

## HOLD THE REINS

Mind alone is the cause  
 For man's rise and fall in life;  
 Mind alone is responsible  
 For man's bondage or liberation;  
 This mind alone makes man forget  
 His reality and land himself in hell!

### Dear Students!

Man is a combination of body, mind, and *Atma*. These three together constitute the steps for man's ascent to the highest stage. The body is the instrument for actions. The mind is concerned with cognition. The changeless and permanent Reality is the *Atma*, which is the divine aspect of man. Thus, doing, knowing, and being are the triune manifestations of the human personality. Although the body, mind, and *Atma* have different names and characteristics, their harmonisation and unification help man to raise himself from the human to the divine level. On the contrary, their alienation from one another degrades him to the animal level.

The word "*antha karana* (inner instrument)" is used in everyday worldly context as well as in the spiritual parlance. What is its form, its nature, its role, its importance, and its destination? When we enquire along these lines, we will find that mind itself assumes the subtle form of *antha karana*, consisting of four aspects, namely, *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitta* (memory), and *ahamkara* (ego), the last three being the subtle aspects of the mind. The particular name is given, based on the functions performed, just as one and the same Brahmin is called a priest (*pujari*) when he performs worship in a temple, a cook when he works in the kitchen, a teacher when he teaches students, and a "*panchaanga brahmin*" when he interprets the almanac (*panchaanga*).

In the same manner when the mind is engaged in wavering thought processes, it is called *manas*. When it is busy in the process of enquiry and discrimination between right and wrong, it is named as *buddhi* (intellect). When it functions as a repository of memories—it is known as *chitta*. When it identifies itself with the physical body, assuming the doership for various activities, it goes by the name of *ahamkara* (ego). Thus, it may be seen that the mind, although basically one, displays these varied forms on account of the different roles assumed by it. In fact, the mind alone is the cause of all things. "Mano-moolam idam Jagat" says the Scriptures. It means the whole cosmos is nothing but a projection of the mind.

Man derives his name from the possession of the mind. As a man thinks, so he becomes. Man means mind, and mind means man. Mind is only a bundle of thoughts. Thoughts give rise to actions, and what we enjoy or suffer in this world are the consequences of these actions. It follows, therefore, that only when man's thoughts are good will his life be good. Thoughts are highly potent. They survive the death of man. Hence it is essential to keep out bad thoughts from our minds. It is bad thoughts that separate man from man and make them forget their common divinity. When men realise that the *Atma* in every body is one and the same, there will be no room for differences. Man should try to expand his relationship gradually from the individual level to the level of the family,

the community, the nation and finally the whole world. The peace of the individual as well as of the world depends on the mind, hence the need for proper disciplining of the mind. Like a fish swimming against the current to save itself from dangers, man should combat the evil thoughts within and protect himself from dangers.

Man today is creating all sorts of trouble for himself, because of his wrong thoughts. None else should be blamed for his pleasures or pains, gains or losses. Mind is the root of the tree of *samsara* (cycle of births and deaths), and the manifested universe in general. To destroy this tree, lay the the axe at the root itself. In other words, the mind should be destroyed by diverting the thoughts to the enquiry about the *Atma*, the real Self or the real “I”.

Based on the differences in the nature of the mind, different colours are attributed to it. For instance, the mind filled with anger is red in colour. A selfish mind is wheat-brown. An egotistic mind is of the orange hue, while the mind dedicated to God is pure white.

Today the world is riddled with fear. Whether at home or out in the street, or while travelling in a train, bus, or plane, people are haunted by fear. The root cause for this ubiquitous fear is the absence of pure and sacred thoughts in the minds of men. The whole world appears like a maze filled with fear at every turn. The tragedy of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna and a hero of Kurukshetra war, was that he knew how to enter the maze called *Padmavyuha* but did not know how to get out of it. Likewise, you know how to enter the maze of worldly pleasures, but do not know how to get out of it. You will know the way out only when you submit your thoughts to the scrutiny of the *duddhi* (intellect).

In the Kathopanishad, the body is compared to a chariot, the senses to horses, the mind to the reins, and the intellect to the charioteer. This means that the mind is in between the senses and the intellect. If the mind follows the dictates of the intellect, it will be safe. If, on the contrary, it follows the whims and fancies of the senses, it will become a bondsman of the senses and a victim of endless sorrow and suffering. Allowing free rein to the senses is the *pravritthi marga* (the external path), while controlling the senses is the *nivritthi marga* (the internal path). Most people are content to pursue the external. Few are concerned to explore the internal. Many people today employ their thoughts and efforts in harming others. They do not realise the fact that the harm they do to others will recoil on themselves many fold. An outstanding example of this is the vicious Kauravas led by Duryodhana and Dussasana subjecting the virtuous Pandavas to innumerable hardships. What was the ultimate result of this? Although the Pandavas suffered temporarily, in the final reckoning the Kauravas were utterly destroyed forever. Students! Always remember this and never think of hurting others. Don't criticise or condemn others. If you deceive your friends, they in turn will cheat you. If you disobey your parents, your children will pay you back in the same coin. If you hurt others, they will hurt you in retaliation. This kind of reaction, rebound, and reflection are inherent in man's mind. Hence you should scrupulously follow the maxim, “Hurt never; help ever.” There are some sinful persons who cavil not only at other men, but even against God. This seems to be their very nature, although God never harms any one at any time.

In this context, the lowest category of people are those who take sadistic pleasure in hurting other people without any provocation whatsoever. They may be compared to the moths whose nature is to damage all clothes indiscriminately—whether it is a valuable sari costing one thousand rupees or a worthless soiled rag in the kitchen. This highly des-

picable tendency on the part of some persons to harm others is traceable to their bad thoughts. We try to dispel foul odours from our living rooms and toilets by using substances like air-fresheners, incense sticks, and other deodorants. Similarly we should try to counteract our bad thoughts with good ones. Good thoughts will eventually lead us to the fulfillment of our lives, while bad thoughts will degrade us to the level of beasts. No doubt the replacement of bad thoughts by good ones, calls for sincere and determined effort, because as Arjuna complained to Krishna the mind is fickle (*chanchalam*), turbulent (*pramathi*), strong (*balavath*), and stubborn (*dridham*).

Everyone clamours for peace. But peace is not any-where outside; it is right there within us only. However, if you want to enjoy that peace, you have to resort to practice (*abhyasa*); what type of practice? First of all give up selfish thoughts. Then persistently engage yourself in the constant enquiry of what you really are. If you merely repeat thrice, saying "I am a man. I am a man. I am a man," you will be half-a-man only. To realise your manhood in full, you should also repeat, "I am not an animal, I am not an animal, I am not an animal." For, people nowadays call themselves men but behave as animals. In the light of this fact, the animal is better than the man, because the animal thinks of itself as an animal and behaves accordingly, whereas man claims himself to be a man but behaves like an animal! You got the name "man" because you are endowed with *manas* (mind). However to deserve that name, you should mould your mind in the proper manner which befits a man but not a beast.

Mind is a priceless possession. It is God's greatest gift to man. The Scriptures have declared that the mind alone is responsible either for man's bondage or for his liberation. So, how can you condemn the mind as bad, when it is capable of leading you to the supreme goal of liberation? A knife can be used to cut fruits and vegetables. But in a fit of anger and frustration, if you make use of it for cutting your own throat or others' throats, is it the fault of the knife? Likewise, you cannot blame the mind if you misuse it. Whether the mind contributes to your upliftment or downfall depends on how you use it.

The mind is often compared to a cat. A cat gently catches hold of its young kittens with its mouth and carries them from place to place to ensure their safety and nourishment. In utter contrast, the cat uses the same mouth for fiercely pouncing upon rats and tearing them to pieces. Similar is the case with the mind. It serves as the supreme benefactor of those who engage themselves in the contemplation of God, in good thoughts, good words, and good actions. On the other hand, the same mind brings disaster to those who take to the wrong path of un-righteousness or outright wickedness.

The way in which the mind functions may also be likened to mono-acting. Because, one and the same mind assumes different forms and plays different roles, depending on the needs of varying situations.

In the beginningless beginning God was one. The thought arose in Him, "I am one; let Me become many," and thus the One became the many. However, despite the many, the unity still persists unaffected by the diversity. Thus, whether for the unity in diversity, or for the diversity in unity, only thoughts (*samkalpas*) are responsible. What is needed is to regulate our thoughts in the right manner. As soon as a thought arises, we should not rush into action, but should subject the thought to the scrutiny of the intellect for a correct decision before implementing the thought. But nowadays most people have the tendency to be in a hurry to put their thoughts into action without any such deliberation. That is the reason for the statement, "Haste makes waste, waste makes worry, so do not be in a hurry." Therefore, action undertaken after deliberation alone results in peace.

People talk of world peace. But how can you ensure peace in the world? Here is the formula for it. “If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.” It may thus be seen that the first link in the chain leading to world peace is righteousness or *dharma*. *Dharma* is only another name for right action. But the prerequisite for right action is right thought. In other words, peace should start with the individual and gradually spread wider and wider right along the line—from the home or family to the village to the nation, etc., till finally, it encompasses the entire world.

You chant, “Peace, Peace, Peace”—i.e., three times after meditation, *bhajan*, etc. By merely uttering thrice with your tongue, you cannot obtain or ensure peace. The significance of the three chants is that man is in need of three kinds of peace; (i) *adhi bhoutik* (peace unhampered by other beings), (ii) *adhi Atmic* (peace undisturbed by ones’ own body and mind), and (iii) *adhi daivic* (peace undisturbed by forces beyond human control). Of these three, *adhi daivic* signifies the need for divine Grace, which can be earned only by absolute surrender to God. This concept of “surrender to God” is often misunderstood. Surrender does not mean the abandonment of all activities, foolishly thinking that “God will do whatever is necessary for me, because you have surrendered everything to Him.” That would be sheer laziness. It is like sitting before a plate of chapatis with potato curry and idly expecting your hunger to be satisfied without eating the stuff. On the other hand, the correct meaning of surrender is to make use of your God-given faculties and energy to perform your legitimate work, dedicating all your activities to the Lord, without the false sense of doership and without undue concern for the results of your actions.

Students! If you want to have good thoughts, you must resort to the spiritual path. The starting point for spiritual path is *sathsanga* (holy company).

Thoughts are contagious. Hence the adage, “Tell me your company, and I will tell you what you are.” You should therefore, scrupulously eschew bad company. Sri Shankara eulogised the value of holy company in glowing terms as follows: “The company of the wise begets detachment, detachment leads to the destruction of delusion, followed by the acquisition of steady wisdom, and culminating finally in *jivanmukti* (liberation, while alive).” Therefore, the essential point you should remember is that only good company will engender good thoughts in you.

Students! Cultivate and develop only sacred thoughts and thus sanctify your lives. Become ideal men, so that others may also derive and benefit by following your example. Bad company, bad thoughts and sensuous ways of living may give you momentary pleasure but will eventually drown you in untold misery and utter ruin. Remember that you cannot but reap what you sow. When you are born from your mother’s womb, your neck is not bedecked with flower garlands or with necklaces of gold, pearls or diamonds but rest assured that your neck does carry on it an unseen heavy garland given by Brahma (the Creator) the garland of the fruits of good and bad actions done by you in previous lives.

Let me conclude with a word about gratitude. For want of gratitude, man is degrading himself to a lower level than even the animals. You say “thanks” to somebody who picks up and gives to you your own handkerchief that you happened to drop on the ground. But how very strange and surprising that you never think of thanking God for all the precious things He has so graciously bestowed on you. He has placed you in this vast and wonderful universe, providing for you pure air to breathe, clean water to drink, mother earth to

live on, etc. In short, but for the five great elements created by Him, you cannot live even for a moment. Therefore, is there a greater sin than forgetting to offer your thanks to such an all-merciful God?

You buy a plot of land with your own money and construct a house thereon with your own money. But the Corporation wants you to pay the house tax, just for providing electricity and water, of course levying separate additional taxes for these amenities. But tell me, what tax are you paying to God for providing you with facilities like the sun who illumines the whole world, the wind which refreshes all living beings with cool breeze, the torrential rain that not only cools the earth but also sustains life, and so on and so forth? Not to give any thought to such things, indicates not only ingratitude on the part of man but also the *thamo guna* (inertia) that is polluting his mind.