

Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

# How the Mind Works

**Controlling the mind is fallacious from the ultimate point of view, but as a process for seekers, it is very genuine. What is mind? Spiritually the mind alternates between likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion. It is simply these pairs of opposites.**

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UMAN NATURE HAS two trends: upward or downward. Normally speaking it is easier to go down than to go up. Naturally one's own efforts, though capable potentially, are not generally toward upward growth. We like to obtain whatever is easy and pleasant; whatever is difficult or problematic we do not want. Basically or intrinsically that is not wrong. Spirit, Light is our true nature, and the refuge or rest we desire. Having given that up, we now have to do what is

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**The Goal makes its own way. If you are sincere and regular in practices, your path begins to widen, to flourish and be successful. Like a bird that takes to the sky—you cannot trace its path although it is there. The way you fly makes its own way.**

difficult and uncomfortable. Therefore, to make the process inspiring and interesting, we need *Satsang*, holy company, holy books, holy places, natural surroundings, and silence through which the mind becomes quieted.

When we first start doing these things, our mind revolts and reacts. Whatever the negative or positive reactions, they should not be suppressed. It is a simple way of being cleansed so that whatever impurities are there will come out. This cleansing process is necessary so that our practices become interesting, encouraging and inspiring. Otherwise religion or beliefs can become monotonous and mechanical. The external world of senses is only replaced by certain dogmas, traditions and beliefs; therefore we do not reach the elevating point of spirituality. As you go on purifying yourself

more and more, negative thoughts begin to subside and you will feel joyful. The journey should be joyful. In between it does become melancholy, static, or kind of complacent. These experiences come, but the duty of a seeker is to carry on, whatever the results may be.

The Goal makes its own way. If you are sincere and regular in practices, your path begins to widen, to flourish and be successful. The whole of unlimited space has the potential of innumerable ways. Like a bird that takes to the sky—you cannot trace its path although it is there. The way you fly makes its own way. Space has the capacity to give you the way you want. Tradition is not wrong, but often it creates complacency and monotony. We need a refreshing or renewed approach.

You have to become immune to the disturbances of the world in such a way that you walk safely. The easy

way is found by wearing your own shield. This shield in spiritual language is called “self control.” Instead of expecting the world to be tempered according to your wishes, control yourself. There are many difficulties and vicissitudes in life that we may want to see changed, but if you can walk with the shield of self control, nothing can disturb you.

When we say that God does everything, in principle this is correct. But in practice we do not see God as doing everything. This is why the saying, “God helps those who help themselves.” When you achieve self control, even if not perfectly, God will help you further. The scriptures proclaim: *Ekam satyam vipra bahuda vadanti*—“Truth is one, sages call it by many names.” We follow the way we like, the way we choose. In spite of the many differences, the way each one follows must be faithful and sincere.

It is not that self control will give you salvation, but it is a necessary step. What is self control? Here “self” implies the mind, not the true Self. Controlling the mind is fallacious from the ultimate point of view, but as a process for seekers, it is very genuine. We generally try to suppress the mind, to use force to make it quiet, and it does not happen. After some time it again exposes. What is mind? Spiritually the

mind alternates between likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion. These two forces are called *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* in Sanskrit: the “will to do” and the “will not to do.”

The mind is simply these pairs of opposites. We wish to do something and something else obstructs us. Either we fall prey to it and get weak, or we overcome it. That means the mind has again two aspects: victory and defeat. These aspects alternate until the mind becomes weakened by friction or conflict. The time does come when the mind becomes so weakened that we begin to suppress it, to be angry, to try any method to control it, but mostly this does not happen. While we sit in concentration, the mind is somewhat quiet, but as soon as we jump up the mind jumps up too. How do we control weakness of mind born of the friction of defeat and victory? Mind can be controlled by the ego, but the

ego is itself involved in this weakness and friction: the anger, pleasure, fame, victory, defeat, and so on.

It is necessary to understand the basic divisions in the mind to know what is meant by control of the mind. The great sage Patanjali has given these four divisions: *mana*, the instinctive mind; *buddhi*, the intellect; *chitta*, the conscience; and *ahamkara*, the ego. The instinctive mind is subject to the senses. Whatever instinct is forefront, that portion of the mind will say “yes” or “no.” As we grow in evolution, we become intellectual, rational beings. Then the determinative faculty or intellect begins to dominate the instinctual mind. If you are sufficiently matured at this stage, you will begin to think what you should and should not do. Then you make the mind controlled by rationality, logic or discussion, based upon your conviction. However, the mind may follow the intellect or the intellect may follow the mind. If the intellect follows the mind, and if it is wrong, the whole chariot is doomed to fall into a ditch. If the intellect is right, you are blessed. If the mind follows the intellect, it may be curbed or suppressed, but there is as yet no satisfaction or fulfillment in this, because the intellect has a limited capacity.

When you evolve further the mind begins to speak from a deeper level: conscience, the witness. Conscience begins to tell you: *you should do this* or *you should not do this*. The creation of religion came from conscience. When we are ruled by the instinctive mind, we are slaves, in bondage. When we are primarily ruled by the intellect, we become leaders, rulers, or are defeated by the same. When we are primarily ruled by conscience, we become religious, righteous. The voice of conscience then controls the intellect as well as the instinctive mind. Here lies the *real* need or meaning of mind control: that it should be neither by suppression, nor by force, nor by intellectual logic. Control should be by the conviction of *should be* or *should not be*. This is the solution.

The fourth aspect of the mind is the ego: the doer and director behind all these three phenomena, though it is still a portion of the mind. When you become egoless you have no mind, but while you have a mind your ego will exist. Ego listens to mind, intellect or conscience. When ego listens to conscience, it convinces the intellect, which then rules or regulates the mind. That control is easy. However, the mind will not pleasingly accept suppression or pressure to do or not do something *unless* it is convinced by conscience. The mind takes many kinds of reactions when we are



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not moved by conscience. These are all parts of one limited consciousness.

You have to be quiet to hear the voice of conscience. It is a deeper voice that cannot be heard in a jumbled or disturbed mind. Some people have asked me if this is the voice of God. If I see someone for whom aspiring to Spirit and God is a long way off, I have at times said, “Yes, this is the voice of God.” This is to make that person at least start there. Once she evolves higher, if she asks again I may say, “God was too far for you. You needed religion. Now I will tell you the further way.” When conscience degrades, religion reverts to dogma and tradition. It becomes habitual, mechanical and monotonous. Those who follow conscience are truly religious, though they may not necessarily follow the form of a religion. The form need not be condemned; it may be fine. But when we stick to the shell of religion—dogma or tradition—we do not find joy or release. When you reside in the conscience part of the mind, you hear the voice of true religion and your heart is purified. At that stage you begin to truly love God.

Loving God is the only religion we could teach to man; there is no other meaning of religion. This can only come out of purification of heart, which is done by the conscience. You must have read or heard that when you sit in meditation, you should first watch your thoughts, allow them to come and go, and be a witness, like a detached onlooker. The question has sometime arisen: “How am I to do this? Either I am involved or detached. Either I am an ascetic or a householder. You are telling me to remain a householder, take care of my family and my duties, and also be detached?” Once you understand the inherent divisions of the mind, you know what you should do or not by applying your conscience.

Often when we first attempt to listen to conscience, although we understand and believe it, weaknesses propel us to do the contrary. This is part of the process. Even though you may fail, do not give up listening to conscience so that at least you repent. Do not suppress the voice of conscience. The time will come, after ten failings or a hundred failings, when you listen properly

and just do it. In the old days in monasteries in India, the guru would accept young disciples and would sit with them and say something like, “God alone is true. Everything else is false. Repeat it twenty times.” The disciples would repeat it twenty times. Then he would say, “Now sit silently, close your eyes, contemplate upon it, meditate upon it,” and the Master would leave. They did not encourage disciples to question or discuss these teachings. The disciples were very devoted and did not need to discuss; they simply accepted it.

Now that we are primarily rational beings, we do not say to suppress the mind. But if you are deficient in devotion to God or your Master, try to understand where you have been suppressing your conscience and giving free play to the instinctive mind. We have called this freedom but it does not give us joy. We need to understand that free play of the instinctive mind is not true freedom, because you are actually suppressing your conscience. Supposing you are weak when you hear the voice of conscience. You know what you should do but this is a deep-rooted karma and you feel compelled or helpless. Do not feel sympathy for the ego. Your heart needs sympathy or compassion; ego needs proper dealing with. The mind and intellect do not need sympathy either. Along with the instinctive mind, apply conscience.

Judge yourself, not others. Judgment, religion and dharma, or righteousness, come from the inner voice of conscience. Although it is not the voice of God, it is pure enough to be followed. Conscience purifies the heart and gradually the intellect also. So when the intellectual faculty begins to think, it will be in connection or relationship with the conscience. When you follow the voice of conscience, the voice of true religion, your thinking becomes purified. In return, this will control the instinctive mind in such a way that instead of making us a slave, it becomes our slave. A better word is instrument. All justice or injustice, good or bad, peace or disturbance, is done through the five senses, and mind acts through them. If the mind is controlled in a pure way, the world outside

becomes just and good. If it follows primitive instinct only, then injustice follows. When you follow the voice of conscience, controlling your instinctive mind and intellect, you will not regret it.

The beauty is that conscience shows us the consequences even as we begin to act. Normally we come to know the results after having done something: first we do and then we think. That is the perverted thinking of intellect and how karma is produced. With conscience it is the reverse: it tells you the consequences before you act, provided you are listening. This is what yogis, mystics, and even some counselors and therapists do. They advise that if you do this or do not do that, there will be certain consequences. How do they know? Even if they are not realized souls, they know because their conscience is open. When you

follow your conscience perfectly, you know the destiny, not only yours but others’ too.

When ego follows conscience and your intellect and instinctive mind get purified, ego begins to be *truly* humble. Before that ego is very bold, so much so that without ego you cannot live or do anything. The real search begins at the level of conscience, when the heart has become sufficiently pure. Then ego asks, “Who am I?” Or you say, “God, Thou art everything. I am nothing.” These two approaches are the same: one is the path of knowledge; the other is the path of devotion. This genuine, natural cry happens when the conscience opens. Therefore each religion teaches us to purify our heart. Without purity of heart we cannot really be spiritual.

Purity leads to selflessness and egolessness, which are beyond this whole mental arena. When you adhere



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invoked. You begin to contemplate, “Who am I? From where have I come? What is my destiny? What is the purpose of life, death and rebirth? What is the mystery of all these phenomena, the stars, suns and cosmos?”

Conscience gives you a clear perspective. If sometimes intellect is clarifying, it is only because at that time your conscience may be open. Otherwise intellect often produces confusion. You cannot have confidence in it. You must have seen how often you change your ideas, decisions and plans, because intellect cannot produce crystal clear solutions. From experience to experience, ideas and convictions go on changing. But when you hear the voice of conscience, you are not confused. You do not even have to think about it. Gradually, as you go on practicing, these things happen and make your path more interesting. The search becomes really joyful. You do not have to control or regret or fight with yourself.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the senses are likened to the five horses of a chariot. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna: “If you follow these horses, they will pull your chariot into the ditch. But when you control the reins, they will lead you to your destination.” When you follow the voice of conscience, the way becomes inspiring and encouraging. Then your practice is very, very efficacious. When you sit in meditation with a clear conscience and purified heart, you become very concentrated. Then whatever goal you choose, it just goes on happening until ego gives itself up and you get to Realization.

There is a story of King Bruce who was lying injured on the battlefield after having been defeated. From there he saw a spider climbing up a wall. Sixteen or seventeen times the spider fell but it kept on until it succeeded in reaching the top. King Bruce contemplated that if a spider can do this, why not I as a man? He got up, gathered his forces, went to the battlefield and won. Do not give up the principle even though in practice you may fail. That is remembering the goal. When you do that you deserve the grace of

God, not otherwise. Carry on practices until the day you become intense about it, which is called longing. When that longing or madness comes to reach the goal, it will be the third stage of conscience. Then you will be very sensible for God and as if mad for the world. Before that you were only sensible for the world.

It is a becoming process. God is within you, God is behind you, God is all around you. When you hear the voice of God, the Word of God, the Cosmic Om, you will be beyond ego. That will be infallible. This is the difference between the voice of conscience and the voice of God. Whereas the voice of conscience still has a limited capacity, the voice of God is unlimited and eternal. With this view, if you read the Gita or Bible or Dhammapada or Koran, you will understand that the portions on which we fight with each other have only a limited, transitory value. On the portions that are of eternal value, the principles of love, truth, helpfulness, harmlessness and so on, we never differ with each other.

When you become Realized or Awakened, you do not need any limited form of religion. Therefore Realized souls do not follow any particular religion or dogma, because they have transcended even conscience. The need of the conscience, or religion, is to guide the intellect, the mind, the senses, and the body. When you transcend the ego you are law unto yourself. Then you are infinite, eternal, God conscious, Christ conscious. You are Liberated, beyond time and space. 🌸

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to the voice of conscience, you do not regret because you know what is right and wrong. You may still ignore conscience because the habit of mind leads you, but the day will come when the voice of conscience will overpower you. This is the way practice is done. At the third level of conscience you will get real devotion, real love, real understanding. What Buddha called right thinking, right action, right speech—all these follow through conscience. I will not teach you mechanically what is right and what is wrong. You have to find that out through your own experiences. Therefore I have said to follow your free way, follow your conscience. This is the way of *sadhana*, spiritual practices, the way a seeker should grow.

Follow your conscience, not what anyone says is right or wrong for you. It is better to attempt that and fail, but do not ignore your conscience. When your conscience is awakened, your guru within is awakened. Your outer guru and inner guru are one. Whatever your

outer guru tells you will be your inner voice too. That is why disciples sometimes experience their guru guiding them from a distance. They do not understand that their conscience is actually guiding them. If your guru is only outside you, you would be simply an automaton. There must be within you the sympathetic vibration of your guru; therefore you listen to your outer guru. When some people hear this, they conclude erroneously and egotistically, “Why to have a guru outside then?” I tell them, “There is no need. Just follow yourself and see if you are happy. The guru will be happy if you are happy.” The problem is that this is ego’s trick, not to follow conscience.

Everyone can be Buddha, everyone can have Christ Consciousness, but that is only when your inner guru, the voice of religion, law and justice is awakened. Even then the ego remains, but as Sri Ramakrishna said: this ego is purified. When ego gets purified, when the heart gets purified, then true love and devotion for God is

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