

On Dating

Transcribed from a talk given by Swami Chinmayananda in 1984 in the U.S.A.

There is nothing wrong with dating but ask yourself, "What do I want out of life?" If you want to be only mediocre or average, then date, drink, dance, or whatever and waste all your mental energy, your destiny is in your hands. But if you want to score high in life, you have to live in self-control. All the men and women who have excelled in life have been fascinated by the goals they set for themselves. You can be in the majority, just wanting to feed your body, or you can choose to be a great person, although they are few in number. There was only one Einstein and one Gandhi.

You can set for yourself a higher vision that will enable you to live up to your maximum capacity. South Asians are scoring high all over the world. Have you stopped to wonder why? The difference lies in having self-discipline and a higher goal to aim for.

When the mind is not engaged in a goal or ambition, it rambles all over. It is the parents' responsibility to show the goal of life, to give ideas, and to let these ideas blossom in their children. A child is naturally fascinated by a flame and will draw close to it, but the job of the parents is to keep the child safe from harm. If the child persists, however, the parent can lead the child close to the flame so he feels the heat. After that the child will not go near it.

I know a sculptor who is considered to be a madman. One day we were walking along a river. He noticed a huge stone and walked around it several times; then he started to lift it, and together we took it to his place. Even after we had brought it to his studio he kept looking fixedly at it. He forgot all about me and just kept looking at it. After a day or two, I again visited him in his studio. I noticed that the stone had taken a human form, yet he continued hammering and chiseling away. He had created a lot of chips around him. I also noticed the empty teacups, for he had not taken the time to eat. After a few more days a beautiful Krishna emerged, I exclaimed, "Oh my friend what a beautiful form you have made."

He said, "Never say that, I never did it."

I said, "Then who did it?"

He remarked, "Don't say I have created it. I did not make it. The beauty was in the stone already and I just chipped off whatever was unnecessary."

In the same way, the higher personality is lying dormant in all of us. That which is veiling the beauty has to be chipped off. So let all your activities challenge your goal. In your success lies the success of the society.

You ask, "Can we have dates? All my friends are dating. Can I do drugs; all my friends are doing drugs?" Use your discrimination! This will show your strong-mindedness. There is nothing wrong with an occasional date; it is not a big deal. But realize you are playing with fire. Haven't you seen the broken families? Children from these homes are searching for love. You, on the other hand, are being continuously fed with love. Indian parents are built that way. Many of you want to imitate your western peers, which is natural at this age, but when they ask you why you are not dating at this time, just tell them, "I don't need to beg for Mary or John's love for a couple of hours when I am saturated in love 24-7." It is the culture. The Indian culture is distinct because of the divine goal. In everything we do, we bring out the divine essence.

One more idea: In life there is both happiness and sorrow, and inspiring moments are few. When we pass the final exams there is excitement. When a grandson is born there is excitement for the grandparents, when the tenth grandchild is born, they are not that excited. When one has done everything, life's excitements have ended. Then comes *vanaprastha*, a stage of meditative living. No grandson can see eye-to-eye with his grandfather, for it is a different generation.

If dating starts at the age of 12 or 13, and by 18 one has had all the experiences of sex and dating, perhaps even had a child by 19, then when 30 comes around there is no excitement, nothing to look forward to. On the other hand, a person of self-control, who has studied at the right time, taken a job, married at the right time, and has children; that person's entire life is an inspiration. You can dull your life and end it at 35, then feel you have nothing to look forward to. Or you can do everything at the right time and live in self-control. That is *sanatana dharma*. Every stage of your life remains beautiful and every action is geared towards the final goal.