

“One who Conquers the Mind, Conquers the World”

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What is mind? Guru Nanak had an interesting dialogue with celebrated Siddhas of his time. They flung at him 73 questions, 64 of which related to mind. This illuminating dialogue is recorded in Guru Granth Sahib under ‘*siddh gosht*’ at pages 945 onwards. They queried him ‘when the heart or the body was not in existence, where did the mind live? (ihrdw dyh n hoql qau mnu kYTYy rhqw)’. And Guru ji replied, ‘Yogi, then the mind dwelt in a state of unattached silence’ (ihrdw dyh n hoql AauDU qau suMin mnuu rhY bYrwgl). Guru ji also urges us to conquer mind, in pauri (step) 28 of Jap ji Sahib. But what is this precious mind? Where does it exist? These questions confront us when we venture out to seek it.

Mind is in the body but is not its component; body is visible but mind is not; body is perishable, but mind is not. Search and you wouldn’t find it in body. Gurbani says-

-snkwidk nwrđ muin syKw[iqn Bl qn mih mnu nhl pyKw[

-iyyesu mn kau rUpu n ryiKAw kwel] (SGGS: 330)

On death the body disintegrates but the mind survives. Recently one doctor made an epoch-making discovery. He was mapping human brain. He had struck numerous electrodes to a patient’s brain and was recording his responses to their activation- feeling hot or cold, experiencing hunger or thirst, feeling pain or pleasure, being drowsy or awake, etc. At one point, the patient revealed, ‘I have gone outside my body. I am watching it.’ This was an astounding and amazing statement. The doctor provisionally classified this as the patient’s hallucination. After working over several other centres, he returned to it and got the same response from the patient.

This experiment showed that some element in the body was not its part since it could jump out. Unlike other body parts, it could abandon the body. The doctor could not obviously indicate the consequences if this part of the brain is removed or destroyed. This out-of-body phenomenon has always been a puzzle for the investigators. But the *dharma* evermore held that, on death, the mind left the body in the manner of pressing some centre in the brain. It is believed that mind escapes the body from one of the seven centres appropriate to its make-up - from the navel, heart, seat of sex organs, intellectual from the forehead, and enlightened from the top of head called ‘sahasradhara’. Mind has four parts: memory, intellect/emotion, analyzer and ego.

Memory and intellect supply data to the mind that decides upon a further course of action. But its resolution is always colored by one’s ego. Memory and intellect are not imperishable parts of body and cease on death. But the residueal mind laden with *sanskaras* and ego survives and provides seed for transmigration. These *sanskaras* span millions of species, past and present, that shape our destiny and behavior pattern in the present life. Religious texts refer to 8.4 million species, roughly as follows (besides humans):

Land based vegetation	2.0 million
Aquatic - in the seven seas	0.9 million
Reptilians	1.1 million
Flying in air like birds	1.0 million
Quadruplas & cattle	3.0 million
Humankind	0.4 million
Total	8.4 million

Gurbani says-

-LK cOrwslh join n Bvy[(SGGS: 1340)

How the mind functions: The mind generally adopts the way of least resistance. It prefers to function in an effortless manner. It hates course correction. Suppose a child draws a free-hand circle, which is anything but a circle. He will easily re-do it since a remake does not call for any special efforts. But he will hate instructions. Teachers' extensive use of red ink at corrections of childhood work has, according to some psychologists, generated distaste in us for putting pen to paper. Likewise, if a child steals and gets away with it, he will be inclined to do this again as he finds the repeat a simple act. Such repetitive acts build a habit that stamps on our mind a lifetime imprint called '*sanskara*.'

We act good or bad as per the dictates of *sanskaras* of present and past lives. These *sanskaras* provide clue to different behavioral pattern of children born in the same family and brought up in the same cultural environment. Unless regulated by self or others, our actions remain slave to the past *sanskaras*. Gurbani says-

mn mUrK kwHy ibllwelAY[purb ilKy kw iliKAw pwelAY[(SGGS 282)

When sense organs give us some information, it is processed by the mind. For example, our ears hear some sound. Mind receives this sensation through our ears. Its second part provides identification to this sound. Its third part gives evaluation to this identified information as 'desirable or undesirable, pleasant or unpleasant, likable or detestable'. The above words represent abuse and are evaluated as undesirable. Based on this evaluation, the fourth part of the mind records its reaction and gives instructions to the body for suitable action. All this happens almost

simultaneously. At this time, the force of *sanskaras* shall provide shape to our physical action. Responding to the above abuse, a rough-necked may pull out a knife and stab, another may just give a shake up, some may engage in a verbal duel. And a saintly person may just ignore the message. In such a situation, Buddha used to say, 'You have offered me this abuse but I refuse to take it.' Hence, vigour and strength of *sanskaras* shall determine our reaction.

The thinking part of our mind is just their prisoner. We cannot escape their push. Slave to them, even the wise, like senior judicial officers and holy persons succumb to their sway. Recently, the Pope had to apologize to the families of victims of sexual misdeeds of his priests and to pay millions of dollars as reparation. The moral uprightness of a few judges of Karnataka and Punjab High Courts is presently under public scan.

In fact, a powerful mind negates our existence. It has rendered us irrelevant. It

conducts as if it is an exclusive owner of the body and recognises no other master. Pushed to almost extinction, we have long forgotten that we are the real masters of our body and mind. What is this all pervading mind?

Nature of Mind: Confusion portrays an order that is not understood. The mind being jumpy is incapable of an orderly behaviour.. What visits it is a cocktail of bad memory, strong ego and forceful *sanskaras*. Its actions are tinted black by *sanskaras* of thousands of past lives. Gurbani says-

jnm jnm kl iesu mn kau mlu lwgl kwlw hoAw isAwhu[
(SGGS: 651)

Also our sense organs are ill-equipped - our eyes cannot see in dark, our ears cannot hear above or below a certain decibel level. So what we hear or see, or believe to be so, is apt to be incorrect and incomplete. We supply this insufficiency by cutting from or adding to our impressions. In result, what we believe to have seen or heard is a truncated and revised version of truth. Thus our mind is a sanctuary for confusion. Incidentally, as the name suggests, our '*smritis*' are based on what was recollected from the hearers' recollections. In the march of time, much was interpolated in - and excised from - what was truly said by the seers. Our confused mind could not grasp the sublime truth which they knew from first hand source. For that reason, we should not attempt to filter their sayings. Such an attempt shall smother the truth. Advisedly, we should not criticize any seer and his words merely because they do not fit into our mind-set.

Indecision: Sri Ravi Shankar says, "A decision is required only when there is confusion." Our mind is a reservoir of confusion. When we are confronted with a problem, we are also posted with a mass of information that is incomplete, tangled, colored, biased and even contradictory. As a variety of permutation and combinations are available, the mind is in a bind how to process this diverse and conflicting information. It is incapable of taking a suitable decision from these heterogeneous offerings. More often than not, we go wrong for want of clarity. With confusing data and 'doubting Johny', our mind's directions are foggy and our follow-up actions insufficient and ineffective. As G. Narayan says, "Actions arising from clarity lead to efficiency and effectiveness. Clarity gives peace of mind and peace enhances the clarity." But our decisions are cloudy and our actions shaky. And the consequences are disastrous. Still we are incapable of seeing through this infirmity of mind.

Imagination: A powerful tool in the workshop of mind is imagination. Its proper use can catapult us into the lap of God and its negative application can drop us in an abysmal depth of sins. Dr Kouhnie handled it positively. He appealed to his patients' imagination. ' Day by day in every way you are becoming better and better' were his famous words. And wonder of wonders, his patients regained health notably fast without any medicine. His get-well-quick suggestion to the mind was made over to the body for quick positive response. Great scientists, thinkers, philosophers, dreamers, psychologists and deeply religious persons relied on this imaginative faculty of mind to create new things or thoughts.

Baba Deep Singh, a veteran saint-soldier, suggested to himself that he wouldn't be captured or killed by enemy soldiers till he reached *Har Mandir Sahib* (Amritsar) and bowed his head there. Four miles ahead of his destination, an enemy soldier beheaded him. Carrying his severed head on his left palm and fighting headless, he reached his cherished goal. Such are the miraculous powers of imagination.

Guru Gobind Singh transformed timid and tremulous Indians into brave and death-defying Sikhs by strongly suggesting to them that they had the strength to fight 'one and a quarter lakh' enemies. A Sikh instinctively trusts that vision and acts as the strongest and bravest man on earth. He fights to win. Fear and defeat do not cross his mind. "The more positive energy we put into managing what we want, the more it begins to manifest in our lives", advises Shakti Gawain. A Sikh's faith in his Guru's blessings is unshakable.

On the contrary, repeated negative suggestion 'you are sick, you are sick' to a person over a period of time is bound to afflict him. Imagination can induce us to believe in something that really does not exist or in the absence of something that is very much present. Most phobias, like fear of heights, closed places, vast spaces, lurking enemies, soiled hands, etc. are creation of 'seized' mind. Imagination enables bhagats to have a dialogue with God and a mad person to talk to a non-existing person. Powers of imagination are limitless.

Restlessness: Mind is always unstable and restless. It is running in all directions. Gurbani says-

iehu mnu cMclu vis n AwwY[duibDw lwgY dh idis DwvY] (SGGS: 127)

Constant waves of thoughts keep on slapping our face. They regularly change their course. We think of hefty bank balances, latest car models or impressive villas on the seaside. Once this is achieved, we expand our ambitions. We are always in competition with others. We want to be peerless. We want to remain at Himalayan heights without anyone above us. Surely, we want to be God. Our demands for more and more are insatiable. They can never be met. We are trying to achieve an impossible task of filling a bottomless bucket. "If we are serious, it will become eventually clear that the fundamental cause of our misery is the constant seeking for contentment outside ourselves", advises Andrew Carlton.

We will never succeed in our insane efforts. Constant strivings shall tire us and repeated failures shall depress us. In cultivating a restless mind, we shall harvest only sufferings. R. Parthasarthy rightly says, "From the actions performed with desires, desire for more of the same or something different arises. You are born because you have ended your last life still caught in the chain of action and desire. Your personality is the conglomeration of desires accumulated through all your deeds from this moment backward, beyond birth to your previous life and even further." So stop this futile race of mind.

How to conquer mind: A graphic presentation of body, mind and soul is given in *Gita*. A driver is sitting in a chariot holding ten reins of five horses. The driver represents the soul directing the five horses (five senses) through ten reins (*karm indris*) to take the chariot (body) towards the blissful destination (*Parmatma*). Ideally, the soul should be in command of the ten senses and the mind; they should not drive our body as per their whims and fancies. But the ground reality is painful. The driver (soul) is sleeping and the mind with its five senses has full run of the field. This

role has to be reversed. We have to conquer the mind. Soul is said to be covered by mind and the mind by body. We have to peel off these layers to find our true self. Gurbani says-

qn mih mnUAW min mih swcw[

(SGGS: 686)

First, stop intervention of ego. I-My syndrome, in our thoughts and actions, should give in. Gurbani says-

mn ry haumY Cof gumwnu[(SGGS: 21)

This evil part of mind leads us astray. Be watchful of our thoughts. Be careful that they are not polluted with our ego. Examine whether our thoughts and actions have approval of the Guru. We can easily attain this by dedicating all our actions to Him. Perceive as if the Guru, and not me, is the thinker and doer. We are just an instrument in His hands. He is using us.

Second, we have to assert ourselves. Mind has made our body captive for ages. It does not readily submit to our authority. We have to re-assert our command over mind and body. Denying small comforts like food, sleep, music, theatre, we begin to exercise control over the mind. Sitting motionless with closed eyes and plugged ears, is a step in this direction. In course of time, the mind submits and ceases to disturb our body. Michael Wolfe in his book *Armouring the Heart* observes: "From feelings deprived, you come to feel empowered by your ability to shake off the prompting of hunger."

Third, still the mind. Stop onslaught of thought waves. We asked the body to obey us. Now we order the mind to listen to us. Just be aware of the cross-currents floating over our mind. Simply be aware. Watch the thoughts objectively and dispassionately. This awareness shall discipline their ceaseless rush. They shall slow down. They shall resume pattern. There shall be red lights to halt their running traffic. Repetition of a holy name like 'Waheguru' speeds up the slowing down process and dissolves ego. Gurbani says -

min qin vyKY haumY mYlu jwey[(SGGS 124)

Gradually, we enter a 'no-mind' plane that links our consciousness with all-knowing Super-Consciousness (vwiHgurU). Here we delight in peace (*shanti*) and bliss (*anand*); we get rightful solutions to our problems, if any; we receive creative guidance; we learn true and primordial nature of things. We get knowledge of three worlds. Gurbani says-

ieh mnu ly jau aunmin rhY[qau qlin lok kl bwqY khY[(SGGS: 342)

The concept of 'I-My' does not exist here since our ego has dissolved. We are in the realm of truth. Perpetual peace and bliss bathe our being. This is our pure Self. Gurbani exhorts us to discover our true self - the original face-

mn qUM joiq srUpu hY Awpxw mUlu pCwxu [

(SGGS: 441)

Continual awareness stills our mind. It now remains quiet and wakes up only when called upon. Hitherto, the mind was always agitated and disturbed. Now

it is in complete repose. Enlightened persons radiate perpetual bliss and peace. For them, nothing is left to be known. They have known the All-Knower. They are winners of the mind and the world.

