

## Conquering the Mind

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In our last discussion we found that the entire personality complex is maintained and run by the *vasanas*, and that they are generated by our egocentric contacts with the world of objects. In passionate hunger for sense gratification, when one's personality runs out in extroverted seeking and clinging to the joys of sense-objects, the sensuous *vasanas* increase in one's personality composition. The more these sub-conscious urges and motivating factors in an individual, the more grows his surge of desires, and the more become the devastating agitations of the mind. And in such an individual the sense-organs cannot remain withdrawn and quiet. They must gallop on towards indulgence in the sense objects that promise but perishable moments of pleasure.

Once a desire is gratified, there is not going to be a permanent satisfaction: it only kindles more desires, more thirst. Therefore, the subtle thinkers of the past rightly advised the seekers who are striving to gain mastery over their mind, "My son! Towards all objects give up every trace of attachment. This is the secret means of winning over the mind."

Our attachment to the objects makes the objects powerful, and then the objects come to rule over our mind. He, who is seeking to master his mind, must therefore learn to live without entangling himself in the endless meshes of attachments by which his personality gets irretrievably bound to the objects and beings around him in his life.

Thus, when the seeker gets attached to the goal of conquering his mind, all his other fascinations automatically end and completely drop out of him. The more his attachments to the external objects, he now realizes the more wild and uncontrollable his mind will be. The very goal he has now chosen, the conquest of his mind, helps him to curtail, regulate control, and ultimately annihilate all his "clinging attachments" to the world outside.

Man clings only to things that he understands contain some joy for him. Thirst for happiness is natural with every living organism in this universe. The murderer expects happiness for himself after the killing of his enemy; the drunkard believes that his happiness is in his bottle; the devotee finds his happiness in his prayers; the poor in searching for crumbs, and the rich and the powerful in trying to gain economic and political domination over the whole world, all are seeking their individual fulfillment in happiness.

This "thirst" (*trishna*) is a built-in urge natural to all thoughtless men. A little quiet contemplation and self-enquiry can reveal that the outer objects do not contain what we are demanding, and that our demand is not really for these objects.

Yet, all of us dissipate our energies in this futile, mad quest, with quixotic fervor, consistent foolishness, and charming idiocy. We refuse to think.

When our anxious demand to master the mind reaches its peak, a sincere and deep urgency comes to assert itself to accomplish, as quickly as possible, this release of our individuality from the suicidal tyranny of our own mind. This anxious urgency is called *shraddha*. As a seeker cultivates himself, and grows in his depth, he discovers in himself an endless "enthusiasm" to put forth any amount of joyous efforts at mastering his mind. Without such a spring of enlivening enthusiasm, the *sadhana* becomes laborious, unrewarding, burdensome, and sooner or later the seeker leaves the field, vanquished and routed by the mind.

Once we generate in our heart a certain amount of this "spiritual enthusiasm", we can readily "remember" our chosen goal constantly. If the constant awareness of the goal is blazing in the highways of our mind, then in our hurried living and the rush of events and happenings we will not, even accidentally, run out catering to the idle demands of the mind and thus fall again unwillingly into some new sets of clinging attachments, expecting happiness from the acquisition and possession of, and indulgence in the world. The constant remembrance of our goal will serve as a steady warning light, and it will guide us aright steadily on our pilgrimage through all the day-to-day contentions of the busy brutal life in the community!

Thus, once *shraddha*, the "sincere urgency" for mastering the mind has manifested in us, spiritual "enthusiasm" in applying ourselves to its achievement immediately follows, and where there is this "enthusiasm" we cannot but steadily "remember" our determined goal. When a seeker lives thus in the constant remembrance of his ideal-to-be-attained, his "concentration" must naturally grow.

The capacity of the mind to entertain consistently one idea, to the exclusion of all dissimilar thought, is called concentration. This single-pointed, mental self-application to an exclusive idea becomes inevitable in a seeker who remembers his goal constantly.

For all our spiritual conquests the forces we employ is our single-pointed concentration. But, however large one's army may be, its strength lies in the education, culture, and discipline of its members. Else the army may win the battle yet lose the war by its own indiscipline and victorious excesses. Similarly, "concentration" is the secret weapon which we must have to storm the citadel of truth; but this weapon in an impure heart may convert all its successes into a suicidal self-annihilation. Therefore, we must cultivate the ethical and moral virtues side by side, and a bosom rich in these glorious traits alone can use its powers of concentration for the creative programs of mastering the mind.

Values of life which arise only in our contact with others in society constitute our strategy and policy, regulating and beautifying all our relationships with others. The *rishis* of yore experimented with these. They came to prescribe the right attitude towards given specific types, or sets of challenges. Thus, "friendliness towards happy ones, kindness towards unhappy ones, joyous enthusiasm towards the virtuous and the righteous, disregard towards sensuous sinners" are prescribed as the healthy attitudes to be cultivated and maintained by all seekers. In this way we learn to *involve* ourselves with good, *commit* ourselves to the righteous, and *avoid* all the evil influences of the sinful.

By bringing up our personality in this way, in the very contentious and competitive market-place of life and in the midst of its tensions, we can spiritually grow and gather more and more steadiness of mind, called "purity of the inner-equipments". Without a steady mind spiritual explorations are indeed impossible. "The earlier prescribed friendliness, kindness, etc. are values of right relationships; when practiced for a sufficiently long time they will lead the intelligent seeker to discover in himself a more steady mind on his contemplation seat."

When the seeker has, as explained so far, eliminated from himself all "clinging attachments" (*asakti*) to and "thirst" (*trishna*) for the world, he will find that his concentration proportionately increases. In a purified mind the power of concentration becomes more dynamic and greatly creative. In such a person, concentration, as applied in his meditation, cannot waver as he had conquered all his eagerness to possess and enjoy the objects of pleasure. When this anxious urge to seek joy in objects has dried up in his bosom, how can any thoughts arise in it to drive the seeker into idle mental wandering during his deep meditation?

"Thoughts, turned extrovert and functioning in the objects are, together and in their entirety called *chittam*. All meditation is our sincere effort to capture and destroy the *chittam*: "the outward-running thoughts." When the mind is not engaged in any object, how can thoughts (*chittam*) manifest on the empty horizon of the mind?" asks the *acharya*.

Students of meditation, not knowing the mode of their mental functioning, unnecessarily struggle to quieten their minds, and feel utterly disappointed and discouraged because they themselves are thereby unwittingly exciting their mind and feeding their thought-agitations therein.

The engine of the mind functions on the oil of perception. The mind running out through the sense-organs reaches the object, and there it *moulds itself* into the shape of the object; when that "object-thought" glows in the light of Consciousness in our bosom, the "knowledge of that object" is born. This is perception, according to Vedanta. The more the perceptions, the more are the agitations. Therefore, "perceptions" (*vedanam*) supply the grist for the mill of the mind," say the wise. The rising of the pictures of the outer objects and memories of the past experiences in the mind (*vishaya sphuranam*) constitute perception, and so long as these perceptions are rising, the mind will be buzzing with its irresistible activities.

Not to cooperate with the mental dancings and not to lend them the grace of life by our identification with them (*a-bhavanam*) brings about the exhaustion of *vasanas*; the end of the *vasanas* is annihilation of the mind; where mind ends, "spiritual ignorance" (*avidya*) ceases to express.

To summarize, therefore, to conquer the mind we must:

- (a) Reduce our clinging attachments.
- (b) End our thirst to enjoy objects.
- (c) When we are eager to master our mind, less number of thoughts arise in us.
- (d) Perception of objects feeds the engine of our mind, and so, cut off this steady supply of vitality to the mind by *a-bhavana*.

When thus stripped of its features one by one, the mind dries up and withers away! Mind disappears to vision, the great grand fulfillment Divine. Hasten thither slowly.