

25. Sacred use of *Indhriyas*

IN THE pursuit of sensory pleasures man forgets his Divine origin. Man can redeem his life only when he understands wherefrom he has come, what is his role in life and what is his destination.

The first thing man has to learn is the role of *Indhriyas* (sense organs). The sense organs are termed *Maathras*, meaning measuring instruments. For instance, the tongue measures the taste of what it eats. The eyes evaluate the form of what it sees. It will notice that a man with a fair face has a snub nose. The senses recognise the differences among various objects in terms of size, quality, etc. The senses have also another function to discharge. They indicate to man the limits to which sensory objects should be used or enjoyed. As the senses are God-given gifts, abuse of the senses by excesses will not only mean transgressing the divinely ordained limits, but will also lead to many harmful consequences. Hence everyone has to adhere to the appropriate limits prescribed for the use of the senses.

For instance, take the case of nostrils. They are to be used for breathing purposes and for smelling objects and discarding foul-smelling objects. The respiratory process conveys a significant spiritual message when air is inhaled and exhaled. The message is contained in the *mantra So-ham*, which is also known as *Hamsa gaayathri*. (Svaami demonstrated how during inhalation the sound "So..." is produced and how "ham" is produced when air is exhaled.) *So Ham* conveys the message of identity between God--"SO" and the individual *Aham*. This *mantra* contains the essence of *Adhvaitha* (non-dualism). What happens when the nose that is to be used for such sacred purposes is used for raking snuff? it is not merely abuse of the nose, but is the cause of various respiratory diseases. Most ailments are the result of misuse of the sense organs for improper purposes.

Recognise the proper role of the sense organs

Jayadheva rebuked men for not using the God-given tongue for chanting the sweet and sacred name of the Lord. The tongue should be engaged only in speaking the truth, in speaking sweetly and in consuming what is pleasant and wholesome for the body. Man degrades himself by consuming intoxicating drinks and non-vegetarian food and by indulging in smoking. These noxious habits affect the brain also.

Saint Suurdaas lamented on the behaviour of people who would not listen to the hymns of praise of God with their God-given ears or gaze on the beautiful form of the Lord in their God-given sight. Persons going on the road should concentrate on the road and not allow their eyes to stray on the wall posters and shop windows.

It is necessary that everyone should recognise the proper role of the sense organs and use them properly.

In this context it may be noted that different animals are victims to different kinds of sensory experiences. Deer are a prey to sound---the roar of a lion or other wild animal. The elephant is afraid of the touch of the mahout's goad. Insects are attracted by light or a flame and lose their lives. Fish are lured by the taste of the worm attached to the angler's hook.

It is a pity that man who possesses all the five senses of perception (sound, touch, sight, taste and smell) is a bond-slave to all of them. Thereby he forgets his freedom.

The senses should be used for sacred purposes

How, then, can man experience real happiness? Only by turning his senses towards God. Man has five senses of perception and five senses of action. The master for all these ten senses is the mind. The ten senses are like ten wives pulling the mind in different directions. It is difficult for the mind to control the senses.

Man should realise that all pleasures derived from submission to the senses are momentary and leave a trail of suffering behind. He should realise that the senses are to be utilised for sacred purposes and the practice of human values. Only then he will understand the true purpose of human existence. The senses are gifted by God for humans to lead ideal lives. See good, think good thoughts, speak sweet words and listen to what is good. Be good and do good.

A young student who spoke earlier referred to Svaami's advice to all of them to "Speak less and work more." The ancient Indian Sages practised silence as a spiritual discipline because they realised the myriad benefits derived from *Mounam* (silence). Svaami Vivekanandha learnt a valuable lesson when he found that after ten days of endless talk he had forgotten all the *shlokas* he had learnt by heart. By practising complete silence for a fortnight he got back his memory powers.

People should realise that God's grace is secured by the sacred use of the senses endowed on man by the Divine.

Man is enveloped by five *Koshas* (sheaths)---*Annamaya*, *Praanamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vijnaanamaya* and *Aanandhamaya* (food, life-breath, mentation, awareness and bliss). Modern man has been able to progress only up to the *Manomaya* stage. He must strive to go beyond the mind up to the stage of bliss.

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You wear coloured glasses. Correct your vision; the world will be corrected. Reform yourselves; the world will be reformed. You create the world of your choice. You see many, because you seek the many, not the One. Try to subsume the many in the One: the physical bodies of yourself and others, the family, the village, the community, the state, the nation, the world. Thus, you will progressively march on towards more and more inclusive of loyalties and reach the stage of unity in thought, word and deed.

Baba