

## **Parables Illustrating the Importance of the Mind** Dr. K. Ramesh Pai

The gross body (*Sthulasarira*) is constituted of the basic elements, the *Panchbhutas*, namely earth, water, fire, air, and the all-pervading space (*Akasa*). The *Indriyas* (senses) coming into contact with the *Indriyarthas* (sense objects) leads to sense perception, which the mind interprets as pleasant, or to be pursued, or unpleasant, or to be avoided. Sense control is a very important part towards the path of realization of the Self (*Atman/Spirit*), the ultimate goal of sincere seekers of *Mukti* (liberation). Sense control can be obtained only by using the mind, and hence its importance.

### **Parable 1**

In a certain town, there lived a prostitute who was brought up in the profession from a young age. On the pavement outside her home, a *sadhu* (holy man) who was well versed in the scriptures and was respected for his knowledge, daily sat giving advice to those who sought it. One day, when the prostitute was passing by, the *sadhu* accosted her and asked her to amend her evil way. She listened attentively and said she would try to change. The *sadhu* saw, however, that visitors continued to frequent her house seeking her services for entertainment and pleasure. For every visitor, the *sadhu* put a pebble by his side to keep count. The prostitute, for her part, for every visitor prayed fervently to the Lord pleading that she had not had the benefit of education in any other vocation to enable her to earn a decent living. After some days, when the pebbles collected by the *sadhu* had become a heap, he stopped her and pointed to the enormity of her sins. She went home, crying piteously and earnestly begged the Lord to put an end to her worthless life.

After some time, both of them died. The body of the *sadhu* was carried by his followers in a grand procession, and he was given a grand funeral. As the prostitute had no relatives, her body was cast away on the forest by hired laborers to be eaten by vultures and wild animals.

The messengers of Death came and carried the woman's soul to Heaven while the *sadhu* found himself in Hell. When he protested against this gross injustice, he was told that *Yama*, the God of Death, was also the God of Justice who was supremely impartial and made no distinction between rich and poor, high and low. He was also told that while he was counting pebbles and watching the number of visitors to the house, the woman's mind was on the Lord. Consequently, he was the sinner who was being punished.

### **Parable 2**

Two young men who were constant companions set out one evening seeking recreation. In a temple courtyard, they noticed there was a *harikatha* performance, a religious discourse accompanied by devotional singing. One of them suggested it would be a good way to spend the evening, but the other did not agree. They parted company. The first one stayed while the other sought a place with a night club atmosphere and vulgar music. After a while, the first friend found the performance uninteresting and started to imagine the pleasures being enjoyed by his companion. On the other hand, the second friend thought he had made a mistake coming to a place of profanity, and began to think of the religious discourse being enjoyed by his friend. The first friend, being seated in a temple courtyard, did not have the benefit of listening to the religious discourse. The second friend, while being at an unworthy place, had his mind contemplating the religious discourse and devotional singing.

Sri Ramakrishna constantly instructed his devotees, "You are what your mind is. Take care of your thoughts and everything will be alright." Train your mind to be like the honeybee. It either sits on a flower collecting nectar or it is in the hive depositing the honey collected. It is in constant contact with honey. So also, your mind must be on God and good deeds. Avoid the nature of the common housefly, which sits for an instant on sweet things, then sits on excreta in the next moment.

He also told them that the mind tends to take the same nature as the object or form it is constantly contemplating. He drew their attention to the example mentioned in our scriptures. A wasp keeps a worm captive in its hole and prevents its escape by standing guard at the entrance. By continuously thinking of the wasp, though out of fear, the worm in course of time is transformed into a wasp.