

14. Young Persons Should Have Full Control Over The Tongue

If one is able to control his senses, even if he is a blind person, he will reach the destination of moksha or attain liberation. On the other hand, if one's senses are not controlled, even if he is the best of men, he will not be able to reach the divine destination.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

You must learn to use the elements of nature properly in order to promote the well-being of man. Although everything in the world is God's creation, we must cultivate the wisdom to make proper use of things. Our sense organs, for instance, have also to be used in the correct manner. Each particular organ

has a distinctive feature. Amongst them, the one that tastes, namely the tongue, is a very important one. It is imperative that we keep it in check. Sometimes to satisfy our pallet we consume all types of food, not knowing that through it bad qualities like lust, anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and selfishness grow in us. Many of the different foods that we eat change, in the gross appearance at least, into waste matter which is not of any value and get excreted. In a subtle way, the same food is changing into our blood and muscle.

Even more subtle parts of this food will appear as our mind. Therefore, either for the distortions in our mind or for the sacred thoughts that generate therefrom, the food that we take is mainly responsible. Therefore, good qualities like peace, forbearance, love and attachment to truth can only be promoted by taking good food. Indian culture, as contained in the *Vedas*, advises us that control of our sensory organs and living on *sathwic* and good food are the paths for realisation of the self and liberation thereof. This is the reason why from time immemorial, in our Indian traditions, the *rishis* ate *sathwic* food and drank clear flowing water. They kept their minds perfectly clean, and this is how they were able to understand the divine spirit. You should make an attempt to control your tongue when you are young. If, in this age, you do not control your tongue and all other sensory organs, you will have to face many difficulties in your later life.

The prosperity of a Nation does not descend from the sky nor does it emerge of its own accord from the earth. It depends upon the conduct of the people who constitute the Nation. We should recognise that the country does not mean just the lifeless soil around us. The country consists of a conglomeration of people and it is what they make of it. To rectify the world and put it on the proper path, we have to first rectify ourselves and our conduct. If at an advanced age, you try and control your desires and senses, you may or may not win God's grace. On the other hand, if at this young age, you control your organs, there is no doubt whatsoever that you will gain God's grace. There is a small example for this. If you go early in the morning to a restaurant and book your table, you will surely get your meal at whatever time you go there later. On the other hand, if you go at lunch time and ask for food, you may be told that there is no food for you that day.

By reading many books and by developing an argumentative tendency, it is quite common today for young people to get into argument with others. Once a young man aged twenty-two years went to Sankara. When Sankara was giving spiritual lessons to his disciples, he interrupted and asked Sankara if all human beings in this wide world should not be regarded as equal since the same kind of blood flows in all of them. Sankara smiled at this young man and said that the blood flowing in that youngster is hot and fast and so he was

trying to push things too far. It is not possible for man to distinguish between permanent and impermanent things. One can adopt the notion of non-duality or *Advaita* in one's own thoughts and attitudes, but it is not possible to equate everything in the world in practice. The young man insisted that this does not seem right. He stated that to him, the proper thing appeared to be to treat all living things in the same manner. Sankara recognised that if this young man was allowed to go on in this strain, he is likely to reach some absurd conclusions.

Sankara decided at once to teach him a lesson and immediately asked him if he had a mother. The young man replied that he had a mother who was alive and that he respected her very much. He again asked if the young man was married. The young man replied that he was married and that his wife had come with him to the *ashram*. Sankara then asked him if he had a mother-in-law. The young man replied that the mother-in-law was quite hale and healthy. Sankara again asked if he had any sisters and the young man replied in the affirmative and said that he had two sisters. Sankara asked if all these people were women. The young man asked how it should be otherwise. Sankara asked if he regarded all of them as equal and treated all these people in the same manner and in particular, whether he was treating his mother as his wife and his wife as his mother.

In this world of multiplicity, one has to recognise qualitative and quantitative difference. Each electric bulb

is of varying power and wattage. Therefore, the difference in the light radiating from the bulb is due to the difference in the bulbs and not due to the electric current. The current is the same everywhere, but the difference arises from the bulbs with different intensities. God's power is like electric power and our bodies are like the bulbs. The light within will be visible to the extent to which we have faith. There is an enormous amount of water in the ocean but the water which you can take out will depend on the size of the pot which you take with you. Similarly by controlling our sensory organs, it is possible to expand our heart. If you become subservient to the organs, the heart will contract.

There is a small example for this. If we have a balloon and we blow in air, the balloon becomes larger and larger. As the air is blown into the balloon, it increases in size, and when it ultimately bursts, the balloon will lose its form and will merge with the infinity of air around it. As we put more air of faith in the balloon of our heart, it will become large and merge with *Atma*, which is omnipresent. This process is called one of merging or reaching the final destination. If in this balloon of our heart, there is no air in the form of faith, the heart cannot expand and it will remain flat and will never have a chance to merge with the divine.

Therefore, if we can develop self-confidence and then attempt to control our sensory organs, we can spend our lives in the proximity of divinity and

ultimately merge in divinity.

In our body, all the other organs are controlled by the tongue. If only we can control our pallet and avoid excessive eating, excessive talking and refrain from using words which ought not to be uttered, our health will improve, and we can have peace of mind. This is why Sankara taught a very good lesson to the tongue by asking that it should become sacred and utter only sweet and divine words like Govinda, Damodara, Madhava, and so on.

We should not cater to the tastes of the pallet unreasonably. If we feel hungry, we should just take good food in a reasonable quantity to relieve the hunger. We should train ourselves in such a manner that our desire to satiate the pallet diminishes. In the same manner, if you desire to abuse others, restrain yourself from using bad words for a long time thereafter. If you treat the tongue in this manner, the tongue will realise that you are not willing to give it what it wants. If it becomes necessary to utter some words, you must first ask yourself if the words are sacred and then only utter them. It is very much necessary for young people to get control over the words they utter, if they wish to avoid harm from the tongue.

I have mentioned to you several times that the patience which the tongue shows is not shown by any other organ. If we turn this tongue into a path which is

not sacred, we will be turning our life itself into a path which is not sacred. The care and forbearance, for instance, with which this tongue moves amidst the teeth is remarkable. The teeth are like sharp knives all round and if we understand how the tongue moves amidst them, we will then understand the forbearance which the tongue shows. If the tongue is even slightly careless and gets under one or other of the teeth, immediate harm is done. In the same manner, we should lead a life which does not get any harm from the enemies who might be surrounding us.

If we want to know also the sacrifice which the tongue exhibits, we have to realise that when we put some good tasty food on the tongue it only recognises the taste and immediately passes it on to the stomach for further digestion, but it does not keep it for itself. On the other hand, if we give bad food which does not taste well, the tongue immediately throws it out of the mouth.

If we again take the aspect of respect, we can see that the tongue deserves great respect. It moves about in its own house and is not like a dog which goes and uses others' houses unnecessarily. Because of the great respect which the tongue commands, it gets a good name for the owner. By using sweet words, he gets to be liked by all. If the tongue only abuses and always talks ill of others, the individual gets such disrespect that people will call him an animal. So, either for our getting a good name or bad name, the main cause is the tongue.

When a crow comes and perches on the top of

our house, we take a stone and pelt at it. On the other hand, if a cuckoo comes on the roof and sings, we will listen to its songs with great pleasure. We hate the crow and like the cuckoo, not because the cuckoo has done something good to us and the crow, something bad, but since the cuckoo has a good voice while the crow has a bad tongue. Therefore, this sacred tongue should be used for the purpose of uttering sweet words. By uttering sweet words, we should be able to turn others also in the society into good ways. In this manner, you should spend the years of your youth by uttering sacred words and speaking about good things. This is what I expect you to do. By exhorting you to take this lesson and spread the same to the world, I am bringing this discourse to a close.