

Methods of Mind-Control.

BY JAYADAYAL GOYANDKA.

A friend asks: "The mind is very fickle and careless; it is most difficult to bring it under control. The scriptures no doubt mention many methods of restraining the mind. We read and hear about them, and try to understand and practise them according to our humble capacity. But the mind does not become steady. What is the easiest method of bringing it under control?"

For the total annihilation of sorrow and attainment of Bliss, mind-control is indispensable. It can be brought under control through sincere and devoted effort on the lines laid down by the Śrutis, Smṛtis and other books of scripture. The real fact is that practicants do not make sufficient effort, and go on making enquiries about the easiest method. That is why generally the majority of people complain that the mind does not

become steady. The ancient Ṛṣis, who wrote the scriptures, have mentioned many methods of controlling the mind. Among them some methods appear easy to some people, while other methods appear easy to others. Owing to differences in the character, temperament and qualifications of men, these various methods have been laid down by the great Ṛṣis. I shall try in the following lines to describe the practices which appear easy to my humble understanding.

First of all, it should be borne in mind that restraint of the mind is difficult unless it is subdued, and subjugation of the mind is difficult unless it has attained purity. Therefore, it is one's first duty to purify the mind. The Mahātmas as well as God Himself has mentioned many practices for attainment of purification

of the mind. Cultivation of friendliness towards the happy, of compassion towards the distressed, of pleasure towards the virtuous and indifference towards the sinner has been mentioned by Mahārṣi Patañjali as a method of attaining purification of mind. Through attainment of purification, the mind gets bright and complacent. Then it becomes steady and restrained:

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां
भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम् ।

(*Yogasūtras* I. 33)

In the *Gītā*, chapter V, verse 11, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has advised practicants to perform action without any attachment as a means of purification of the mind. The instructions of other saints and Mahātmās also are almost on the same lines as this.

The sum and substance of all these instructions is that to engage oneself in the welfare of all beings and render happiness to all without seeking honour and without any motive of self-interest is an excellent means of purification of the heart. But there is another method which is even better than this, and that is the Kīrtana of the Names and glories of God.

“Just as fire burns even when unwillingly touched, similarly Śrī Hari when remembered even by wicked men destroys their sins.”*

Says the *Gītā*:—

“Even if the most sinful worships Me with undivided heart, he should be accounted as virtuous,

* हरिर्हरति पापानि दुष्टचित्तैरपि स्मृतः ।
अनिच्छयापि संस्पृष्टो दहत्येव हि पावकः ॥

because he has resolved rightly. He soon becomes righteous and obtains eternal peace. O Arjuna, know it for certain that My devotee never perishes.”*

When sins are eradicated through practices mentioned above, the mind automatically becomes pure and free. It is then very easy for it to become one-pointed and restrained. A mind thus become pure and free attains the qualification of obtaining Supreme Bliss.

It is necessary to understand the character of the mind. The scriptures are really profuse in their description of its character.

Mahārṣi Patañjali also says:—

प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रा स्मृतयः ।

(*Yogasūtras* I. 6)

“Proof, error, doubt, slēep and memory, these are the five functions of the mind.”

The cessation of these functions is Yoga.

One Mahātmā has described the states of the mind to be five—distracted (क्षिप्त), scattered (विक्षिप्त), confounded (मूढ), fixed on one object (एकाग्र), and restrained (निरुद्ध); and another has characterized it only as fancy or thought (सङ्कल्प). They are all correct from their own points of view. In short, therefore, it may be stated that that which is the substratum of thought, or that in which thoughts or

* अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।

कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(IX. 30, 31)

fancies arise is mind. Being the substratum of thought, it may also be characterized as thought. Now, the point to be considered is what is the easiest method of restraining thought? But even before that it is necessary to understand why thoughts repeatedly make their appearance and the cause of distaste for any sort of spiritual discipline. Together with this it is also necessary to form an idea of the hindrances which make their appearance during spiritual practice.

Referring to these hindrances, Mahārṣi Patañjali says in his *Yoga-Darśana*:—

व्याधिस्त्यानसंशयप्रमादालस्याविरतिभ्रान्तिदर्शनालम्ब-
भूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानि चित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरायाः ।

दुःखदौर्मेनस्याङ्गमेजयत्वश्वासप्रश्वासा विक्षेपसहसुवः ।

(I. 30, 31)

“Sickness, incapacity for action, doubt, carelessness, idleness, thirst for sense-enjoyment, delusion, non-attainment of Samādhi, and unsteadiness—these nine forms of distraction of the mind are hindrances to Yoga.

“Sorrow, agitation, unsteadiness of limbs, inhalation and exhalation—all these go together with the above nine forms of distraction.”

The other scriptures also say, more or less, the same thing. Among these hindrances disease, incapacity, carelessness, idleness, attachment and unsteadiness, these six are primary; and among the six, again, idleness and unsteadiness are particularly harmful.

The main reasons for the appearance of endless thoughts on

the surface of the mind are past impressions in the accumulated store of Karma (सञ्चित) and the Karma which has begun to bear fruit (प्रारब्ध), evil habit, attachment for sense-objects, past sins which obstruct the growth of attraction for spiritual practice, doubt, error and lack of faith.

For the destruction of attachment for sense-objects one should constantly revolve in mind the thoughts of evil and misery involved in the enjoyment of the perishable and transient objects of the world and cultivate dispassion towards them and renounce them.

Prārabdha, or the Karma which has begun to bear fruit, is generally terminated through suffering and enjoyment, and Sañchita Karma, *i. e.*, the accumulated store of sins, is destroyed through disinterested service of suffering humanity and practice of Japa of the Divine Name.

For removal of evil habit, doubt, error and lack of faith, association of virtuous souls and study of sacred literature are particularly helpful.

In the *Gītā*, chapter VI, verse 34, Arjuna queried Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa about this very question of mind-control. Recognizing the validity of Arjuna's doubt the Lord answered him by saying that though the mind was unsteady and fickle, it could be made steady through practice (अभ्यास) and cultivation of dispassion (वैराग्य).

“O possessor of mighty arms, the mind is undoubtedly unsteady and hard to control. But it can be

brought under control through practice and dispassion.”*

Restraint of the mind becomes easy when this instruction is carried out. Maharṣi Patañjali also corroborates this instruction:—

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ।

(*Yogasutras* I. 12)

“Through practice and dispassion, it (the mind) may be restrained.”

Bhagavān Kapila, the author of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, also mentions practice and dispassion as the two methods of controlling the mind (वैराग्याभ्यास्तात्). The conclusion of the other scriptures also are almost identical in this respect. A devotee says:—

“Stop the fancies of the mind, by whatever method you can; either by Bhakti, or by Yoga, or by Jñāna.”

The above discussion proves that practice and dispassion are the two sovereign methods of controlling the mind. One should, therefore, cultivate dispassion towards worldly objects and girding up one’s loins begin the practice of controlling the mind. It is necessary in this connection to understand what constitute practice and dispassion. Lack of enjoyment of any object of this world consisting of the three Guṇas and total want of thirst or attachment for all objects is called dispassion. Other scriptures also define dispassion in almost these very terms. The term ‘practice’ is a

* असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

(*Gita* - VI. 58)

comprehensive one. It requires to be explained at length, but instead of entering into details, we shall only touch upon the main points. With reference to ‘practice’, Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

तत्र स्थितौ यत्नोऽभ्यासः ।

(*Yogasutras* I. 13)

“The attempt to fix the mind only on God is called practice.”

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो बृढभूमिः ।

(*Ibid.* I. 14)

“It becomes established when done constantly and reverentially for a sufficient length of time.”

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says almost the same thing:—

“Withdrawing the wavering and unsteady mind from whatever objects it may run after, it should be repeatedly fixed on the Paramātmā.”*

The easiest and best method of removing all spiritual hindrances and attaining steadiness of mind is the practice of Japa of the Divine Name and meditation on the Form of God. Maharṣi Patañjali also corroborates it:

ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा ।

(*Ibid.* I. 28)

“Through Devotion and surrender to God also the mind will cease its function.”

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः । तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् । ततः प्रत्यक्चेतनाधिगमोऽप्यन्तरायाभावश्च ।

(*Ibid.* I. 27-29)

“The Name of God is Om. Japa should be performed of this Name and the Form indicated by the

* यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

(*Gita* - VI. 26).

Name should be meditated on. Through this practice all hindrances are removed and the Ātmā is realized."

The *Gītā* says:—

"O Arjuna, he who exclusively and constantly meditates on Me, I am easily accessible to that Yogi ever attuned to Me."*

That is why Japa of the Divine Name and meditation on the Form of God should be constantly practised in a disinterested spirit.

The scriptures mention other forms of 'practice' as well through pursuit of anyone of which it is possible to bring the mind under control. The following are a few of the more important among them.

(1) Instead of withdrawing the mind from objects it feels tempted to dwell upon and then subduing it and fixing it on God, the easier course is to meditate on God in the very object it usually reflects upon. Therefore, this should be attempted with a view to restrain the functions of the mind. God being immanent everywhere, contemplation on Him according to one's light, practised with reverence and Love, brings about cessation of the mental function.

(2) The mind may also be made one-pointed and its functions may be stopped through fixing the eyes with feelings of Devotion and Love on the lotus-like face of an image or picture of either Bhagavān Śiva or Viṣṇu, or any other deity chosen by the

practicant, and feeling infinite compassion and Love flowing towards him from the Lord, placing the bee-like mind on the lotus of the face of that embodiment of Bliss.

(3) If one stands early in the morning facing the sun with closed eyes, he will feel the whole surrounding pervaded by a strong mass of light. Keeping this light in view, let him imagine that the whole atmosphere is being filled with another mass of light which is a thousand times stronger than this, and that there exists nothing except that light. This is the Form of Paramātmā as Light. Thus forgetting the world and fixing the mind entirely on the Form of God as Light, the mind may be made steady.

(4) Dispassion is naturally developed through the study and appreciation of the character of saints like Dadhīchi, Ṛṣavadeva, Jaḍabharata, Śukadeva and others who possessed this quality among them. Therefore, even through the meditation of a Mahātma, who possesses dispassion, who has totally annihilated all attachments of the world, dispassion may be developed and the functions of the mind may be stopped. This is also an easy method of bringing the mind under control. Mahārṣi Patañjali also says:—'कीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम्' "the mind may be steadied even through the meditation of a person, who has overcome all attachments."

(5) There is a Nāḍī (nerve) called Suṣuṃṇā in the heart, which is the seat of Supreme Bliss. The *Gītā* says:—'सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टः' "I am

* अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

in the heart of all beings." Paramātmā is the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss; therefore, Consciousness and Bliss should be contemplated on in this Nāḍī. All the other nerves of the body are under the control of this nerve and cease their function as soon as it stops to beat. The average movement of this Nāḍī is 78 to 80 per minute. The beat of pulse at the wrist or in the temples proceed in consonance with the movement of this Nāḍī. The mind may be steadied and as a consequence God may be realized through Japa of Om practised with the rhythm of the movement of this Nāḍī, together with meditation on God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss, in this centre. The practice is no doubt somewhat difficult, but if it is pursued at a lonely and secluded place where one is not likely to be disturbed by other sounds, success may be attained. Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—

विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती ।

(Yogasutras I. 36)

"Or, the griefless state of illumination of the mind also steadies the mind."

This state is attained through meditation of God in the Suṣumṇā as described above.

(6) Retiring to a quiet place possessing sacred associations, undisturbed by any sound which may cause distraction, sit at ease in the Swastika or any other posture, and closing the ear-holes with the tips of two fingers concentrate your mind on hearing the unstruck sound which is going on automatically within you.

In the beginning the practicant will hear various sounds, but after some practice he will hear a sound similar to the tick of a watch repeating itself at the rate of 78 or 80 per minute. If that sound is imagined to be either Rāma, or Śiva, or Om, it will be heard as either of those Names of God. If the mind is concentrated on that sound imagining it to be Brahma itself, the faculties of the mind may be stopped and God may be thereby realized. This practice appears from the outside to be somewhat hard, but when earnestly practised either in the middle of the night or very early in the morning it will not be found to be extraordinarily difficult.

(7) Repeating Om at a stretch in imitation of the hum of bees, imagine God to be that sound. The faculties of the mind may be thus concentrated and fixed on God.

(8) The mind will become steady even through the meditation of an image or form for which one possesses reverence and Love. Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—

यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा ।

(Yogasutras I. 39)

"The mind may be steadied and its faculties may be stopped even through the meditation of a form for which one possesses a liking."

(9) Concentrating the mind on Om, exhale deeply and try to the best of your ability without feeling any exhaustion to keep the breath outside imagining God to be present in it. This is also a good practice for controlling the mind.

Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

प्रच्छेदनविधारणाभ्यां वा प्राणस्य ।

(Yogasūtras I. 34)

“The mind may be steadied also through exhalation and attempting to fix the breath outside.”

(10) Retiring to a sacred and lonely place, sit closing your eyes and meditate on God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss, withdrawing all the faculties of the mind from worldly objects and renouncing all desires and thoughts. If any thought appears in the mind, it should be immediately driven out. With a heart full of dispassion erase from the mind all impressions of the world and even of the body so that you may altogether forget their existence. This is what is called hewing the tree of the world with the axe of dispassion. But, remember, the process of forgetting the existence of the body and of the world involves the danger of producing sleep through the absorption of the mind in Prakṛti. Therefore, meditation on God should proceed side by side with the process of negation of the body and of the world, and one should resolutely fix oneself in such meditation. This is what is meant by surrender to God. Through this practice, the mind will gradually settle itself in the Form of the Paramātmā.

(11) Through exercise of discrimination and argument according to the four well-known lines of conciliation (सम), allurement (दास), coercion (दण्ड) and creation of dissension (भेद), the mind may be steadied and God realized thereby.

This is also an excellent method of God-Realization.

(A) To argue with the mind as one argues with a friend is what is called the policy of conciliation (सम). Taking the mind to be a simpleton and a friend address it as follows: “Dear friend, you are very fickle by nature; you get yourself involved in everything without any judgment, and this causes endless trouble. Please henceforward do not do anything without consultation with me. Just remember, whenever you involved yourself in any work without my consent it brought terrible difficulties on our head. You should give up this stupidity and foolishness and should never go anywhere or do anything without taking my consent. O mind, the world on which you meditate considering it to be the seat of happiness, does not contain any happiness at all; it is through delusion that it appears to you to be the source of happiness. You should reflect on this truth even from now, otherwise there is a terrible repentance in store for you in the future.”

(B) To argue by offering temptation to the mind is the policy of allurement (दास). For instance, one may argue:—“O mind, the joy from contact with worldly objects being limited by time and place is by nature momentary and transient. A delicious article of food is dear to the palate, and not to the ears or the sense of touch. The pleasure it gives is temporary, and not constant. Similarly, delightful music gives satisfaction to the ears, not to the tongue or to the sense

of smell, and that satisfaction also is short-lived. On this analysis, you should understand that the pleasure given by every object, being limited by time and place, is perishable and transient. In comparison with the Supreme Bliss of God-Realization, this worldly pleasure is not like even a fire-fly before the sun. The joy derived from worldly objects is no real joy, but only a reflection of it. That is why when the real joy is attained, this worldly pleasure disappears, as the stars disappear on the rising of the sun. Therefore, withdraw yourself from the pursuit of perishable and momentary worldly happiness, and try to attain the joy, which is eternal, in which lies peace and Supreme Bliss.

The amount of labour and trouble one has to undergo for gaining worldly happiness is not required for attaining Supreme Bliss. The more one understands the secret of it, the more he will go on gaining the Sattvic type of happiness even during the period of practice. Therefore, give up these enjoyments of the world, and devote yourself only to God for the attainment of real happiness."

(C) If the mind does not yield to the policies of conciliation and allurements, attempt should be made to control it through the policy of coercion (दण्ड). To control one through threat is called application of the policy of coercion. Just as a king subdues his enemy through threat, even so the mind should be subdued. Thus:—

"O mind, if you persist in your habit of meditating on the world and on objects of enjoyment, I shall renounce everything and retiring to a forest or a cave perform austerities and thus bring you under subjection.

Even if I die of hunger, I shall not care, but I shall certainly uproot your existence. It is owing to your foolishness and unsteadiness that you do not realize the terrible condition to which you and I have been brought through your meditation on the world. Therefore, either by the practice of Yama or Niyama, or by whatever means it may be possible, I shall set about to destroy you. For when I sit for meditation on God, you create vexation by producing all sorts of worldly pictures before me and thus deprive me of Divine meditation. When I sit for practice of Japa or study of the scriptures you induce me to finish them quickly pointing to the importance of false worldly work. Thus I fail to attain success in anything. When I attempt to perform patiently my daily obligatory spiritual duties and devotional practices you take shelter under sleep and thus stupefy me. On reflection it appears that you are my greatest enemy. Therefore, it is just and proper to destroy you by whatever means I can. If you want to avoid destruction give up this habit of contemplation on the world and take without delay to meditation on God, so that you and I both may be blessed."

(D) With the object of gaining some purpose, to create misunderstanding among friends and relations by carrying tales against some to others and *vice versa*, is known as the policy of sowing dissension (भेद). Thus in order to break the friendship and affection between the mind and the senses in connection with the enjoyment of worldly objects, this policy of dissension may be employed.

First of all, the senses may be addressed thus:—

"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."*

"O senses, the mind is extremely unsteady, greedy and ignorant; you should never suddenly do anything without judgment following the dictates of the mind. If you involve yourself in falsehood, hypocrisy, theft, adultery or any act of violence under the direction of the mind which is wholly swayed by lust, anger and greed, you will open yourself to terrible suffering both in this world and in the next. For instance, you will be punished by Law and lose prestige and suffer tortures in hell if you are found guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy. Similarly, theft and adultery will bring you social chastisement, infamy, legal punishment and terrible tortures in hell. Therefore if you are interested in your own welfare give up vice and enjoyment and exercising judgment engage yourself in right conduct as well as in the acts of service and worship of God."

The mind should be told—"The senses serve their own purpose and enjoy objects with your help, and when their purpose is served they throw you into the pit to suffer tortures. For instance, you feel pleasure when the palate induces you to take a wrong diet mentioning it to be right, or the sense of touch induces you to indulge in the momentary joy of sex. But as their after-effects you become a victim of diseases and consequent suffering and have to repent all your life, and your strength, energy, brilliance, fame, virtue and longevity get destroyed. The other sense-pleasures also are of

the same type as the above. Thus committing sins under the subordination of the senses you become a victim for suffering the tortures of hell. Therefore, O mind, if you carelessly neglect your true interest, you will suffer the fate of crores of other creatures. The suffering undergone by the beasts, birds and insects is nothing but the result of their neglect of the opportunities of human birth. If you take care this time, well and good; otherwise the present life also will be a terrible loss. Therefore, heed the warning, and do not waste a moment of this valuable human birth. To spend even a moment of this life without remembering God is as good as throwing oneself into the jaws of death. For a man attains whatever thought takes hold of him at the time of parting from life. And the last thought of a man generally happens to be what he has practised throughout life. This proves that the pursuit of thought of this perishable world is the same as falling repeatedly into the jaws of death. Therefore, regard worldly thoughts to be as good as death and withdrawing from them devote yourself only to remembrance of God. During your life of activity also when the faculties begin to run after worldly objects, meditate on the presence of God everywhere."

The *Gītā* says.—

"He who sees Me everywhere, and sees everything in Me, I am never lost from his view, nor is he ever lost from My view."†

Thus advising and instructing the mind, when the practicant succeeds in engaging it in the constant meditation of God, it gets steady, and he is thus blessed with God-Realization.

* मन लोभी मन लालची, मन चंचल मन चोर ।
मनके मते न चालिये, पलक पलक मन और ॥

† यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥