

Making Our Mind Our Best Friend

The Gītā and other scriptures declare that desire is the great enemy of man. Why is desire the great enemy of man? Because, it pulls our consciousness to the object of desire. It pulls us away from God. What then about the desire for God? Perhaps, at the very end, even that too has to be dropped, but the scriptures also make it very clear that there is such a thing as *subheccha*, good desire.

The desire for God is a good desire, and anything that lifts us towards God, that lifts and broadens our consciousness, is considered to be a good desire. This is the way that we can distinguish between the desire that leads us down and the desire that leads us up. Selfish desire, sensuous desire, narrows our consciousness, pulls us down; the more powerful the desire, the narrower our consciousness. But when we want to do good for others, when we want to meditate, when we want to study the scriptures or enquire into who we are, it broadens our consciousness. Our consciousness becomes lighter.

There is a darkness about our consciousness as well as narrowness when the object of our desire is sensual pleasure or for our ego satisfaction. On the other hand, if we are giving ourselves away, whether to others, or to God in meditation and other spiritual practices, there is a lightness in our consciousness, a broadening of our consciousness. Ultimately, this is the essence of the spiritual life. This is why Lord Yama warned Naciketas to choose the good over the pleasant, telling him that the good leads to our highest welfare, the pleasant to our destruction. We should choose the good which broadens our consciousness rather than the pleasant which narrows it.

This then gives us a guideline that we can apply to our experience. That which fixes our consciousness on sensual objects, on objects that please the ego, is to be avoided. That which broadens our consciousness—doing good to others, being good, being kind, being compassionate—is to be desired and followed. But how do we handle our mind so that it chooses the good over the pleasant?

There is a law of the mind that says that nothing stays in the mind indefinitely unless we feed it. Therefore, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī said that if a thought comes into your mind to do something that is against the

scriptures, then simply do nothing, just watch it. By the law of the mind, eventually it will fade away. But if a thought comes into your mind to do something good, do it immediately. Otherwise, by the same law of the mind, it will fade away, and you will have missed an opportunity to do something good.

Therefore, we must know our mind and the effect that our thoughts have upon it. What we desire makes our mind either our best friend or worst enemy. We must choose the good that leads to our highest welfare, that broadens our consciousness, and reject the pleasant, that which drags us down and narrows our consciousness.