

17. Anger is the Greatest Enemy

He who is able to fully control his senses will be in a position to attain liberation or *moksha*. Vemana, the well-known philosopher-poet, has written a verse which says that one who has eaten a dog is considered a great *yogi*; one who has eaten a pig is considered a greater *yogi*; one who has eaten an elephant is considered as the wisest among the *yogi*. We must go deep into the meaning of these three statements. The word “dog” stands for anger, the word “pig” for ego, and the word “elephant” for attachments. One who is able to control and overcome one’s anger, ego, and attachments becomes a great *yogi*.

Not only in India but in several parts of the world, people are getting interested in the knowledge and practice of *yoga*. Though there are many schools of *yoga*, the most significant is the *Patanjali Yoga*. Patanjali defines *yoga* as the regulation and control of the tendencies of the mind. Without controlling the senses, we cannot attain happiness in any walk of life or in any endeavour. If we just let go our senses in a wild fashion, the result will be sorrow and joy. Today Indians are not paying proper attention to the control of their senses. Some people are under the misapprehension that they miss the very essence of life if they control their senses and deny themselves the pleasures of the senses. This is a mistaken idea. We should not think that we are controlling or restraining the senses. The real meaning and significance of this process is not that we are restraining the senses from performing their functions, but that we are directing and regulating them along the proper channels. Thus we shall be able to enjoy the real delight of the mind and the real pleasure of the spirit.

Anger, pride, and other passions reduce man to the level of a lunatic and sometimes degrade him to the level of an animal. Therefore, it is very necessary that we should recognise *vijnana*, *prajnana*,

and *sujnana*, which are latent in people and direct them along the proper channel and thus achieve the highest state of supreme bliss. The cause for all the troubles, confusion and turmoil is the fact that we have lost mastery over our senses. By leaving the senses unfettered and unregulated, we will not be able to discriminate properly, think coolly, calmly and rationally. Thus, many times we are misled into wrong actions. Anger is like an intoxicant. Internally, it induces us to do wrong things. This is the source of all the sins. It is a great demon. Anger leads us to commit all other sins. In the case of Viswamitra, we know that all the good he acquired by *thapas*, was nullified by this one evil, anger. The merit he had accumulated through *thapas* undertaken for thousands of years was all lost in a moment of anger.

We need not go as far as Viswamitra. In our daily lives, we know that when we become angry, our nerves become weak and feeble and we lose grip over ourselves. Even a moment of anger takes away our strength that we gather by eating good food for three months. Anger not only debilitates us and takes away the merit of our good deeds, but also enfeebles our condition. If we are able to control this anger, we shall be in a position to attain merit through the utterance of the Lord's name.

Vasishta attained the title of *Brahmarishi* and Viswamitra also wanted to attain the title of *Brahmarishi*. Even after years of *thapas*, he could not attain the same. Viswamitra became furious because even when the world honoured him with the appellation of *Brahmarishi*, Vasishta did not agree to call him so. Anger induced the thought in Viswamitra that if he eliminated Vasishta from the world, then everyone would honour him with the name of *Brahmarishi*. Once, on a moonlight night, Vasishta was describing to his pupils the qualities of Viswamitra. Viswamitra, who was hiding behind a bush with a sword in his hand to stab Vasishta, happened to hear the glowing tributes Vasishta was paying to Viswamitra. Vasishta was not aware that Viswamitra was hiding behind the bush and in his normal manner was describing the good qualities of Viswamitra's

thapas, which he compared to the moonlight. This brought about a sudden transformation in Viswamitra. He began to repent in his mind his decision to kill Vasishtha, who was such a great man and was talking about his fine qualities. He thought how bad he was when he entertained the thought of killing him. He felt that he must make amends and fell at the feet of Vasishtha, expressing his repentance. He did so and Vasishtha with a beautiful smile said: "Great *Brahmarishi*, wherefrom have you come?" When Vasishtha addressed him thus Viswamitra was surprised and felt quite repentant. Vasishtha said: "Today you really deserve the appellation of *Brahmarishi*, because you have eliminated all your anger and ego and fell at my feet in a mood of utter repentance."

We must recognise the truth underlying this episode. So long as there is the feeling of anger and ego in our hearts, we will not be able to feel well in our life and will feel sick in our mind. One's anger is one's greatest enemy and one's calmness is one's protection. One's joy is one's heaven and one's sorrow is one's hell. He who is possessed by anger will be hated by people because he will commit a number of bad deeds. Anger leads to many great sins. First we must endeavour to control this emotion of anger. Sometimes, ego also enters the feeling of anger. The prestige of an individual is sometimes undermined by one's own wealth and one's pride in wealth. One's wealth creates a kind of barrier between him and his kith and kin. People lose everything and are exposed to great suffering because of their anger.

If we aim at transcendental reality and Divinity, we must decide to bring this great emotion of anger under control. Anger is caused by weakness. It is not the weakness of the body but of the mind. To give strength to our mind and remove the weakness from our mind, it is necessary to fill it with good thoughts, good feelings and good ideas. While the funeral pyre consumes the dead, *chinta*, or an agitated mind, reduces to ashes the living body. It is a living death if one is obsessed by pride, ego and anger. A state of mind in which one overcomes these things is described as *sthita-prajna*. A

sthitaprajna is one who is neither elated by joy nor depressed by sorrow. He can take joy and sorrow in his stride with the same equanimity of mind.

Perhaps you think it is not easy to control our senses. Even if it is not easy to control them, it is very easy to divert all of them in the direction of God and give them a new orientation. The *gopikas* give classic examples of such supreme self-control. By directing the powers of your senses towards God, all the impurities of the senses are eliminated in the process. The first step is cultivation of love towards all living creatures. This helps you to control your senses and direct them toward God.

There are three fish in a pond. One fish said to the other two: "The water in this pond will run dry day after day. A time will come when the pond may become completely dry; and before the fisherman comes to catch us, it is necessary that we go and stay in some place where there is a perennial supply of water." The second fish said: "You are imagining. Your mind is full of needless fears. The pond will not run dry. The fisherman will not come to bother us. Enjoy your present state." The third fish said the same thing. The first fish was discouraged when the other two did not accept its advice and so it had to share their fate. As anticipated, the fisherman came and trapped them, cooked and ate them. Our life may be compared to a pond and the length of our life to the water.

The three fish are the three *gunas*, *thama*, *raja*, and *sathwa*. The *sathwik* tendency always decides to follow the path of good and fixes its attention on things that are permanent. It decides that before the level of water runs down, it should save itself and it always thinks of noble things. Water has been compared to the length of life and day-by-day it recedes and at any time death may overcome it. The fisherman is the emblem of death. *Thama* and *raja* are antagonistic to *sathwa* and, therefore, even the merit of *sathwa* is counteracted by the other two. These two *gunas*, *thama* and *raja*, mislead our senses and send them along the wrong path. We should first try to control *thama* and *raja* and thereby attain mastery over our senses. If we

follow good methods, even *raja* and *thama* may be conquered by close association with *sathwa*. We should believe that holy, sacred and perennial love can be found in every human heart where God resides. We should believe that God is the indweller of the heart and must follow the teaching that comes from the heart and adopt good methods to follow such a teaching.

Our ancients have given us sacred paths of *yoga* and *dhyana* to overcome evils and gain control over our senses. To control anger and hatred, the ancient sages left their villages and went to the forest. Today it is not necessary to retire to the forest to get rid of anger and hatred. Virtue cannot be practised in a vacuum. If you live in an atmosphere of anger and are able to control it, then it is a meritorious achievement. But if you live in a forest where there is no room for anger and say that you have controlled your anger, it is not meaningful. You must, therefore, remain in the worldly surroundings where there is ample scope for the rising up of emotions of anger and hatred and then learn to control them. That will be a meritorious achievement.

The sages used to perform *yagnas* and *yagas* for gaining mastery over their senses. The real nature and meaning of a *yagna* is the overcoming of all our evil tendencies, throwing them into the fire of sacrifice. This is described as *bhootabali*. The word *bhootabali* has been misinterpreted and some people think it means Animal sacrifice and this has given rise to evil practices. This is not the right way. *Bali* means tax. Today we are paying taxes on our property, on our houses and on our income. But the intention of levying taxes in the olden times was different from the intention of taxing today. Today taxes are often collected but misappropriated by people in power. Taxes of olden days were used to further improve and increase the welfare of the people. Where there was no water supply, they used to provide water; where there were no roads, they used to build roads. By sacrificing all our evil tendencies to God, we are blessed with what is beyond man and what man badly needs in this world.

We offer to God so many things, because the offering gives us pleasure. We offer flowers to God, not because God does not have flowers, but because it makes us happy to offer flowers to Him. Many students say, "If I pass with a first class, I will break five coconuts at Your feet." Does this mean that God does not have coconuts at His disposal? All the objects we offer, like leaf, flower, water and all others, have an allegorical significance. The word leaf does not refer to tulasi or any other leaf. Our body is a leaf. Our body is offered as a sacred leaf to God. Because this body is full of the three *gunas*, we consider it a leaf and make an offering of it to God. The word *pushpa* stands for the flower of the heart. The flowers we talk of, in the context of God, do not refer to the earthly flowers, which fade away. Similarly, the word fruit is the fruit of the mind. It means that we must do our deeds without expecting any reward; and if action is done in that spirit, it becomes a holy sacrifice. Water does not mean that which is drawn from the taps. It refers to the tears of joy that spring from the depths of your heart. You should not offer leaves gathered from trees which are external or flowers from plants in the garden or water drawn from the well or fruit got from somewhere else; but you must offer all these from the tree of your body, which is sacred, to God. Whatever offering you make, when you offer those things born out of the tree of your own body, then the full merit will be bestowed on you.

The word *narikela* stands for a coconut. Every Indian must grasp the inner meaning of offering a coconut to God. We never offer the coconut as it is. We remove the fibre that covers it and offer the fruit that is free from all the external fibre. Only then is it possible to break the coconut. By breaking the coconut, the water in it flows out. The heart is the coconut and it is covered by the fibre of desire. The water that flows out is the *samskara* or purification. The fibres on the surface are the desires. We must strip the heart of all desires and offer the core without the fibre. It then becomes an offering to God. If we aim at a state of no birth and want liberation from the cycle of birth and death, the core acquires a different sig-

nificance. If we plant a coconut as it is, in course of time and by watering it, another plant will grow out of it. At the time of germination, there is water in it. At that time, the kernel will be clinging to the sides of the fruit. The water in due time, gets dried up and the kernel shrivels and begins to drift away from the external surface of the coconut. If we try to get the kernel out, plant it and water it, nothing will happen. Our body may be compared to the shell and our life to the kernel. Our *samskaras* are the waters inside the coconut. As long as there are *samskaras* within us, the heart will always cling to the body consciousness just as the kernel clings to the fruit.

Control of the senses helps us to get rid of all evil tendencies. When your mind is troubled by bad thoughts, try to sit in a place and think of God, then you will be happy. Several great saints have taught the path of acquiring control over your senses. They used to offer to God all the tendencies that arise from the senses. They used to dedicate all their actions to God because they could divert their senses in the right channel. Their senses were not touched by temptations of sins. When you do any action just to please God, no evil result will flow out and cause you any suffering. What is offered to God is totally free from all defects and imperfections.

Gowranga was the original name of Chaithanya. As he grew up, he directed all thoughts toward God. He used to wander along the streets, singing *kirtans* and beating cymbals in his hands. In those days, there were enemies of such *nagarasankirtan*, or singing on the streets; and they used to take away the instruments from the hands of those who used to go along the streets chanting the name of God. Even at such moments, *Chaithanya* never exhibited any trace of anger. When anyone took away the *tala* from his hands, he used to think that the Will of God was that He wanted him to chant His name without any accessories. The harm done to him was interpreted by him as a great benefit done to him. If anyone abused him beyond endurance, he used to utter the name of Krishna and thus tune his mind to the mood of Krishna. When he uttered the name of

Krishna, Chaithanya lost consciousness of his body. Because he lost his consciousness whenever the name of Krishna was uttered, he was known by the name of Krishna Chaithanya. Such titles won in those days, were because of deserving merit and not like the titles conferred today on good, bad, worthy and unworthy people, all alike. In those days people never cared for worldly titles. Every person considered himself as the child of immortality. The removal of immortality is the way to attain immortality. Injustice, impropriety, and inequity are weaknesses that must be got rid of. With a pure heart filled with the spirit of love, we must get ready to serve our country. Though you may not read *Vedas* and *Sastras*, though you may not perform *yagnas* and *yagas*, it is possible to gain the grace of God by the cultivation of love.

Sathwik food, which is congenial for the mind, is necessary to develop these qualities of love. Today many people think that *sathwik* diet consists of milk, curd, and so many other things. This is not correct. You must try to understand the real nature of *sathwik* diet. You take the *sathwik* diet through your mouth. The mouth is only one of the five sense organs. *Sathwik* diet does not mean simply the food we take through our mouth; but also means the pure air we breathe through our nose, the pure vision we see through our eyes, the pure sounds we listen to through our ears and the pure objects we touch through our feet. All we take in through the doors of the five sense organs may be described as the *sathwik* diet. *Sathwik* diet means the synthesis of *sathwik* food: breathing pure air, listening to good sounds, looking at good sights and touching pure objects. Only then, we may be said to be *sathwik* in our habits.

We must believe that it is the duty of Indians to control and develop the senses along proper channels. Today, India is considered a weak nation because the people have not exercised such control as our ancestors used to, over their senses. We must also try to bring about unity in diversity. One piece of straw cannot bind even a tiny ant. But if we weave a rope out of a thousand pieces of straw, we can bind even a wild elephant. Therefore, it is possible for us to

achieve great things through unity. Indians must all be united, and through unity, try to safeguard the higher values of Indian culture. India is a sacred country, which has given spiritual leadership to the entire world for centuries. All the great cultures that have been accepted in other countries originated at some time or other and in some form or other in this sacred land.

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