

VAGARIES OF THE MIND

It is the mind that matters, wherever one may be,
 Neither home nor forest can give you liberation;
 It makes no difference—whether you are in the temple or forest,
 As long as the mind is not up to the mark.

Dear students!

“The universe is like the reflection of a city in a mirror,” declared Dakshinamurthy. What man has to achieve primarily is the purification and final annihilation of the *anth karana* (inner instrument) not so much the *purusharthas*, viz., *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (fulfillment of desires), and *moksha* (liberation). The whole world along with its joys and sorrows, vices and virtues, truth and untruth, justice and injustice etc. is in the mind only.

The mind is like a clean mirror. It has no intrinsic power of its own to directly experience the sense objects except through the concerned sense organs. For instance, it can see only through the eyes and hear only through the ears but can neither see nor hear by itself independently. Consequently, the offences committed by the senses are reflected in the mirror of mind. No blame attaches to the mind *per se*. It is the association with the wayward senses that pollutes the mind. According to the Scriptures, the mind is subject to three kinds of pollution: *mala*, *vikshepa*, and *avarana*.

What is *mala*? Man commits many offences, knowingly or unknowingly, not only in this life but also in previous lives. The imprint of these actions is carried by the *chitta* (memory), life after life, like dust accumulating on the surface of a mirror day after day. Thus, the mirror of man’s mind gets covered up by such dirt, which is technically named as “*mala*”. On account of this *mala*, man is unable to see clearly the reflection of his real identity in the mirror of his mind. Hence, it is necessary to cleanse the mirror of the impurities covering it. This cleansing is done by regulating one’s food and other living habits, including recreation. Young students particularly should strictly avoid eating impure food. Purity should be ensured with regard to the vessels used for cooking (*patra suddhi*), the food materials used for cooking (*padaartha suddhi*), and thirdly, the process of cooking (*paaka suddhi*). In this connection, an important point which is generally overlooked is the fact that many of the ills from which people suffer today are due to consuming things obtained through unfair means as well as polluted by the bad vibrations from cooks of questionable character. It is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, especially in the present day context, to ensure such purity in all these respects and at all times. To get over these practical difficulties, the way out suggested by the scriptures is to offer the food to God before eating it, duly regarding it as God’s gift. To the question, “Where is God?” the answer is given in verse 14 of Chapter 15 of the Gita—“*Aham Vaiswanaro bhutva*” etc.—which declares that the Lord dwells in every one as *vaiswanara* (the digestive fire and digests the different kinds of food that is consumed). If you eat food without first offering it to God, you will be affected by all the impurities and defects present in it. On the contrary, if you offer the food to the Lord before eating, as suggested in verse 24 of Chapter 4 of the Gita “*Brahmaarpanam*” etc., it becomes *prasada* (gift from God), and consequently all the impurities in the food are thereby eliminated.

This helps the process of gradually cleansing the mind of its impurity or dirt called Mala. It should, however, be borne in mind that the complete removal of *mala* cannot be done in a day or a month. This requires persistent and prolonged practice. If raw gold or ore is to be converted into pure gold, it has to be melted on fire repeatedly to remove the impurities. So also the impurity of man's mind, called "*mala*", can be eliminated only by constant practice over a period of time.

The second distortion of the mind, called *vikshepa*, is due to the constant wavering of the mind, like the movements of the reflected image in a mirror that is kept moving or shaking frequently. To control this waywardness of the mind, one should undertake various spiritual practices like meditation, prayer and the nine modes of devotion mentioned in the scriptures, viz., (1) *sravanam* (listening to the Lord's stories, *leelas*, and *mahima*), (2) *kirtanam* (singing His glories), (3) *smaranam* (remembrance), (4) *Pada sevanam* (service to the Lotus Feet), (5) *archanam* (worship), (6) *vandanam* (salutation), (7) *daasyam* (master-servant relationship), (8) *sakhyam* (companionship), and (9) *Atma nivedanam* (offering oneself to the Lord i.e., Self-surrender).

If the young students of today, who will be the leaders of Bharath tomorrow, cannot control the fickleness of their minds and cleanse the impurities thereof, the future administration and politics of the country cannot but be deplorably impure and corrupt. Students should realise that education is for life but not for making out a livelihood. They should strain their every nerve to acquire steadiness of mind, which is a prerequisite for concentration. For this, you should bend the body, mend the senses, and end the mind and this is the process of attaining immortality. If you want to be masters and not slaves, you should keep your body, senses and mind under your control.

Why is the country today torn by strife, indiscipline, violence, and chaos? Because people, both young and old, are preoccupied with external material things, totally ignoring the spirit within. The entire educational system is riddled with selfishness. Educated persons want to amass wealth quickly by any means, fair or foul, hook or crook. It is the same motive that is impelling many students to go abroad and acquire money for selfish ends, without any regard for their parents or their motherland. Such self-centred intellectuals, who suffer from the craze to go abroad, should remember the declaration of the Scriptures that "one's mother and motherland are much superior even to heaven." They should give up their obsession for acquiring wealth and realise that real wealth consists in leading virtuous lives coupled with love and service to the land of their birth. Your foremost duty is to show gratitude to your parents to whom you owe everything including your food, blood, and head. You have to take care of them, especially in their old age. If you discharge your duties properly and lead your lives on these lines which broaden and purify your minds and hearts, your mind will automatically become free from the distortion of *vikshepas* and you will acquire steadiness and concentration of mind without the need for any other spiritual disciplines.

Now, we come to the third distortion of the mind: *avarana*. This may be likened to a thick cloth covering the mirror of man's mind, which does not at all permit of any reflection whatsoever of the image of the Self. Thus, while *mala* does not enable us to have a clear and correct image of the Self, and while *vikshepa* results in seeing the Self as wavering, *avarana* altogether hides the Reality (Self) and makes one identify himself wrongly with his body.

Students! Recognise that what you are experiencing as the real world is only the "reaction", "resound", and "reflection" of your "Real Self." Now, the question arises, "What

exactly is the thick cloth that covers the mirror of one's mind"? This cloth is made up of the *arishad-varga*—the gang of six internal enemies of man—viz. *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride), and *maatsarya* (jealousy, envy). Out of the six, pride may be considered as the worst enemy. Pride is of eight kinds: pride of money, learning, caste, affluence, beauty, youth, position or authority, and *tapas* (spiritual pride). If you ponder over two facts you can overcome this enemy namely pride.

Firstly, if you look around instead of being like a frog in the well, you will find that in respect of each of these eight items that cause pride in you, there are many other people who are superior to you. Secondly, all these items—money, authority, youth etc.—are highly transient. Therefore, get rid of pride as well as the other five enemies included in the *arishadvarga*, if you want to remove the *avarana* covering your mind's mirror. The best means to remove this thick cloth of *avarana* is to develop love for all. Love is God. Live in Love.

Love is the only bond that can unite all and make us realise the one Reality behind all the seeming diversity. A simple illustration will make this point clear. You have a candle light. You cover it with a vessel having several holes in it. Although there is one light, you see light through each and every hole, giving the impression of there being several lights. Now, you cover the vessel with a thick cloth. You see no light at all. Next you remove the thick cloth. You see many lights again. Now break or remove the pot. You see the one and only real candle light.

Similarly, the *Atma* inside you is covered by the body having nine holes through which you see the multiplicity and diversity in the world. You have covered this nine-holed body of yours with a thick cloth, which is woven with the warp for woof of "I" or *ahamkara* and "mine" (*mamakara*). When you remove the cloth made up of "I" and "mine", and when you get rid of the wrong identification with the body, the *avarana* of the mind disappears, and you see the light of your Real Self (the *Atma Jyothi*), the only Light (*Eka Jyothi*), dispelling the darkness of the illusory multiplicity.

The mind, the intellect, the memory, and ego, which together constitute the *antha karana* (the inner instrument), are formless, but the external instruments, the sense organs, which are the media through which the *antha karana* perceives the phenomenal world, have forms. The *antha karana* is subject to four kinds of defects, viz., *bhranthi* (delusion), *pramadam* (hazard or danger), *karanaapaatavam* (weakness of the instruments), and *vipralipsa* (jealousy). These four defects result in the malfunctioning of the *antha karana*.

Bhranthi refers to the deluded state of mind in which a person mistakes, for instance, a rope for a snake and vice versa. In other words, he regards the unreal as real and the real as unreal; the temporary as permanent and the permanent as temporary.

Such delusions invariably lead to accidents or dangerous situations (*pramadam*). If you hold a snake thinking it is a rope, you are certainly in for trouble. Man today regards the body as real, not knowing that it is as unreal as a water bubble, which is sure to burst at any time, at any place.

Students! You must carefully note one point. If it is the sense organs that enable a man to see, hear, talk, and so on, how is it that even when all the organs are there intact in a dead person, he is unable to see, hear, talk etc.? It is because the power that animates the organs is not there. The body may be compared to a torch light. The eyes are like the bulbs. The intellect is the switch. If with all these, you don't get light, what could be the

reason? Obviously there are no battery cells inside. The blood cells in our body are like those battery cells. They carry the divine energy in them. The blood cells may be there, but if the divine power has left them, they can no longer make the senses function. So it is clear that in the presence of the divine power the body can do many wonders; in its absence, the body becomes not only inert, but also decomposed and rotten.

Once a *Vedantin* came to Me and asked, “Swami! Sankaracharya has said that Brahman alone is real and the world is illusory. But we are directly perceiving the world as substantial and deriving so many experiences from it. How can we deny its existence?” I told him, “My dear one! Leave to the world itself the question of its reality or unreality. First of all, find out whether you are real or unreal.” Like that *Vedantin*, the students of today also want to learn about everything else but not about their own reality. You seem to be more concerned with the “news” outside than the “nuisance” inside you. First get rid of this nuisance of your ignorance; realise your true nature. Reform yourself first, before thinking of reforming others. Otherwise your *bhrama* (delusion) will land you in *pramadam* (danger).

The third defect of the mind, *karana apaatavam*, means weakness or debility of the instruments. This weakness affects both the inner instrument (*antha karana*) and the external instruments (the sense organs.) Here is a small story to illustrate the weakness of *antha karana*. There was a rich farmer in a village. He was the undisputed leader of the village. There was another middle-class farmer in the same village. One day, the cattle belonging to both these farmers were grazing together. Unexpectedly there started a fierce fighting between the two bullocks, one belonging to the rich farmer and the other to the middle-class farmer. During the fight, the rich man’s bullock died due to the injury to some vital and vulnerable part of its body. Now, the middle-class farmer who was there at that time became deeply worried. He ran to the village to inform the rich farmer about the fatal accident to the latter’s bullock. But due to the highly nervous and confused state of his mind, he was trembling with fear, and he told the rich farmer that the latter’s bullock had killed the bullock of the farmer; i.e. the opposite of what actually happened. The rich farmer very calmly received the news. He consoled the small farmer, saying that, when human beings endowed with intelligence are killing each other, there is no wonder if the rich farmer’s bullock has killed the small farmer’s bullock, because after all the animals are devoid of any intelligence; in the meanwhile, the small farmer realised his mistake in giving a wrong report and told the rich man, “Respected Sir, I have unwittingly committed a blunder by giving a wrong version of the accident. I am very sorry to tell you that it is my bullock that has killed your bullock.” On hearing this, the rich man was beside himself with anger. He rebuked and abused the small farmer in very strong terms and demanded from him a penalty of five hundred rupees. This story betrays the *karana-apaatavam* in respect of the rich man’s *antha karana*, which obviously was weak because of its inconsistent behaviour based on the feeling of “I” and “mine” as opposed to the “other” man.

Now, let us consider some examples of *karana-apaatvam* relating to the external instruments, the sense organs. When a person is suffering from malarial fever, even *laddu* (delicious sweet) will taste bitter. This is due to the diseased condition of the tongue but not due to any defect in *laddu*. Similarly, a jaundiced eye will see everything as yellow, irrespective of whether the actual colour is white, red or black etc. It must, however, be noted that the ailments of the external instruments have an adverse effect on the internal

instruments, because of their relatedness. Anyway, the net effect of *karana-apaatvam* as a whole is to undermine *maanavatwa* (human nature).

The fourth deficiency of the *antha karana* is “*vipralipsa*”, which means jealousy or envy. It is one of the worst qualities of man. He cannot endure or tolerate the prosperity or happiness of others. There is no cure for this disease. Feel happy when others are happy. Do not give room for envy. Develop fraternal feelings towards your fellow students. Rejoice in their curricular and extra-curricular achievements, without any feeling of envy. The reason for envy is selfishness, which is rampant nowadays both among the students and non-students. For instance, able-bodied students rush in and occupy the front seats in buses, even pushing aside the old people, women, and children who are standing in a long queue. Why don't you give preference to such people? Even if you don't get a seat in the bus, you can afford to walk a mile or two, thereby deriving the double benefit of saving the bus fare and giving much needed exercise to your body.

Students! All that you have to do to achieve purity in thought, word, and deed is to follow these five injunctions

Think no evil; think what is good.
 See no evil; see what is good.
 Hear no evil; hear what is good.
 Talk no evil; talk what is good.
 Do no evil; do what is good.

When you adhere to these five injunctions as the very breath of your life, you will be able to overcome all four defects of the *antha karana* and achieve purity of mind and the other three components of the *antha karana*, and thereby experience ineffable bliss.

Students! You are aware that water is stored in tanks during the rainy season and is used later on during summer to irrigate the agricultural lands. Similarly, from this moment you should cultivate control of the body, the senses, and the *antha karana*, because now you have the vigour and vitality of youth. Acquire God's Grace in abundance now, when the time is opportune. It will stand you in good stead in your future, which will then be bright, secure and prosperous. Also remember that God will never forget His devotees. It is the devotees who forget God. God never forsakes His devotees; only the devotees forsake God.

Students! The body, the mind, and the senses are like water taps, while the intellect is like the water tank. As the water in the tank, so is the water in the taps. So, in the days ahead, we shall be discussing about this important faculty of *buddhi* (intellect).