

Chapter XI. Liberation: the Goal of Meditation

The beneficent and maleficent impulses

The fulfilment of life consists in the realisation of the *Atma* (*Atma-sakshatkara*). To get this realisation, one should be entirely free from impulses (*vasanas*). Liberation (*moksha*) is, in the true sense of the term, liberation from the bondage of these impulses. These tendencies are of two types: beneficent and maleficent. The beneficent tendencies are saturated with holiness; the maleficent ones feed the mind and make it more and more uncontrollable and unsteady; they spread and strengthen the desire for objective pleasure.

If the beneficent impulses (*subha vasanas*) are encouraged and cultivated, they will not go on multiplying and binding the mind indefinitely; they become fried seeds, which will not sprout. If you stick to the beneficent impulses, you can easily acquire knowledge of Brahman (*Brahma-jnana*). These impulses are characterised by such activities as association with great souls (*mahatmas*), reverence for the great, conversation with them, following their advice, charity, fortitude, love, patience, truth, courage, continence, etc. These are the pure impulses.

The impure tendencies lead one to such vices as craving to see things that cater to the lower desires (like cinema pictures); eating dishes that are full of passion (*rajas*), like fish and flesh; drinking intoxicants that ruin one's personality by developing anger, delusion, greed, conceit, deceit, hatred, envy, etc.

Such impure tendencies are of three types: Worldly impulses, scholarly or intellectual impulses, and physical or bodily impulses. The physical impulses make men desire a beautiful physique, a strong sturdy build, a glossy skin that will never be disfigured by wrinkles, and round hard muscles. The scholarly impulses prompt one to crave being known as an unrivaled expert and to crave the defeat of every competitor in the field. And lastly, the worldly impulses make one crave glory, power, personal authority, and pomp. All such desires can be grouped under this head. They are all impulses. They bind you to the wheel of birth and death (*samsara*) and tie you down to this Earth.

Destroy ignorance

The giant tree called mind has two seeds, impulse (*vasana*) and breath (*prana*). The seed becomes the tree, the tree yields the seed. The breath moves because of the impulses; the impulses operate because of the breath. If one of these is destroyed, so is the other. So, if the mind has to be free from their influence, ignorance (*a-jnana*) has to be transformed first.

Ignorance does not exist alone; it has an offspring: selfishness (*ahamkara*). That demon (*asura*) has two children, attachment or attraction (*raga*) and impulse (*vasana*); that is to say passion and craving. Passion and craving are closely interrelated. As the passion, so the desire. They are sisters.

Through attachment, one gets the feelings of my and mine, the feelings provoke desire, and desires breed worry. Therefore, to remove ego (*ahamkara*), attachment and impulse have to be annihilated. That means ignorance has to go, for by that means alone can ego be killed.

How to destroy ignorance and develop wisdom (*sujnana*)? That is the question! The answer is through meditation. The conquest of ignorance, ego, attachment, and impulse brings about liberation (*moksha*) for the

individual (*jivi*).

Uproot the impulses that make up the mind, and the mind is no more

The one who is a slave to impulses and tendencies (*vasanas*) is devoid of wisdom (*jnana*). That one is, in truth, a weakling! But let me assure you that there is no cause for alarm. As soon as impulses are uprooted, that person can earn back the divine nature that was lost by neglect.

The impulses invade the realm of the heart; they cause endless trouble. They remind you of pleasures, agitating the memory of past experiences, and you start craving them again. The cravings make the senses and their leader, the mind (*manas*), engage in brisk activities; there is no escape for you from this. So you attempt to collect and enjoy the things that you crave. All this takes place in the twinkling of an eye, so to say.

The impulses operate so subtly and so powerfully. Just as the seed contains within itself the trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits, so too, all this lies dormant in the impulse. The impulses are the cause of all the objective unhappiness. If they are absent, the mind is pellucid and pure. If they are present, all purity is ruined; they are obstacles in the path of truth, of *Atma*, and of immortality. A mind free from impulse is transmuted and is no longer mind.

Nature (*prakriti*) is the world of impulses (*vasanas*). The mind is attracted toward nature and the external objects of the world by means of this tendency for attachment and starts contemplating on the objects and dwelling on their qualities because of these impulses. Without impulses, the mind will not be affected at all by the objective world. The mind is like a piece of cloth; it takes on any colour with which it is dyed. Pure (*sathwic*) impulses make it white, restless (*rajasic*) ones change it into red, while ignorant (*thamasic*) ones give it a black colour. The mind is shaped by the type of impulses with which it is filled. One has to undertake meditation and concentration (*dharana*) in order to destroy these impulses. The mind is but a bundle of impulses.

Success in meditation from uprooting impulses

Some aspirants say to themselves that in spite of many years of steady practice, they have yet to acquire success in meditation and concentration. The reason is easy to point out: they have not been able to uproot the impulses (*vasanas*)! Therefore, such practitioners must strive to conquer their innate tendencies. They must fortify themselves with greater faith, and act.

The aspirant who is disturbed now and then by impure impulses must overcome them by will power and spiritual exercises. The liberated soul (*jivan-muktha*) has burned out impulses, but the householder (*grihastha*) is cultivating them. There is no profit in simply controlling them; a cobra becomes harmless only when its fangs are plucked out; similarly, their roots must be burned. Then only can the aspirant attain the Brahman.

Of course, even pure desires are a bond. But they are not hindrances, however many they may be. A thorn is removed by another and both are thrown out afterward, right? So also, when impure impulses are overcome through the influence of pure impulses, one has to outgrow both. This means that even the purest of impulses, the craving for liberation (*moksha*), has to disappear in time. Only then can you become That. A shackle is a shackle, whether it be of iron or gold. One has to be free from both. That is to say, one should attain a stage when neither good nor bad will attract or repel.

Anyone aiming at the realisation of God should practise the diminishing of impulses, the curbing of the

mind, and the understanding of the fundamental principle. One of these is not enough for liberation (*moksha*). In the liberated soul (*jivanmuktha*), impulses persist, but only as fried seeds. They will not cause further births.

The Atma is free of everything

See, the subtle body is the seat of ignorance (*a-jnani*). It is saturated with impulses and traditions and experiences. The *Atma* is free from all these. It is ever pure. It belongs to neither sex and has no mind, no senses, no form. Not only that; It has no breath (*prana*), even! It cannot be said to be alive or dead. How can contemplation on such an *Atma* be anything other than pure? How can light and darkness coexist? How can purity and impurity coexist?

Of all the workshops in the world, the workshop of the body is the most wonderful, because it is the tabernacle of the Lord. In such a factory, the impulses are sublimated into vows, the impurities are weeded out, beneficent desires are shaped, and good imaginings are brought about. The main aim is the uprooting of impulse, though this is a difficult task.

Mountains can be swept away sooner than these deep-rooted impulses (*vasanas*). But with will power and zest, supported by faith, they can be overcome in a short time. Just do not give up your determination and faith, whatever the loss, hardship, or obstacle. Remember, the impulses overpower you and keep you down as their slave. Opium and brandy enslave you and hold you in their full grip only for some time, but impulses grip you for a whole lifetime! The entire meaning and purpose of meditation is to attain freedom from these mighty and manifold impulses.