

23. Charioteer of the heart

SRI KRISHNA has explained in the Geetha that sorrow is the fruit of *Rajo guna* (quality of passionate activity). He has also shown that only the person who recognises this truth and removes *Rajo guna* and *Thamo guna* (quality of sloth and inertia) from his heart, can be happy. As man has all the three *gunas* (qualities) in his heart, he is bound.

The entire world is a manifestation of the three *gunas*. Of these three, *Rajo and Thamo gunas are the source of trouble*. For all sorrows, grief, trouble and problems, these two *gunas* are responsible. There are six attributes for *Thamo guna* sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, laziness and inertia.

A farmer who wants to raise a crop in the field has to remove, at the outset, the weeds from his field. If different types of weeds grow, the crop will be affected adversely. Removing the weeds is an essential pre-condition for getting a good crop. In the same way, a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) who wants to realise '*Aathmaanandha*' (the joy of *Aathma*), has to remove from his heart the various manifestations of *Rajo and Thamo gunas* in the form of malice, desire, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy. These six types of enemies of man are the children of *Rajo and Thamo gunas*. We won't be able to experience the joy of *Aathma* (individual soul) as long as these weeds are there. Therefore Krishna asked Arjuna to remove the *Rajo and Thamo gunas* from his heart.

Take every effort to remove dirt from your heart

If we invite some great man, such as a saint or a learned person to our house, some preparations will have to be made at home, to make it presentable. We have to clean the house and the surroundings before the guest comes to our house. A house which is not clean lacks sacredness and great people would not go to such places. In the same way, if we invited a minister or governor to our village, we would clean the road and decorate the path and keep everything fit and proper for receiving the eminent visitor. If we take so much care and precaution when we invite a person who has only a temporary position, how much more clean should we keep our heart when we invite the very Creator and protector of the world Himself to enter! It is only when we purify our heart that God will be able to enter it.

Krishna said: "Arjuna, you are taking Me as the charioteer of your chariot. Take Me as the charioteer of your life. The seat on which I am seated in this chariot is very dean and well decorated. Think how clean and how grand your heart should be to make it a seat for Me if I become the charioteer of your heart. As long as *Rajo and Thamo gunas* are there, the heart is not pure. These two *gunas* will go on polluting and dirtying the heart. Therefore, to begin with, remove the *Thamo and Rajo gunas*. Make every effort to remove the dirt from your heart."

Vairaagya removes all the dirt from the heart

To take another example: These days when one goes on a picnic, one takes a mirror, a comb and a handkerchief. Why do they take these things? On the way, the wind may blow their hair out of place, and they may need a mirror and comb to tidy it. When they get hot and tired, there may be some sweat on the face, so they take a handkerchief to wipe it off. These three things help one to maintain one's looks. In the same way, if you want to correct the disturbed beauty of the mind, you have to take certain things.

Whether our hair is dishevelled or not, is shown by the mirror. To find out whether our mind is disturbed or not, devotion acts as the mirror. This mirror also must be clean. If the mirror is clean, it will be easy to see whether there is impurity in the mind or not. When we recognise that the mind is disturbed, we have to correct it; for this purpose, we need the comb of wisdom. The cloth with which we wipe the dirt from our heart is *Vairagyam* (detachment). This removes all the dirt. In the journey of life, wherever we go, we need to have devotion, wisdom and detachment.

We must try to understand the different characteristics of *Rajo guna*. A person who is full of *Rajo guna* will always be in a hurry. In everything, he exhibits undue haste. He has a lot of anger in him and develops unlimited desires. He cannot keep still even for a moment. These are the features of *Rajo guna*. If you go to the zoo and watch the animals--be it a tiger, a fox or any other animal--you will find that they do not keep still for a moment. They are continually moving. The reason is that they have *Rajo guna*. If *Rajo guna* enters the heart of man, it makes him move all the time. It doesn't merely make the person restless but makes him deluded as well. Not merely does he become deluded, but he goes on desiring objects, desiring everything in the world, and thereby becoming more and more deluded and restless. So, restlessness, desire and delusion are the three important features of *Rajo guna*.

Transcend the three *gunas* to experience bliss

The three *gunas* are represented in the Raamaayana by the three brothers in Raavana's family. The embodiment of *Thamo guna* is Kumbhakarna, of *Rajo guna* is Raavana, and of *Sathwa guna* is Vibheeshana. These three *gunas* are brothers, but if you allow the first two into your heart, they will cause a lot of harm. When you enter the Kingdom of Liberation, you will have to remove *Sathwa guna* also. *Vedhaantha* (concluding essence of the *Vedhas*) teaches that we must transcend these three *gunas*. If a thorn were to prick your foot, to remove it you do not need a knife; another thorn would be enough to help you remove it. Once you have removed the thorn, you could throw away both the thorns. In the same way, with the help of *Rajo guna*, you have to remove *thamo guna* and with the help of *sathwa guna*, you must remove *rajo guna*.

Before you can enter the mansion of *Brahmaanandha* (the bliss of oneness with *Brahman*) you have to cast off all these three *gunas*. As long as you have *gunas*, you won't be able to experience bliss. That is why Krishna commanded Arjuna to transcend all three *gunas*.

The most important cause for the three *gunas* is the mind. It is impossible to rise above our human nature and realise our divine nature until, the mind is transformed. We have to offer our mind to the Lord. Once we surrender our mind to God completely, He will take care of us in every way.

One must give up the mind to attain *Brahman*

Once upon a time, King Janaka sent round a message inviting scholars, sages and *yogis* to teach him the knowledge of *Aathma*. He announced: "In the time it takes me to climb on to my horse, one should be able to give me full *Brahma jnaana* (knowledge of the Absolute)." The sages and scholars were worried, as they felt "This is going to be a severe test for our scholarship and learning." No one dared come and offer to satisfy the King's demand.

Meanwhile, a sage by name Ashthaavakra entered the kingdom. While he was nearing the capital he saw the scholars and *rishis* assembled there. They were looking worried and despondent. He asked them, "What is the cause of all your worries?" They explained their situation and he said,

"Why should you be scared about such a small thing? I can solve this problem." So saying, he entered the court of King Janaka. He said to the King, "King{ I am ready to teach you the knowledge of *Aathma*, but it cannot be taught in this palace which is full of *rajo* and *thamo* gunas. First I must take you to a *Sathwa area*."

They took a few horses and soldiers and left the palace. On reaching a lonely spot, Ashthaavakra told the king, "I am now going to teach you the knowledge of *Aathma*. I am the preceptor and you are the disciple. Are you ready to accept this relationship? If you agree to this, then you have to make the offering the *shishya* has to give to the *Guru* (preceptor). Only after you have made your offering will I start my teaching." King Janaka told Ashthaavakra, "I want to attain *Brahman* and I am therefore prepared to give you anything you want." Then the *Guru* told the King: "I don't want anything except your mind." King Janaka answered: "I offer it to you; from now on, it is yours."

Then the *Guru* brought a horse, made it stand, and asked the King to sit down on the ground in the middle of the road of his kingdom. He left the king there and retired into the forest to sit quietly under a tree.

King Janaka completely submits himself to the *Guru*

The soldiers waited for a long time for the return of the king but neither the king nor Ashthaavakra came. They wanted to know what had happened to them, and one by one, they went to find out. They found their king sitting in the middle of the road with a horse standing nearby. The king had dosed his eyes and was absolutely still. Ashthaavakra was nowhere to be found. They were rather afraid that this Ashthaavakra had cast some magic spell over the king, making him lose his consciousness. They went to the prime minister and brought him to the king. The primeminister called the king, "Mahaaraaja, Mahaaraaja, Mahaaraaja," but the king did not open his eyes or respond in any way. The primeminister and all other courtiers were alarmed as they could not rouse the king or give him any food or drink. They were wondering what to do. Left with no alternative, the primeminister sent the chariot to bring the queen, thinking that if she called the king, he would respond to her entreaties. The queen came and pleaded. But the king remained unmoved.

Meanwhile, the soldiers went in search of Ashthaavakra into the forest. They found him sitting under a tree in total peace. They took hold of him and brought him to the place where the king was sitting. Ashthaavakra said, "The king is saved, he is all right. You may see for yourself." The ministers, the queen and others told Ashthaavakra: "He has not opened his mouth or eyes." Ashthaavakra went close to the king and called him, saying, "Mahaaraaja." Immediately the king opened his eyes and replied, "Swaami." Ashthaavakra told the king, "The ministers and the queen have come; the soldiers and many others have come and all have tried to talk to you; why did you not answer them?"

Offer your mind to God to remove duality

The king replied, "Thoughts, words and deeds are associated with the mind. As I have offered my mind entirely to you, first I need your permission before uttering a word. What authority do I have over my mind? I have offered it to you; it is yours. I won't do anything without your permission and command." Then Ashthaavakra said, "You have reached the state of *Amanaska* (free from mental limitation) a" and he asked him to place his foot upon the stirrup to mount the

horse. By the time he had climbed the horse and placed his other leg over the horseback, he got the experience of *Aathmaanandha* (Bliss of Divine self).

Krishna told Arjuna, "Offer your everything to Me; offer all your *Dharmas* (righteousness) to Me and I will take care of you and give you liberation and deliverance. Be they physical, mental, spiritual or worldly, offer all your actions to *Me*."

Keep the body steady to control your mind

King Janaka was able to get liberation when he offered his entire mind and the three types of activity, thought, word and deed, to Ashthaavakra. The essential meaning of this episode is that one should become *Amanaskaa*, to realise unity with the Divine. As long as you have a mind, there is duality. Cold and heat, day and night, sorrow and joy, loss and profit--all these pairs of opposites come about only when you have a mind. If you want to learn to treat all these things equally, you have to offer your mind to God. That is why in *Vedhaantha* it has been said that it is the mind that is responsible for liberation or bondage. As long as you have the mind, *thamo* and *rajo guna* will not leave you alone. As long as you have these two *gunas*, there will be no stillness of the body. What is the reason for the restlessness of the mind? On account of the desires of the sense organs the mind becomes restless.

Here is a small example for this. When there is some water in a vessel, if the vessel moves, the water also moves. If the vessel is steady, the water also will be steady. In steady water, you are able to see your image, but in moving water, your image will also be moving. Therefore, if you want to enter into a state of meditation, you must keep your body still. The body is like the vessel, and the mind may be compared to the water inside it. If body moves, the mind inside will be agitated. Therefore, control your mind and make it steady by keeping your body steady.

For meditation, it is very important to keep the back straight. The Kundalini power travels from the *Moolaadhaara* (at the base of the spinal column) to the *Sahasraara* (thousand-petalled energy centre) in the crown of the head. Therefore, you must be steady. Head, neck and body have to be straight; there should be no bend. This is extremely essential for students and *saadhakas* engaged in meditation. That is why I tell the students often, "Why do you study? To become steady!" If fight from boyhood you can keep your body under control, it will be very useful in achieving many things in later life.

Krishna chose Arjuna as an ideal representative of mankind to set an example for humanity. He said to Arjuna, "I am using you as an instrument in order to make an example of you. Therefore, you must first become an ideal person."

The Mandhir, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 12-9-1984

The tongue is a tool, as I said. You can harm yourself and harm others with it. So, be very careful; use it only for your good and for the good of others. If you use it for talking kind words, for repeating the Name of God or singing His Glory, or praying to Him then, it is put to the best use.

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