Cultivating Positive Thoughts

Darkness present in a room cannot be removed physically. It can only be removed by switching on the light. Darkness, therefore, can be defined as absence of light. Similarly, negative thoughts can be defined as absence of positive thoughts. It is very difficult to remove negative thoughts but it is very easy to cultivate positive thoughts. Persistent negative thoughts creates sympathetic overactivity and leads to lifestyle disorders like blood pressure, acidity, depression, diabetes and heart blockages.

Many Vedic scriptures have talked about modalities of living a positive life and cultivating positive thoughts. Navratras observed twice in a year involve three phases of three days each, the first phase where one tries to avoid doing negative things wilfully (worshipping the Kali), the second phase of three days where one wilfully performs positive activities (worshipping the Laxmi) and finally the last three days where one reads about positive lifestyle (worshipping the Saraswati).

One of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali talks about removal of negativity by cultivating opposite thoughts. For example, the thoughts of theft can be removed by bringing the thoughts of charity in mind. Patanjali wrote (2.32, 2.33) "that to counteract destructive attitudes one should cultivate thoughts of the opposite kind. These destructive attitudes, as for example thoughts of violence, whether they are done, caused to be done or merely approved of; whether motivated by greed, anger or preceded by ignorance and whether mild, moderate or extreme, will result in infinite suffering and ignorance. Therefore, one should cultivate thoughts of the opposite kind."

Lord Buddha, in his teachings, has given another formula by which one does not have to cultivate opposite thought to cultivate any positive thought. Buddha said that hatred couldn't be removed by hatred; it can only be removed by bringing the love back. It is a fact that one cannot hate an unknown individual. One can hate only a person whom he or she has loved once. Generalized positive behavior involves promoting smile, appreciating and passing on compliments to others.

Adi Shankaracharya, in his teachings, propagated the third way of negating the negative thoughts. He said that every thought has multiple perspectives and one should think differently for every situation.

Cultivation of positive thoughts, opposite thoughts or changing the perception of the thoughts, can be all in the mind, may remain silent or end up with an action. Even giving a silent blessing to someone without his or her knowledge is considered as a positive thought.

Satwik thoughts come from satwik mind and satwik mind in turn comes from satwik food. The best way to remember a satwik food is whatever is offered to God is satwik in nature. The food is fresh, seasonal, locally grown, with cooking done on Ayurvedic principles, usually naturally white and in most instances contained in the top part of the tree or the plant.

The frame and state of mind also has to do with death and rebirth. Both Buddha and Bhagwad Gita describe it in great details. The state of mind at the time of death, determines the rebirth. If the mind is calm and peaceful and imbued with positive thoughts at the time of death, this will augur well for a happy rebirth. However, if the mind is in a state of anger or has strong desire or is fearful, etc., this will predispose to an unhappy or lower type of rebirth.

The mind that arises at the time of death is usually the one that the person is most habituated to. People tend to die in character. So, Buddha wrote that the time to prepare for death is "now", because if we gain control over our mind now and create positive aura, we will have a calm and controlled mind at the time of death and be free of fear.

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