

15. Mano moolam Idam Jagath

THE mind is extremely subtle. It derives its energy from food. In the dialogue between *Uddalaka* and *Svethakethu* in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, the theme is the connection between food and the mind. Pure food is conducive to purity of the mind. One with a pure mind is filled with pure thoughts, and bubbles with energy derived from pure love. Wisdom is the efflorescence of purity of mind. Only such a person can achieve control over the senses.

The self-controlled person, by discovering his divine nature, can illumine the world around. Like a joss-stick, which scatters its fragrance in all directions, the name and fame of the pure-hearted self-realised individual reach all. Pure thoughts hold the key for purity of mind. Thoughts have an objective reality of their own. They deal with six characteristics associated with physical objects: weight, form, quality, size, force and colour. If a man has a *champaka* flower in his hand, the fragrance of that flower is carried by him wherever he goes. Likewise, he will be carrying foul smell too wherever he goes. It is the same with good or bad thoughts. They radiate their good or bad vibrations around them. Thoughts have so much power that when they are directed towards great objectives they can be used to influence the world. When the mind is filled with good thoughts, such as truth, love, forbearance and compassion, one's life is filled with peace and serenity. If, on the other hand, one allows thoughts of hatred, envy, anger and conceit to grow, life becomes perpetual misery.

Thoughts and life

The face is the index of the mind. When you bear ill-will towards anyone, your enmity alters your face and manners. When you entertain good and loving thoughts, your heart is filled with joy and you experience an upsurge of happiness. If you fill your heart with love, your entire life becomes a saga of love. If you fill it with hatred, envy and pride, life becomes a dreary desert.

A tree that has roots deep in the ground cannot be destroyed when its branches or leaves are cut off. Likewise, when evil qualities like hatred and envy have struck deep roots for the tree of life, they cannot be got rid off by striking at some branches. By suppressing bad thoughts intermittently, these evils cannot be eradicated. The mind has to be completely emptied of all bad thoughts to achieve real peace. Every bad thought must be rooted out the moment it arises in the mind. The war against bad thoughts is like the war against enemy hordes who attempt to get behind a fort through a subterranean tunnel. As each one of the enemy emerges from the tunnel, he should be struck down. Each one of the sense organs--the eye, the tongue or the ear--when it is influenced by a bad thought, is led astray and behaves improperly. When they are influenced by good thoughts and impulses, they act in a manner which produces joy and contentment. When the eye sees someone who is regarded as an enemy, there is an upsurge of ill-will in the mind. On the other hand, when one sees a dear friend the reaction is one of love and affection.

Sacred words generate elevating power

As in the case of things seen, what we hear can also have bad or good effects. The power of words to influence the mind is even more. Great *Vedic* pronouncements like "*Aham Brahmaasmi*", "*Tat-Twam-Asi*" and "*Ayam Atma Brahma*" provide inspiration to aim at the highest goal. They should not be construed or used in a manner to inflate one's ego.

Every expression is charged with a power of its own. When the words used are sacred, they generate a sanctifying and elevating power. When the words are abusive and vulgar, they arouse excitement, anger or depression.

The joy or distress experienced by the mind is the result of the impressions conveyed by the senses. All experiences are products of the mind. The world itself is the projection of the mind. The mind can bring remote things near or send near things afar. It is the source of pleasure or pain. The sages have declared: "*Mano moolam idam jagath.*" (This universe is based on the mind).

The mind seeks to acquire something with much effort in the hope that its possession will give pleasure. But the pleasure derived from it does not last long. And the sorrow caused by its loss is considerable. There is trouble during the process of acquisition. Possession confers only temporary pleasure. The loss of the object leaves a trail of misery. Very often the pain from loss exceeds the pleasure from gain. It is a futile waste of one's life to go after such transient pleasures. Realising the meaninglessness of such pursuits the sages practised self-control as the means to enduring happiness. They evolved the technique of turning the senses and the mind inward to seek the source of lasting bliss.

***Sadhana* for self-control**

This technique is described as *Tantra*. It consists of a variety of practices called *Mudras*: *Khechari Mudra*; *Bhoochari Mudra*; *Madhyama Mudra*; *Shanmukha Mudra* and *Saambhavi Mudra*. By practising these *mudras*, the sages tried to turn the senses and the mind inwards.

Khechari Mudra: It consists in concentrating the two eyes on the mid-point between the eyebrows during meditation. This exercise enables the integration of vision by which one's Reality is experienced. This *mudra* can also be practised by closing the eyes, but concentrating the look inwardly on the midpoint between the brows. Performing the *mudra* with open eyes is an ordeal. Hence concentration with closed eyes is preferred.

Bhoochari Mudra: In this, meditation is done with the eyes and the mind concentrated upon the tip of the nose. When the Divine is meditated upon in this manner, a unique kind of joy is experienced.

Madhyama Mudra: In this, the eyes are concentrated on the middle of the nose between the tip and the mid-point of the brows. Unlike the *Bhoochari mudra*, in which the eyes may be fully open, in this the eyes are only half-open. This *mudra* becomes easier after practising the *Bhoochari mudra*.

An exercise for sense control

Shanmukha Mudra: This is a very sacred exercise. It is also a very difficult one to practise. It consists in closing with the fingers of both the hands the eyes, the ears and the two nostrils. By gradual practice, one should try to practise this *mudra* for as long as seven minutes at a stretch. Inhaling of breath should be done once in seven minutes. Through regular practice, this form of sense control can become a habit. No discomfort will be felt from control of the breath. By this practice, all the sense organs and the mind get absorbed in exploring the internal. The purpose of this discipline is to turn the sense organs away from the influence of happenings and objects in the outer world.

For instance, when the ears hear sounds from outside, the mind gets excited or pleased. Similarly when the eyes see certain objects or persons, the mind is influenced one way or the other. But by closing the eyes and the ears, the mind is induced to think less about the outer world and thereby made to achieve some kind of serenity. By closing the nostrils, the mind is saved from the influence of odours. Hence, when the organs of sight, hearing and smell are controlled, the mind is turned inwards.

Today all our sense organs are totally absorbed in experiencing the external world. Listening to some gossip or hearing about some stranger, people develop an unhealthy curiosity regarding men and things.

Looking within

All our thoughts are influenced by what we see, hear or smell. We must try to control the sense organs, especially the ears and the eyes. When you close your eyes even for a brief moment, you will be able to hear *the sound "Om"* coming from within you. This *pranava* sound can be heard when you close all the doors and windows in a room and let the wind blow through a small chink.

The body is like a house which contains the ten *indriyas*, of which four are important---the eyes, the ears, the nose and the mouth. When you close these four openings, the sound "*Om*," which arises from within can be heard. It represents the primal sound---the *Nada bindu*. The light of the *Atma* shines beyond this primal sound. Hence the Divine is hailed as *Nada Bindu Kalaatheetha*--"one who transcends the range of the all-pervading *Nada (Pranava)*." The purpose of the *Shanmukha Mudra* is to reveal to us the vibrations of the "*Om*." When we concentrate on this "*Om*," the senses and the mind turn away from the external to the inner world of the Spirit.

Control of the mind is the means to *Moksha* (liberation). Purity of mind is the primary requisite. When the mind is free from bad thoughts and is filled with good *sankalpas* (good thoughts) it is called *Chitta* (consciousness).

The Tamil saint Tiruthondar declared in one of his hymns: "Oh Rama! I am worshipping you with a pure mind!"

Sambhavi Mudra: This *mudra* aims at controlling the five *Karmendriyas*, the five *jnanendriyas* and the four psychic agencies---*Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chittam* and *Ahamkara*. All these fourteen elements have to be directed towards the spiritual quest. The *Aham* ("I") is sustained by *Ahamkara* (egoism), *Chitta*, *Buddhi* and *Manas*. When *Ahamkara* is destroyed, the *Chitta* (Heart) becomes purified. A pure *Chitta* imparts illumination to the *Buddhi* (intelligence or discriminating power). When the *Buddhi* is illumined the mind becomes pure. And only a pure mind can control the sense organs and direct them in the right path.

Characteristic of a truly cultured person

The ego may be inflated by any number of things. It may be wealth, knowledge, power, position, beauty or intelligence. Such self-conceit is invariably associated with bad traits. It indicates the dominance of the sense organs over one's mind. Many are likely to feel proud about their knowledge or intellectual ability. But knowledge and intelligence without character and good conduct have no value. Learning by rote what is contained in books, without fully understanding their meaning or putting the knowledge to practical use, is a futile verbal exercise. Information from

books and intellectual ability do not constitute culture. A truly cultured person is one who understands what he studies and makes proper use of that knowledge.

As regards the knowledge of the *mudras* referred to earlier, some may try to practise them. There is nothing wrong in doing so. The three *mudras* - *Khechari Mudra*, *Shanmukha Mudra* and *Sambhavi Mudra*---are of immense value in developing control of the mind. The practice of these *mudras* is closely related to the awakening of the *shadchakras* (the six centres) in the spinal column.

Develop self-reliance to face problems of life

The quintessence of the teachings of the Upanishads, the Gita and Vedanta is control of the mind. The first step in the process is developing faith in God. Without genuine and deep faith in God, it is utterly useless to master all the 700 slokas in the Gita. It is simply a burden on the memory.

Reciting the *Vedas* or ritual reading of the *puranas* dozens of times may be mental gymnastics, but are of little spiritual value. Reading or listening to stories about *rishis* and 'sages with superficial interest is valueless. It is only when they are studied with faith and earnestness that they can have an effect on our thoughts and actions. They will then cease to be mere stories and become sources of inspiration and solace for transforming our lives.

Students! You must develop self-reliance to face the problems of life with ability and fortitude. You must discharge your duties with devotion. You must draw the right lessons from the stories of the epics *and the puranas*.

Even as while eating you reject bad food, you must reject bad thoughts and take in only good wholesome thoughts in the mind. Do not bear any ill-will towards those who may have done some harm to you. By returning evil for evil, how are you better than the other person? It is only when you do good even to the person that causes harm to you that you can show your better nature.

Be good, do good, see good--this is the way to Sai!

Discourse at the Institute Auditorium on 31-7-1986.

The fruit comes from the tree. But can the tree know the nature of the fruit? When two sticks are rubbed against each other, fire emerges. But do the sticks know that the fire is latent in them? Likewise, The Divine is latent in man. It is through the process of enquiry and sadhana that man can discover the divine in him. It is like churning buttermilk to get the butter in it Through spiritual discipline and pure love, man should manifest his divinity. The true nature of Bhakti will then be clear.

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