

Chapter 18. Sense Control

Teachers and students

Teachers reveal the direction and the goal. Students lay the road and journey into the future. The skill and strength, the status and stature of mankind are shaped and furthered in proportion to the quality and character of its teachers. Character is the hallmark of humanity. Teachers must dedicate their learning and wisdom to the great task of uplifting pupils to higher levels of knowledge and action. The virtues that they help to inculcate in their pupils are essential for the uplift of society also. When virtues are rooted in the heart, man shines in full glory. A life without good character is a shrine without light, a coin that is counterfeit, a kite with a broken string.

Teachers who teach with the salary paid to them in their minds and students who learn with the jobs they may procure in their minds are both pursuing wrong paths. In fact, the task of the teacher is to discharge their duty of instructing and inspiring the students so that they develop their latent talents and advance in the perfection of their skills. The task of the student is to unfold the divine that is within and equip themselves for serving society with skill and knowledge.

Thought, speech, and action

People have three instruments gifted to them: the mind, which involves them in thought; the power of speech, which enables them to communicate their thoughts; and the power of action, by which they can execute their thoughts, alone or with others, for themselves and for others. The mind designs thoughts that are either helpful or harmful. The mind can lead one into bondage, into deeper involvement in desires and disappointments. It can lead one into freedom, detachment, and desirelessness. The mind is a bundle of likes and dislikes. The mind (*manas*) is the seat of chewing the cud of sensual and mental experiences (*manana*).

Reining in the mind

The mind is engaged in two activities: thinking (*alochana*) and inner dialogue (*manasika-sambhashana*). These activities follow different lines. Thinking is intent on solving problems that present themselves before the mind. Mental dialogue multiplies the problems and confounds the solutions, causing confusion and adoption of wrong and ruinous means to solve them. The inner conversation and controversial chatter continues from morning till night, until sleep overtakes the mind. It causes ill-health and the early setting-in of old age. The topics on which the chatter is based are mostly the faults and failings of others and their fortunes and misfortunes. This perpetual dialogue is at the bottom of all miseries. It covers the mind with thick darkness. It grows wild very quick and suppresses the genuine worth of manhood.

The talk that inhabits the mind during the waking stage persists even in dreams and robs one of much-needed rest. And the sum total of all this exercise is, to speak the truth, nil. No one can call themselves full and free unless they succeed in stopping this evil.

The *Upanishads* announce certain remedial spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) to get rid of this obstacle to inner peace. The first spiritual discipline is regulation of breath (*pranayama*). Regulation of breath is no gymnastics,

nor a formidable exercise. The mind has to concentrate on the period of retention (*kumbhaka*), on the process of inhaling (*puraka*) and exhaling (*rechaka*). When attention is fixed thus, the inner talk on other irrelevant matters will end. And mental strength is acquired.

The second spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) is: immersal in beneficial activity (*karma*) —that is to say, service to people that will help diminish the ego sense, acts that are good and godly. When one's thoughts are engaged in such activities, the mind turns away from the talk it indulges in.

Again, the spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) of listening to spiritual advice (*sravana*), reflection on spiritual directions (*manana*), and discovering ways and means of confirming faith in the Spirit (*nidi-dhyasana*), also of recital of the names of God (*japa*) and withdrawing the mind from sensual pursuits (*tapas*), have been prescribed by the scriptures more for the silencing of this mental chatter, this inner talk. They are more a preparation for attaining the Reality than for its Realisation. For it is only when the mind is cleansed and clarified that it can achieve such a profound task. Only then can the lessons taught and the experiences undergone be pure and unsullied.

Use speech properly

The second instrument that is gifted to people for uplifting themselves is speech —the use of words. Speech is charged with tremendous power. When, through speech, we communicate to a person something that upsets their balance or shocks them into grief, the words completely drain off their physical strength and mental courage. The person falls on the ground, unable to stand. On the other hand, when, through speech, we communicate something happy or unexpectedly cheering, the person gets the strength of an elephant.

Words don't cost anything but they are priceless. So, they have to be used with care. They must be employed not for gossip, which is barren, but for pure and productive purposes only. The ancients recommended the vow of silence in order to purify speech of its evils.

A mind turned inward toward an inner vision of God and speech turned toward outer vision of the Lord — both will promote spiritual strength and success.