

## Chapter XIV. Remove Defects in Character

**B**ut you should avoid the difficult obstacles in the path of meditation, viz. anger, pride, conceit, the tendency to discover the faults of others, mischief, etc. These operate even subconsciously, as the currents in the depths of the ocean.

Spiritual aspirants must be vigilant not to lose their temper on even small things, for that will block their progress. They must cultivate love toward all, and meekness. Then, undesirable habits will fall away from them, since anger is the parent of all wrong behaviour. Anger can turn any person into bad ways, any moment, and in any form. So it should be sublimated first by systematic effort.

Spiritual aspirants must welcome gladly the announcement of their defects by anyone; indeed, they must be grateful to those who point them out. Aspirants must never entertain hatred against them, for that is as bad as hating the “good”. The “good” has to be loved and the “bad” discarded. Remember, the “bad” should not be hated. It has to be given up, avoided. Only people who can do this can achieve progress in meditation and spiritual wisdom.

Conceit, jealousy, the passionate (*rajasic*) exhibition of one’s superiority, anger, the craving to inform oneself of the weakness of others and their failings, trickery—all these are obstacles in the path of meditation. Even if these are not patently exhibited, the inner impulses urging one along these wrong directions are latent in the mind.

Just as a room kept closed for a long time is found dust-ridden and foul-smelling, is opened, cleaned, and made habitable by elaborate sweeping and dusting, so the mind has to be cleaned by meditation. Spiritual aspirants must, by inward observation, examine the mind and its contents and condition. By proper disciplinary habits, the accumulated dirt should be removed little by little, systematically. Conceit, for example, is deep-rooted and unyielding. In the passionate (*rajasic*) mind, it puts forth many branches in all directions and spreads everywhere. It might appear to be dry and dead for some time, but it will sprout again, easily. As soon as a chance arises for its exhibition, it will raise its hood. So, spiritual aspirants have to be ever vigilant.

With regard to anger, spiritual aspirants have to be vigilant even about the most minor matters that might provoke them, because if they are careless, they cannot progress in the least. Such people must cultivate a humble, loving spirit. Then the bad traits will disappear. Some aspirants become very angry when someone discovers and announces to them the bad traits they possess. This makes matters worse!

### Eliminate pride

Aspirants must always have the inward look; if they allow the mind to wander outward, they cannot identify their own faults. Pride prevents the inward look and confuses the examination of the mind. When aspirants want to achieve success, they must bow down to those who point out their faults. That is the way to progress quickly and fast in the path of meditation. And they must endeavour not to entertain the faults any longer.

It is hard to get rid of pride and self-love or ego (*ahamkara*), for everyone has been shaping this life from the beginningless period of time! Everyone has been allowing their mind to flow in the direction it likes for ages past, so it is very difficult now to turn it from its accustomed path and bend its steps in another direction.

Individuals full of I (*aham*) love to exercise authority over others. They will not agree with others that it is

“bondage”, for the arguments of others are not advanced by them! They see everything through glasses coloured by the smoke of selfishness and self-love. “My words are true.” “My opinion is correct.” “My deeds are right.” Thus they feel and thus they spend their days. Such behaviour is very harmful for spiritual aspirants. They must look forward eagerly to any helpful criticism or suggestion or advice, from whatever quarter.

Besides, aspirants must minimise all discussion and argumentation, for this breeds a spirit of rivalry and leads one on to angry reprisals and vengeful fighting. Do not struggle to earn the esteem of the world. Do not feel humiliated or angry when the world does not recognise you or your merits. Learn this first and foremost if you are an aspirant for spiritual success. Do not become happy when you are being praised; therein lies a deadly trap, which might even lead you astray and endanger your progress.

Thus, you must reform your mental traits and habits. Cultivate the habit of never causing pain to others. Try to understand others and sympathise with them and do things that will be helpful. Train yourself to take insult and criticism as “decorations” awarded to you. Struggle hard to be friendly with everyone, whatever their nature or conduct. A sense of joy is necessary for meditation and concentration to progress, but many things deprive you of the atmosphere of joy. So you must pray sincerely, in order to be free from such obstacles. The recital or repetition of mantras will be of great help.

### **Follow Krishna’s advice and meditate**

In the third age of humans (the *Dwapara-yuga*), Krishna said,

When you start fixing your thoughts on Me,  
all thoughts that agitate you will be stilled through My grace.

*Mathchiththah sarva dhurgani math-prasaadhaath tharishyathi.*

This discipline of meditation must be rigorously followed. In fact, *dhyana* (meditation) means “discipline”. Discipline, regularity, steadiness —these are the essentials of meditation. A spiritual aspirant who keeps these things in view can achieve quick results. Meditation is a first-class cure for the illness of worldly existence (*bhava-roga*). Along with it, another drug must also be taken; its name is contentment. If there is contentment in the mind, one enjoys an endless festival. Craving makes the mind waver; it is an all-consuming fire that will destroy people slowly and surely.

The royal road to meditation is contentment. Just as a traveller who has trudged along for miles in the scorching sun feels refreshed when taking a bath in the limpid waters of a cool and shady lake, so too the unfortunate individual struggling in the scorching heat of desires feels happy and relieved when bathing in the lake of contentment.

### **The three guards: peace, contentment, discrimination**

At the gates of liberation (*moksha*) and Self-realisation (*sakshatkara*), three guards are posted to ask you for your credentials. They are peace or mental equilibrium, joy or contentment, and inquiry or discrimination (*santhi*, *santhosha*, and *vichara*). Even if one of the guards is made to become friendly, the others will facilitate your entry. First in the series is peace. If you make peace yours, contentment (*thrupthi*) is yours, and contentment is the highest source of joy and the most valuable possession. It is as much as an empire.

Without contentment, desire (*kama*) and greed (*lobha*) attain dangerous proportions and will overwhelm the power of discrimination itself. Desire easily becomes greed, and greed degenerates into miserliness and lust, which make you flit from object to object in mad pursuit of the evanescent sensual joy. How can people with such qualities develop the faculty of concentration? And without the capacity to concentrate, how can they engage in meditation? And without meditation, no one can get Godhead (*Daivam*).

Advise the mind that flows so swiftly in so many directions: “Oh mind, do not drag me along the floods of objects, along the path of sensual desires, and spoil my career. Instead, take me to the Lord. Flow in that direction, please.” Giving up all other desires and being ever content, dwell on His name and His form only, to the exclusion of everything else. Meditation on the name and form is real peace (*santhi*), genuine contentment (*santhosha*).

Contentment will not make anyone an idler, remember. It is an attribute of true pure (*sathwic*) character. It will make the mind turn always toward the Lord. It will save you from the tribulation to satisfy the unimportant wants and to cater to selfish needs. It will direct human talents toward efforts that elevate. The contented person will also be truthful and will therefore be in constant communion with the *Atma*. That is to say, the contented person can be immersed in meditation for long periods without rest or the feeling of tiredness. Meditation is the only method of counteracting the mental activities that surge forward in a thousand directions; there is no other method at all.

### **Be comfortable in all environments**

The capacity to concentrate is a very useful qualification. You must watch the vagaries of your own mind—how it travels, what objects it runs after, etc.—and, slowly, by means of meditation, you should teach it to stay still and to behave beneficially.

Do not worry about the unsatisfactory environment you may have. Of course, the place may have some drawbacks and it may not be ideal. But it is no use trying to run away from all that. You can overcome the drawbacks by training your own mind. Stay in your environment and pray to the Lord! Pray that He may fill you with His thoughts and His vision, making you ignore the defects of the environment. Do not seek comfort, for comfort might not be conducive to meditation. Learn to be comfortable in any place; that is better. Live in joy wherever you are; that is the way. Revel in the realm of your mind; worship in the mind the Lord you have chosen as your goal and be free of all the defects of the natural or human environment! Then, no spot can be irksome to you, nor will any place seem disgusting.

### **Concluding admonitions**

Pride is an insidious vice, so at the slightest inkling of the disease, try your best to eradicate it by retiring into a lonely spot and engaging yourself in meditation. Delay is dangerous. “Even divine nectar (*amritha*) becomes a poison if the dose is delayed,” says the proverb. Remember this and act swiftly. Meditation stills the agitated mind and makes it clear and full of joy.

Many in this world, even among the learned, do not spend their allotted span of life in the pursuit of certain selected ideals. Hence, their earthly careers are like the voyage of a storm-tossed ship that has lost both its anchor and its compass and is caught in mid-ocean. They are torn between opposing ideals and goals; they listen to diverse appeals; and their lives end in waste and failure, for they say one thing and do another in their ignorance and

fear. Meditation gives them fixity of purpose, courage, and also wisdom.

The feelings that arise in the mind, which are classified as serene, restless, and ignorant (*sathwic*, *rajasic*, and *thamasic*), also have to be watched and cleansed. The restlessness and ignorance have to be uprooted. Meditation is the weapon for this task.

The path of meditation (*dhyana-marga*) will destroy ignorance (*a-jnana*), and it will grant the individual union with the Godhead (*Brahmaikyatha*).