

The Mind is Like a Still Lake

By Gurani Anjali

The mind is like a still lake -- until a thought enters it, like a drop of rain. The circles spin and spin and spin. So ask yourself what is the thought that you're going to put in this perfect lake called the mind.

The mind is always clear, always pure. It's a perfect place. It's a great reservoir. So the thought you put in will spin like a drop of rain that falls on a clear, still lake. The ripples begin, one thought leads to a thousand thoughts, and sometimes you cannot stop them. You don't stop them because you keep adding more and more drops of thoughts. But you must clear the mind. For that, attitudes have to go. Negative thinking has to be erased. How do we achieve that state? Through absorption. But first, through what is called in Yoga *prati paksa bhavanam* (cultivation of the opposite), and then through absorption. Being immersed in the activity at hand creates absorption. One eventually experiences *citta vrtti nirodah* (cessation of thought). A silence occurs and there is a rest. A silence occurs, and we are at rest for that time, for that moment.

Yoga is *citta vrtti nirodha*. When one experiences *nirodha*, one has peace of mind. Peace of mind doesn't necessarily mean peace of circumstance. The Yogi must aim for the quiet bliss which is within. It is a place of silence, a place of being in that perfect state of ecstasy. The world may be chaotic around you; it may be full of fluctuations; it may be fearful; it may be full of pain; but the Yogi aims for *citta vrtti nirodha*, to be in peace even though circumstances are not.

The Yogi does not have indifference in life but aims for that great difference: to know the difference between the real and the unreal. The Yogi aims for that perfect state: *citta vrtti nirodha*. When the Yogi has that perfect state, then he or she can live a healthy, prosperous life. It's a state the Yogis live for. In *citta vrtti nirodha*, there are no thoughts that are filled with *asmita* (I-am-ness). Me, me, me. To have no "you" in circumstance is a great achievement. It is one less thing to be worried about. If you experience a circumstance that is full of afflictions, and then you have to have "you" in it, you just add to those afflictions. It is very hard to live, but if "you" are not there, at least there is one less aggravation. It's a high state to aim for, but that is a Yogi's dream, to have *citta vrtti nirodha*.

To attain to that state, there is the practice of the *yama* and *niyamas*. One of them, *tapas* (austerity or bearing the extremes), is walking the middle path without being affected by pain or pleasure. The Yogi lives in such a way that he or she does not get overwhelmed by the pain or the pleasure. To have that experience and to live in such a manner, *citta vrtti nirodha* is absolutely necessary.

There is not one single individual in the world, no matter how great they are or how insignificant they are, that does not live with the human realities of pain and pleasure. There is not one. If you are human, you have to have them. Pleasure and pain come and go like the wind. They hit you from this side, and slap you from that side. You keep getting slapped on your face. "Here, take a little pleasure. Here, take a little pain. Here, take this, take that." They both push you and push

you until you are made to stand in the middle. It's all very, very natural isn't it? But the *jiva* (individual self), going through the evolution and the cycles of life does not want the pain. Yet it is a human reality that we have to have in order to reach our highest aim in life. We have to be pushed! So, when the pleasure comes, don't sit back and say "ah, great". Take it as a slap. And when the pain comes, take it as a punch. A slap is different than a punch, you know. Take it like that and know that you are being helped. You are being helped to find the real, the non-dualistic state. Welcome it.

If someone abuses you, if someone uses you, if someone brings you flowers, whatever they do, appreciate it. Be thankful for it because they are helping you to be here in the moment. Be here, not in yesterdays or tomorrows. You know yesterday is a dream and tomorrow will always be today. Can you live like that, in the now? Yes, you can. You can live in the middle and yet be totally aware, feeling the pains and pleasures of life and yet staying perfect. Like the lotus that blooms. You have to come away from all that and still look beautiful and feel good. Yoga is *citta vrtti nirodha*.

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