



Mind and Meditation

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The mind is composed of five layers. These five layers resemble the petals of a banana flower which has many layers of petals. The outer layers of the flower are harder and the inner layers are softer. So the layers of the mind are similar to the petals of the banana flower. The outer layers of the mind are harder or crude and the inner layers of the mind are softer or subtle. In order to properly utilize the mind, we must be very clear about its resources. We must understand the mind by what it does, so that we can follow the best method to develop a particular layer of the mind. Yoga is an exact science which prescribes a systematic procedure for each human resource, therefore we must clearly know the function of each resource and apply the necessary technique.

FIRST LAYER OF THE MIND

The first layer of the mind performs three functions--sensing, desiring and acting. This layer of the mind is the link between the five senses and thought, between thought and the five motor organs. The five senses are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The five motor organs are the vocal chords, hands, feet, genital organs and anus. Because the five senses come in contact with the outside world, the first layer of the mind has desire. This mind then wants to fulfill its desires through the five motor organs. If this layer of mind is not in contact with the senses, then no desire results. It is like a child sitting in the class-room thinking of his/her favorite TV program or imagining some fantastic thoughts of voyages to outer space. The teacher may be giving a lesson in math's or science, but because the child's first layer of mind is not in contact with the sensory organs, the child's senses do not see or hear the lesson. The first layer of the mind must be in contact with the senses so that an impression can be made.

MORALITY

Morality is the process to develop the first layer of the mind. Morality is the force which carries you to your destination. Obviously the mind must have a goal. In which direction should the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin move. Before moving you should decide where you are going. What is the goal of life? Why did you come to this planet? If you do not have a direction, then your energy is scattered, you achieve nothing. Consider the effort football players exert in training to participate in league championships. Do you think they would have the same enthusiasm for the game if the goals on either side of the field were removed? All the practice of the team players with the help of experienced coaches is done to be able to score more goals than the opponent. If there are no goals, then what is the point of practicing days and weeks for competition. Even the thousands of football fans would never come to the game just to watch the players expertly kick the ball around the field for hours. It is the goal that makes the sport of life interesting and exciting. Morality means the proper use of the sensory and motor organs. The eyes should see only those objects which bring the mind closer to the goal of life. The ears should hear only those sounds which carry the mind within reach of Infinite Happiness. The skin should only bring the mind in touch with those objects which remind us of His all pervading presence. Each and every sensory and motor organ should be utilized in relationship with the goal of Infinite Happiness, Love and Peace. The sensory organs should bring the mind closer to the Supreme Goal and the motor organs should inspire others to follow our example.

SECOND LAYER OF MIND

The second layer of the mind thinks, remembers and experiences. Whatever has been received through the doors of the mind, the five senses, passes through the first layer to the second layer of the mind. The experience is held here for a short time to analyze all its qualities, to compare this thought with memories of the past and to enjoy its pleasure or pain. The most important quality of this layer of the mind is its capacity to hold the experience. Everything in this universe is rhythmic. The brain gives a specific number of impulses per second, the heart beats regularly a number of times per minute and the body breathes a certain number of cycles per minute. Now a normal healthy human being breathes 16 to 18 times per minute or approximately 1 breath every 4 seconds. The pattern of breath is as follows: breathing in --pause-- breathing out --pause-- breathing in --pause-- breathing out --pause-- etc. As you can see there are two times in the cycle of breathing when the breath stops or pauses. These two pause periods are important for different reasons. The pause with the breath in is important for lifting things. A weightlifter breathes in before lifting heavy weights during the Olympics. However when you are watching a very exciting program on the television, perhaps a fight between good and evil, while the struggle is going on, your mind is completely absorbed in the action on the screen. When the exciting scene is completed, your natural reaction will be to take a very deep breath and exhale. Why? Because of your complete concentration, the breath is automatically held in the pause with the breath out. Therefore it is important in the strengthening of concentration to consciously develop the pause with the breath out.

PRANAYAMA

This process of breath control is called pranayama in yoga. Prana in Sanskrit language means vitality. Vitality is that quality of a thing that makes it alive, a living being. Yama in Sanskrit means control. The control of the vitality of the body is pranayama. The practice of pranayama in yoga means the control of the breath. Breath is the link with the prana, therefore the control of breath leads to the control of prana. Since the practice of pranayama is for deeper concentration of mind in meditation and for greater power of will, pranayama must always be linked with ideation, the sentimental and intellectual meaning of mantra (an acoustic sound appropriate to the individual empowered by the Guru). Increasing psychic strength without proper psychic direction is dangerous. A car driving at high speed without the aid of the steering wheel will lead to disaster.

To understand clearly the relationship between the mind and the breath, we need a good analogy. The mind in thought behaves like a lake full of water. Every time we think a thought, the water of our mind-like lake reflects that thought. Perhaps you have seen in the cinema or television a drama where a beautiful princess is sitting by the side of the lake admiring her reflection in the water. Because there are no ripples, no waves in the water, she can see her reflection clearly. Meanwhile a mischievous boy or man, most likely the future husband of the princess, throws a stone in the water to tease the princess. When the stone enters the water, it breaks the calmness of the water destroying the reflection of the princess by creating ripples or waves. The breath is like the stone entering the water. The mind wants to hold the reflection of the thought, but every breath breaks the reflection, disturbing the mind. If a person breathes 16 to 18 times per minute, the psychic reflection is broken every 3 to 4 seconds. In meditation our effort is to keep the flow of thought continuous without break or pause.

Pranayama is taught to increase the holding power on thought by reducing the number of breaths per minute. In Stanford University in California and at the University of Connecticut Medical College, the Ananda Marga meditators were monitored with the help of highly sophisticated machines to determine the heart rate, blood pressure, basal skin tension, breath rate, etc. during meditation. The average breath rate of all the participants was 2.2 times per minute. This means that the flow of concentration in thought was only broken every 30 seconds or more depending on the efficiency of the practitioner. Since meditation is the process to increase the speed of the mind towards the Supreme Goal, pranayama is an essential ingredient and should be learned by every meditator from a competent teacher. However, without morality, proper direction of the mind toward the goal is unlikely. Pranayama practiced without a firm base of morality will lead to degeneration. Therefore the spiritual aspirant should be careful in the observance of morality.

THIRD LAYER OF MIND

The third layer of mind is the storehouse, library of all experiences which the second layer of mind has ever held. Whenever anyone performs an action, the mind associates with the action in three ways.

- (1) The mind identifies the object, makes the object part of itself, it has a sense of ownership, control, domination.
- (2) The mind has the vanity that it is doing the action. The mind wants to take credit for acting. It looks around to see if others have noticed that it is acting now.
- (3) (3) It wants to maintain its separateness, its individuality. It wants others to see that somehow it is different, unique.

These three dimensions of the same action create a distortion in the mind, colors the mind. It is through this distortion or color that the mind views the world, communicates and makes decisions. If the mind is filled with positive, good and noble experiences, then it sees the world as good and noble. However, if its experiences are negative, evil and degrading, then it sees the world as bad. It is because of these distortions that the spiritual aspirant cannot see beyond itself, gets entangled in life's ups and downs, heavens and hells. Some call this opportunity and accept the challenge, others call it fate and submit to it.

SENSE WITHDRAWAL

If mind is to go beyond this layer of distortion, it must withdraw its identity from these three conditions. At the time of learning meditation from a competent teacher, you will be told to withdraw your mind from the external influence of the society i.e. family, friends, professional associates, etc. during the 20 to 30 minutes of meditation. Our behavior is strongly influenced by the environment. Most people do not have the courage or strength to act according to their own inner voice. Society pushes and pulls the mind this way and that, demanding and expecting, emotionalizing and pressurizing until we are unsure whether the desires we have are our own or someone else's. Pass the examination very well, get into the science stream, go to the University, get married to this girl not that, have five children or have two, like these people, shun those people, this fashion, that fashion, etc. are all decisions demanding action, but based on external influences.

So in developing the mind, one has to bring the mind temporarily away from these outside forces. Then that mind, disassociated from external pressures and influences, is brought beyond identity with the body. Human mind is more attached to the body than its environment. It will save its life at the expense of others. Again it is more attached to the face than the foot. A scar on the foot, arm or leg does not disturb the mind, but a scar on the face needs to be hidden with clothing, cosmetics or removed by plastic surgery. The mind must be brought beyond body consciousness. The mind is then brought to a point, a seat. The body has a seat, the mind also. The subtlest mind, the existential feeling of "I EXIST" has a seat. If someone asks you, "where are you?" Your reply will be, "I am here."

But where is that "here" where "you" are? That point where "you" are is your mental seat. To withdraw the mind to that mental seat is called sense withdrawal. This accelerates the process of reaction of all your previous actions, good and bad, which act as a barrier to the real experience of Infinite Happiness. The person who properly performs this technique of yoga finds the mind rapidly changing in attitude, emotion, rationality, conviction, compassion and motivation. The distortions of the mind are removed one by one. The world and its Creator are seen as they are and not as we imagined them to be. The mind is purified.

FOURTH LAYER OF THE MIND

Discrimination and non-attachment are the functions of the fourth layer. Decisions are based on the capacity of the mind to see the situation clearly, sharply and precisely. The greater the capacity of this layer of the mind to discriminate, the better the possibility for proper decisions, without fear or favor. However decisions must be acted on. Action is prejudiced by the attachments of mind and proper action depends on non-attachment. The ship's captain may decide to sail away from the harbor into the vast sea, but if the ship is still tied, attached to the pier, the ship will not move. Those attachments, ropes tied to the pier must be cut or loosened so that the ship can reach its destination.

CONCENTRATION

Once we have decided on the Goal of life, all our physical and mental strength must be focused on it. The procedure for developing a precise mind, able to pierce through each attachment as it is confronted with the power of passionate love for the Supreme is called concentration. Concentration focuses power. The fine tuning of a sitar or the precise focusing of the camera gives the music or the picture its impact. The impact, the power of the mind gives speed to action, accelerates movement towards the Goal. As the mind moves nearer the Goal, as the iron filings move closer to the magnet, the speed of its movement increases. In that movement decisions must be made and acted out sacrificing whatever is necessary to achieve that Infinite Love. The process of concentration contains the elements which enhance this movement.

THE FIFTH LAYER OF MIND

"I" feeling is the subtlest mind. It is the very edge of the mind. If one goes beyond "I" feeling, one's individuality, speciality and uniqueness merges in its Origin. It is because one identifies with the society, the body, the senses, the intellect, the past, the conscience or the ego that the "I" cannot experience its true essence. The "I" associates itself with so many limitations that its thirst for limitlessness is frustrated.

MEDITATION

The endeavor to associate the "I" feeling with its true Self by the use of acoustic sound, sentimental and intellectual meaning by the power of Guru is called meditation. Morality is the foundation, meditation is the means and the Supreme Entity is the Goal. To make meditation effective, five fundamental elements are needed--morality, sense withdrawal, concentration, breath control and grace of Guru (Mantra). Each aspect of meditation develops the appropriate layer of mind unfolding tremendous mental strength and stamina leading to the real experience of the existence of God with an overwhelming devotion. By the repetition of the proper acoustic vibration following the breath with sentimental understanding of the meaning, the power of the Guru (Mantra) awakens the spiritual potentiality in the mind and body and brings the "I" feeling in union (Yoga) with God. This is the meaning of Yoga and the motivation for the development of mind. This is the systematic and scientific process for the realization of God and for the development of sacrifice in service to the suffering plants, animals and human beings of this entire universe.



" ...It feels good to give, to watch a child laugh, learn and live. Give a child the chance to discover fulfillment in life. Your help makes a difference.

SERVICE TO HUMANITY
Help those in need! **You can**
Make a Difference!

Self Realization and Service to All
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Social Service Spirituality
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A photograph showing the profiles of several people, including a woman in the foreground, looking towards the right. The image is partially obscured by text and has a yellow-to-black gradient background.