you on the path. Every day you should give some time to reading - at least 15 minutes.

The next method is meditation. Try to have at least 20 minutes of meditation every day. It is preferable to meditate for 30 minutes.

Then the next method is to try to help others whenever you get the opportunity. Try to make others happy rather than becoming happy yourself. Happiness comes automatically to those who try to serve others and make them happy.

Another method is to try to cultivate a habit of listening to another person's point of view even when it conflicts with your own point of view. This is known as tolerance and is one of the greatest qualities. A husband or wife may say or do something which the other does not like. Why be angry with your partner? Let them have the freedom to differ. These are certain methods that will be of assistance.

You can also attend certain intensive yoga courses for a week or weekend. If you attend them, they can also be helpful.

To summarise - *Satsang* (the company of good people), good spiritual books, meditation, self-analysis, tolerance and yoga courses.

One more method, when you go to bed, before you fall asleep, try to meditate or read a spiritual book. You should not do anything worldly before your sleep. If you think about God before you fall asleep, it will bring you benefit. The last thought in your waking state before sleeping goes into your subconscious and is very effective. In the same way, as soon as you get up in the morning, remember the Divine again.

Q: You say that there are positive and negative people. Should there be any difference between our behaviour to negative, and to positive people and what is the meaning of negative and positive?

A: The meaning of negative and positive is this: Positive people are those who are always ready to help others. Whatever they can do to help, they are ready to do. Even if they cannot do anything physically, at least mentally they have positive ideas and emotions. If the world were full of such persons only, there would be no problems. There are people who do not try to help but who do not try to injure either. However, there are also people in great numbers who will just trip you up for no reason. They find pleasure in seeing someone fall down. They are full of envy and there is no question of them helping anyone. They are always pleased if a person has bad luck. These are negative people and you come to know them instinctively.

Now the reply to your question as to what our attitude should be. Try to have the company and friendship of positive people whenever possible in a natural way. What do I mean by 'natural way'? You should be committed to your work and duty. Neglecting your duty in order to meet positive people is not natural and right. It is bad if someone neglects his work just to spend time with a positive person. 'In a natural way' means, after work when you have time, you can associate with those whom you find positive. As regards the negative people, try to be indifferent to them, not against them. Do not have any ill-feeling against the negative. Ill-feeling will cause harm to you. To be indifferent is another matter. Suppose I am sitting by the roadside, waiting for a bus. I am indifferent to the people who are passing. I do not say that the one in blue is bad and the one in black is good. In the same way you should show indifference towards the negative people and not antagonism - no ill feeling only indifference. Leave the negative as they are and try to be close to the positive. This will be helpful.