

14. The human chariot

DEAR *Students!* *Man* is a combination of body, mind *and Atma*. The three together help man to reach the highest stage. The body is the instrument for actions. The mind is the means of cognition. The changeless and permanent Reality is the *Atma*. This is the divinity in man.

Doing, awareness and being are the three important aspects of man. Body, mind and *Atma* have different names and characteristics, but it is their joint role which helps man to divinise himself. Their alienation from each other degrades man to the animal level.

Antahkarana is used both in common speech and in spiritual parlance. What is its form, its nature, its special quality, and what is its purpose? When we enquire along these lines, we find that the mind itself takes the subtle form of *Antahkarana* (the inner activator). The mind

assumes four forms: *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta* and *Ahamkara*. (mind, intelligence, memory and ego). *Buddhi*, *Chitta* and *Ahamkara* are three subtle forms of the mind. According to the function that is performed, the particular name is given. The same Brahmin, when he is performing in a temple, is called a priestly *poojari* (Brahmin); when he is working in the kitchen, he is called a Brahmin cook; when teaching students, he is called a Brahmin teacher, and when interpreting the *Panchanga* (almanac) he is called a *Panchanga brahmin*.

In the same manner when the mind is engaged in thought processes, it is called *Manas*. When it is engaged in the process of enquiry and discrimination between right and wrong, it is called *Buddhi* (intelligence). The third name is *Chitta*, the will or the decision-making agency. It has the function of memory. When the mind identifies itself with the body in action it is called *Ahamkara* (I-am-the-doer).

Mind, thoughts and actions

The mind, although one, displays these varied forms on account of the different roles it assumes. The mind is the cause of all things. The whole cosmos is a projection of the mind. "*Manomoolam idam Jagat*" (The mind is at the root of the cosmos).

Man derives his name from the possession of the mind. "*Yad bhaavam tad bhavati*" (As a man thinks so he becomes). Man means mind and mind means man. What is the mind? It is a bundle of thoughts. The good and bad things in the world are dependent on man's actions. What we enjoy or suffer in this world are the consequences of these actions. What is the impulse for these actions? Thoughts. It follows that only when man's thoughts are good, his life will be good.

Thoughts are highly potent. They survive the death of a man. Hence it is essential to keep out bad thoughts from our minds. It is bad thoughts which separate man from man and make them forget their common divinity. When men realise that the Spirit in everyone is one and the same, there will be no room for differences.

Proceeding from the individual, man gets related to society, the nation and the world. The peace of the world depends on the individual. The individual as well as the world are based on the mind. Hence the need for proper disciplining of the mind. Like a fish swimming against the current and saving itself from dangers, man should combat the evil thoughts within and protect himself from dangers.

Different colours that attribute the mind

Man today is bringing all troubles upon himself by his thoughts. No one else is to blame for his condition. The mind is the source of all thoughts and because different persons have different thoughts, there are differences amongst them. Because of these differences, different colours are attributed to the mind.

For instance, the mind that is filled with anger is red in colour. A selfish mind is brownish. An egoistic mind is of the orange hue. The mind dedicated to God is pure white. We stain the mind with different colours. They do not come from outside. It is each one's thoughts which impart a particular colour to his mind. Hence it is only when the mind is filled with good thoughts that one's life can be peaceful and safe. Today the world is riddled with fear. Whether you are at home or out in the streets, you are haunted by fear. The root cause for this ubiquitous fear is the absence of pure and sacred thoughts in the mind. The whole world is a maze filled

with fear at every turn. You know how to enter the *Padmavyuha* (maze) but you do not know how to get out of it. This was the tragedy of Abhimanyu. You know how to enter the maze of worldly pleasures but you do not know how to get out of it. You will know the way out only when you submit your thoughts to the scrutiny of the *Buddhi* (intelligence).

The mind and intelligence

In the *Kathopanishad*, the body is compared to a chariot, the senses to horses, the mind to the reins and the *Buddhi* to the charioteer. What is the role of the mind in this analogy? The reins (mind) are between the horses and the charioteer. This means that the mind is between the senses and the *Buddhi*. If the mind follows the dictates of the *Buddhi*, it will be safe. If it gives free rein to the senses, it will be a bond-slave of the senses and as a result experiences sorrow.

Allowing the senses free rein is the *Pravritti Marga* (the external path). Controlling the senses is the *Nivritti Marga* (the internal path). Most people are content to pursue the external. Few are concerned to explore the internal.

In the *Upanishad* analogy it must be noted that unless the *Buddhi* (charioteer) holds the reins (the mind), the chariot cannot be managed properly. If the senses (the horses) are given free rein, the chariot will be in trouble and everyone in it will be in trouble. What is happening today is the misuse of the body and violence to the *Atma*.

Most people today are engaged in causing harm to others. Even if they succeed in this, they do not realise that the ill they do will come back to them many-fold. An outstanding example is found in the *Mahabharata*. Duryodhana and Dussasana subjected the high-minded Pandavas to innumerable hardships. What was their fate ultimately? They were utterly destroyed.

Whatever evil you do will recoil on you

Students! Don't think of doing harm to others. Whatever evil you do will recoil on you sooner or later. There are some persons who cavil not only at other men, but even against God. This seems to be natural to them. In fact God has done them no harm. Yet they revile against God. It is the nature of some evil-minded persons to do harm even to those who have done them no harm. Students should totally avoid bad company, because bad traits are contagious. Cultivate the company of the good.

Remember that when one is born he comes with a garland given by the Creator--the garland of the fruits of good and bad actions done by him in previous lives. Engage yourselves always in good thoughts and good actions. Be grateful to God for all that He has given you.

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