

## Some Methods of Mind-Control.

BY HANUMANPRASAD PODDAR.

*He who has conquered the Mind has conquered the world.*

The methods we shall discuss in this article are shortly as follows:—

1. To cultivate dispassion towards all enjoyments of this world as well as of the next, knowing them to be the sources of suffering and evil.
2. To cultivate regularity of habits, and carry on all activities according to a regular plan.
3. To watch and analyse every activity of the mind and protect it from evil-thinking.
4. To disobey the promptings of the mind.
5. To keep the mind engaged in some noble and worthy activity.
6. To withdraw the mind from wherever it may be tempted to wander, and fix it on God; or in the alternative, to allow the mind to wander wherever it may please to wander, realizing that God is present everywhere and in every object.
7. To practise concentration on one object.
8. To fix the sight on the navel or on the tip of the nose.
9. To hear internal sounds.
10. Meditation and mental worship of a Divine Name or a Divine Form.
11. To practise Friendliness, Compassion, Joy and Indifference.
12. To study spiritual literature.
13. To practise *Prāṇāyāma* (Breath-exercise).
14. To practise *Japa* along with the flow of breath.
15. To take refuge in God with a whole heart without any mental reservation.
16. To separate the Self from the mind and observe the working of the latter.
17. To practise *Kīrtana* (loud chanting) of the Divine Name, merging oneself in the Love of God.

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।

वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥

( *Gita.* VI. 96 )

The Lord says:—

“It is My opinion that *Yoga* is difficult of achievement by one whose mind is not under control; but the man of effort, who has control over his mind, can attain it through practice.”

These words of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa prove that *Yoga* in the form of God-realization is difficult of attainment without mind-control. If anyone should entertain the desire that his mind should freely wander among objects of worldly enjoyment without any restraint, and at the same time

he should be automatically blessed with God-perception, it is an error on his part to do so.

He who seeks total negation of suffering and realization of God, who is Bliss itself, must bring his mind under control. There is no other alternative before him. By its nature the mind is very unsteady as well as strong. It is no easy matter to bring it under control. All spiritual disciplines are undertaken to control the mind, and the moment victory over it is gained, the practicant may be said to have conquered the world. Āchārya Śrī Śankara said—

जितं जगत् केन मनो हि येन ।

“Who has conquered the world? He who has conquered his mind.” Arjuna also, finding mind-control to be extremely difficult, addressed the Lord in these helpless words—

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।  
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

(Gita. VI. 34)

“O Lord, the mind is very unsteady, rash, hard and powerful; I consider it as difficult to restrain as the wind.”

No one should argue from this that an attainment which appeared to be so exceptionally difficult to Arjuna, can never be attained by ordinary men like us. To conquer the mind is, no doubt, exceptionally difficult, the Lord has admitted it, but at the same time He has laid down the means of attaining it—

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।  
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

(Ibid. VI. 35)

The Lord said: “O Arjuna, there is no doubt that to curb this unsteady mind is extremely difficult; but it can be brought under control by practice and dispassion.”

This definitely proves that conquest of the mind may be difficult, but not impossible. Without establishment of control over the mind, there can be no negation of suffering. Therefore, the mind must be subjugated, and in order to do this it is necessary in the first instance to know its general constitution as well as character.

#### CONSTITUTION OF THE MIND

What is the mind? It is a peculiar substance existing between spirit and matter, which is itself non-spiritual and material in character, but bondage and freedom of men depend on it—

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।

In short, the mind is what constitutes the world; where the mind is not, the world is not. It is subject to constant change, its function is to revolve on the whirligig of resolves and doubts (संकल्प-विकल्प); whatever object it properly grasps, transforms it into an image of that very object. It follows the path of attachment, all evils take their rise from attachment; in the absence of attachment, the mind will not be drawn

towards worldly objects at all. Attachment or attraction grows from observation and detection of some virtue or beauty in a thing; that is how the mind is drawn towards it. Contrary to this, it will feel repulsion and hatred for what would appear to it to be a source of misery and evil. It will not run after that thing. If it does so through mistake, it will return, as soon as it detects the evil. In truth, when the mind goes after an object of hatred, it is attraction for it that induces it to do so. Generally speaking, this is the nature or constitution of the mind. Now, the question is, how is it to be brought under control? The Lord has laid down two methods for doing this—repeated Practice and Dispassion. Mahārṣi Patañjali says in his “Aphorisms on *Yoga*”:

‘अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ।’

(*Samādhi-Pada*. 12)

“The mind is restrained by constant practice and cultivation of dispassion.”

Let us, therefore, examine and consider these two methods of mind-control.

#### METHODS OF MIND-CONTROL, (1) DISPASSION TOWARDS OBJECTS OF ENJOYMENT

The mind will continue to be attracted by worldly objects so long as they appear to be beautiful and repositories of happiness. The mind will never run after them, when these very objects begin to appear to it as sources of evil and misery (which,

in fact, they are). If at any time it should feel tempted to go after them, it will immediately return. Therefore, the habit should be formed to look upon all objects of enjoyment (whether of this world or of the next) as sources of misery and evil. The conviction should be strong that these objects are full of misery and evil. The mind is tempted only by handsome and delightful objects. When it comes to realize that true Beauty and Joy lie not in worldly objects, but in God (which is the real truth), then this very mind will give up its attraction for worldly objects, and will attach itself to God. This is known as the practice of Dispassion. It is one of the most efficient methods of conquering the mind. True Dispassion lies in the total negation of what appears as the world and the realization of the eternal presence of God in its place. But a beginner should start with the practice of observing evil and misery in worldly objects so that there may be diminution of his attachment for the same.

The Lord said:—

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।  
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥

(*Gita*. XIII. 8)

“Dispassion towards all objects of enjoyment, whether of this world or of the next; self-effacement, and realization of the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness, and pain should be cultivated.”

The mind can be brought under control through this practice of indifference towards sense-objects, or Dispassion. This is a short description

of the practice of Dispassion. Now, we shall proceed with a discussion on the other item, viz., 'Repeated Practice.'

## ( 2 ) REGULARITY OF HABITS

In controlling the mind, formation of regularity of habits is extremely helpful. All work must be carried on according to a fixed time and fixed method. From early morning when you leave bed till you retire to bed at night, a regular programme should be made for spending your time, so that the mind may automatically begin the work at the time allotted to it. In carrying on worldly activities, the utility of regularity of habits is well-known to all ; but in forwarding spiritual life also it is extremely beneficial. There should be no deviation on any day from the exact place, seat, posture, time and duration fixed for meditation on any particular Form of the Deity. A regular meditation for even five minutes daily is better than an irregular meditation for a longer duration. A practice for ten minutes today, for half-an-hour tomorrow and total absence of it on the third day, such a method of procedure leads to success with difficulty. When the regular habit of meditation for five minutes has been formed, let it be increased to ten minutes, but once having increased to ten minutes let it not be less even by a minute on any day. Similarly, the seat, posture, time, the Form of the Deity and *Mantra* ( formula ) should not be frequently changed. Habits thus formed easily lead to mind-control. Regularity of habit should be extend-

ed even to matters like food, drink, dress, sleep and other ordinary activities. The rules of habit should be formed according to the injunctions of the scriptures and suited to one's own circumstances.

## ( 3 ) WATCHING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MIND

Every activity of the mind should be carefully watched and scrutinized. At night before going to bed, it is proper to make an attempt to recollect all activities of the mind during the day. It is, no doubt, very difficult to remember all the wayward and irregular thoughts that pass through the mind ; but whatever portion of the same you may recollect, sit in judgment over them, and give praise and encouragement to the mind for every Sattvic ( good ) thought, and sternly reproach it for what thoughts appear to be Rajasic ( passionate ) and Tamasic ( dark ) in nature. Through day to day practice on this line the mind will be impressed with the ideas of doing good and abandoning evil ; and in the course of a few days it will learn to avoid evil and to devote itself only to good activity. Let the mind develop, first, this character of doing good, it will be, then, easy to bring it under control. Until a boy gives up evil association, he continues to receive evil promptings from his evil companions. It becomes, then, difficult to reform him. When he gives up evil association, he no longer receives evil promptings from his friends ; at home he receives good instructions and noble thoughts from his parents. He,

then, quickly reforms his ways and becomes an obedient son. Similarly, if anyone should try to make a mind habituated to worldly thoughts totally free from thoughts, he will not succeed. In the first place, he should protect it from evil thoughts. When it will begin to devote itself to divine thoughts, it will not be difficult to bring it under control.

#### (4) DISOBEYING THE MIND

The mind should not be obeyed. Until it is brought under control, the mind should be regarded as the greatest enemy. Just as every activity of an enemy is watched, even so every activity of the mind should be carefully watched. Whenever it is detected to take a wrong course it should be reproached and floored. Never show any courtesy to it, even through mistake. Though the mind is very powerful and several times the palm will have to be yielded to it, one should not lose courage. He who does not lose courage is bound one day to conquer the mind. There is one peculiarity about this fight with the mind; if the fighter fights with determination, the strength of the fighter will grow from day to day, and the strength of the mind will correspondingly become less. That is why the fighter is bound to attain victory over it, sooner or later. Therefore, instead of supporting it, every one of its activities should be very carefully scrutinized. The mind is very clever. It will frighten you, coax and cajole you, and present many other peculiar and wonderful shades before you; but take care not

to fall a prey to its deception. Never place your trust on it. When you thoroughly cultivate this distrust, its courage will be lost, and it will give up its struggle and deceit. In the end, instead of playing the role of a master, it will become your most obedient and faithful servant:

“The mind is greedy, covetous and unsteady; it is a robber; Do not follow the dictates of the mind, every moment it changes its form.”\*

#### (5) ENGAGING THE MIND IN NOBLE PURSUITS

The mind can never remain idle; it must have something to do. It should, therefore, be kept constantly engaged. Evil thoughts arise in the mind whenever it is kept idle. Therefore, keep the mind engaged in carefully selected noble and auspicious activities till you fall asleep. The pictures of the noble deeds performed during the waking state will appear in dream at night.

#### (6) FIXING THE MIND ON GOD

The Lord said:—

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।  
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

(Gita. VI. 26)

“Restraining it from whatever worldly objects the unsteady and wavering mind may run after, it should be repeatedly fixed on God.”

When the practices of mind-control are started, the mind shows

\* मन लोभी मन लालची, मन चंचल मन चोर ।  
मनके मत चलिये नहीं, पलक पलक मन और ॥

so much of strength in the beginning, it so easily overcomes the beginner by its instability and power, that the latter very often gets demoralized, and a sort of despair takes possession of his heart. But he should cultivate patience at this stage. Such is but the character of the mind, and we have to attain victory over it; no useful purpose will be served by getting demoralized. We have to face it diligently. What does it matter if it is not subdued today? There is bound to come a day when it will be thoroughly subjugated. That is why the Lord said:—

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।  
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥

( *Ibid.* VI. 25 )

“Through gradual practice let him acquire tranquillity by means of Reason controlled by steadfastness; and having established the mind in God, let him not think of anything else.”

The practicant should cultivate great firmness and patience. No purpose will be served by his getting perplexed, or feeling sad and depressed. Just as particles of dust are found on the floor even after it is thoroughly swept, even so it should cause no wonder if the mind appears to be more unsteady and illimitable during the process of making it free from thoughts. But that should not frighten us into stopping the process of cleaning up the mind. A strong determination should be made that no idle thought, no false imagination will be allowed to enter the portal of the mind. Many a time the mind frustrates the efforts of the practicant in

spite of all his firmness and determination. He imagines that he is engaged in meditation of God, but the mind is busy within itself in the worship of its own day-dreams. When the practicant gets conscious of it, he receives a shock of surprise. He wonders how this happened. Wherefrom those new dreams of which he had never been conscious made their appearance? The fact is, during the attempt of the practicant to make the mind free of undivine thoughts, the mind gets, on the one hand, some amount of rest from the work to which it is ordinarily habituated; and on the other, it is not yet used to fix itself on God. Therefore, no sooner it finds some rest it begins to unroll the past impressions like the pictures in a cinema. That is how old pictures and ideas make their appearance during meditation which would not appear when the mind is engaged in ordinary worldly activities. Observing this unusual strength of the mind, the practicant gets puzzled and stupefied, but let him not worry on account of this. When his practice will gain in strength, the mind as soon as it is relieved from worldly activities will learn to attach itself to God. Gradually it will become so much used to meditation that it will not give up meditation even when forced to do so. What the mind seeks is happiness. It runs after worldly objects because it feels happiness to lie in them, instead of in God. When through practice it will realize worldly objects to be sources of misery and supreme happiness to lie in God, it will itself give up its fondness for worldly

objects and run after God. But till this stage is reached the practicant must constantly and carefully keep himself engaged in spiritual practice. Whenever he detects the mind to have wandered, he should seize it at once. Like an expert thief, the mind is a past-master in the art of giving the slip. Therefore, it should be seized immediately it makes an attempt to run away.

Removing the causes which drag the mind after worldly objects, fix it on God. Keep a careful watch over it, so that it may not run away. If you cannot control it by this means, allow it full freedom to wander, but meditate the presence of God in every object on which the mind may rest, and thus train it to meditate on God. By this method also the mind may be steadied and brought under control.

*( To be continued )*

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