

Liberation from the Mind

One day many, many years ago, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī was giving a talk in Bihār in Hindi. However, right in the midst of this Hindi talk he uttered one sentence in English: “You must understand your mind.” Obviously Swāmījī wasn’t talking about understanding our minds according to pop psychology: “Why do I feel this way? Why do I think this way?” and so forth. Rather, as Swāmījī was, as always, teaching liberation, he wanted us to understand in what way our mind is blocking our liberation and in what way it can help our liberation. Because the scriptures tell us that mind is the cause of bondage and mind is the cause of liberation.

The classic Vedic way of analyzing our mind is as a fourfold inner instrument. They say that we have *citta* or a storehouse of past impressions, *manas* or the thinking mind, *buddhi* or our higher faculty of discrimination, and, lastly, *ahamkāra*, the self-arrogating principle or ego.

The key factor is that the *citta* or the storehouse is constantly sending up thoughts or emotions into our mind. If we just act on them, then we do many foolish things. Thus we must use our discriminating faculty or *buddhi*. The *buddhi* or intellect can act in two ways. If we’re bound, the intellect or *buddhi* is the slave of the mind. Something comes into the mind, a desire, and the intellect instead of discriminating, “Is this for my highest good or is it just pleasant,” schemes to see how it can bring that desire about. This is a corrupt intellect, an intellect that is not fulfilling its designated purpose. The intellect or the *buddhi* is supposed to take an independent position. It is supposed to see what is coming up in the mind. It is supposed to dismiss foolishness, refuse to go along with what is not correct—not *dharma*—and further, to do what is correct, what is according to *dharma*.

If the *buddhi* acts in this way, always acting according to *dharma* or righteousness, determined to do what is right and ignore what the mind may want unless it is in accordance with *dharma*, then that is liberation, that is freedom from the mind. That it is that opens us up to final liberation where we know ourselves as part of the Whole and spontaneously and naturally do what is right.

Interestingly enough, in Western psychology, as explained by the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, the human being is thinking, feeling, and

willing. Similarly, if the will becomes the slave of our thinking and feeling, we are bound, we have no control over what we are doing. But Kant said that the will is the superior faculty. It is what the human being really is. Therefore, the will is meant to do what is right, not become the slave of the mind.

So whether we call it the higher will or the enlightened *buddhi*, we come to the same place. Liberation is in our hands. It is up to us not to be a slave of our crazy mind. It is up to us to see the mind for what it is, to know that we are superior to the mind and that we choose what we shall do.

There is a modern spiritual teacher who frequently says, "I don't care what you think or feel. I care what you do." In other words, what we do is up to us; if we use our discrimination we can always do the right thing. Let the mind and emotions do what they want, think and feel the way they want to. Let us always do what is right, and we will be liberated from the mind.