

Śama: MAKING THE MIND AVAILABLE¹

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Śama is typically defined as *mano nigraḥ*, commonly translated as mind control. And wherever *mano nigraḥ* is mentioned, we will often see it paired with *mano nāśa*, destruction of the mind. This is very revealing. Anyone who wants to destroy the mind is already destroyed, is he not? Otherwise why does he need to have his mind destroyed? Such a desire reveals that his thinking is destroyed, and he wants to get rid of the mind to solve that problem. Today, mind-control has become big business. Anybody who says that you should control the mind will have subscribers to that idea—and to his program. Everybody knows that you can't control the mind, and therefore, people will nod their heads.

"The mind is turbulent"

"Ah! you said it."

"Nobody can easily control the mind."

"That is true."

"You have to work hard to control the mind."

"That is true I have to work hard."

"Even if you have worked hard, you think that you have controlled the mind, that control just goes away."

Everything looks true, and thus, mind control is a million dollar business. The poor mind. Bhagavan thought, "Let us give this human a mind and watch what happens." Lakshmi told him, "Don't do these experiments." But Narayana said, "No, no I am going to try," and gave this human being a mind. Now Lakshmi goes on saying, "Didn't I tell you, didn't I tell you?"

The mind is just the most beautiful instrument that a human being has. Everything else that we have, every animal has. In fact, they are better equipped. A police man takes the help of a dog, and is called a sleuth but the real sleuth is the dog. It is the dog who sniffs out the criminal. All other animals are better equipped than human beings in one way or another. Look at a bat; it can fly in the dark. People think it is because it is able to see in the dark, but it is not. A bat

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just goes on squeaking and sending out sounds, and when the sounds rebound, it is able to interpret them. It has inbuilt sonar. A bat can detect an obstruction while flying and navigate its way around it. It can also send out specific sounds to gather information, and when the sounds come back, it can know what the object is. It can distinguish a leaf from a fruit, and it can determine that this fruit is ripe and this is not. What a marvel is this bat! There is so much research going on about bats. There is one person in a University near Louisville doing research on bats, who people call 'bat nagger'. He is an Indian, whose name is Bhatnagar, and in America they pronounce it 'bat nagger' I had long discussions with him to learn all about bats. He has so much to tell about these bats, which are better equipped than we are for certain things.

The only thing that makes you special is this great mind you have. It is not an ordinary thing. There is nothing wrong with the mind as long as you don't say that there is something wrong with it. Or if you don't say it, but you have the feeling that there is something wrong with it, that is even worse. The mind is an angel. It is the greatest endowment of a human being, and it has to be used; it is meant to be used.

People manipulate people only through the mind. Therefore we have to analyse this properly.

One has to pay one's attention to one's mind. It cannot be taken for granted, nor should it be looked upon as something that causes real problems. Mainly, the mind is meant for knowing, remembering, and also, to entertain emotions. The seat of emotion as well as the seat of knowledge is the mind, so there is an emotional mind, a cognitive mind, and a recollecting mind. Because it is instrumental in knowing, it is called the inner, *antaḥ*, instrument, *karāṇa*, *antaḥkarāṇa*. Without the mind, an individual cannot know. It is the instrument, *karāṇa* through which we know, like the eyes are the *karāṇa*, through which we see, and the ears, the instrument through which we hear. But the eyes, ears and other senses cannot function themselves, without being backed by the mind. Therefore, so you come to recognise something only with the help of the mind, and therefore, it is a *karāṇa*.

Now, what is it that really bothers a person? When a person is bothered, it is the person that is bothered, really speaking. Being just an instrument, it is not the mind that really bothers. Yet, in this, the mind seems to play a role. How? In creating certain emotions, like fear. Fear is for the person, not for the mind,

please understand. The poor mind is unnecessarily blamed, but it is the person who is afraid, and therefore, there is an emotion called fear. It is the same for anxiety, hatred, and so on. And also, there are emotions like love, compassion, and empathy, which the mind manifests. Now compassion only reveals the compassionate person. In understanding emotions, we always have to include the person, otherwise, the mind will become the whipping boy for all our problems. An emotion is me, viewed from the standpoint of the mind.

Whenever a book deals with the mind, it actually deals with the person with reference to the mind. This 'me', the individual, with reference to an emotion called compassion, is compassionate—I am compassionate. Because I am compassionate, there is compassion; because I am loving, there is love. It is not the other way around. It is not that because there is love I become loving, but rather, because I am loving there is love. So too, because I am frightened, there is fear; because I am agitated, there is agitation; I am anxious, therefore there is anxiety; I am hateful, therefore there is hatred.

Why do we separate this mind and then whip it unnecessarily? Neither do I have to whip myself; I am what I am due to certain laws. So whenever we talk about the mind we have to be highly responsible, or we may create problems for others. It is very easy for a person to conclude, "My mind is no good at all." But there is no such thing as a 'bad mind'. The mind is always good; it does its job. If you are anxious, it presents anxiety for you, but it does not cause you anxiety. The mind is not a threat; it's just you. You are the person, the affected person, and the mind gives an indication that you have to pay a certain attention in some areas. Paying attention is called *śama*.

All these situations like anxiety, depression, unwarranted anger, reveal the person. If a situation doesn't warrant intense anger, yet the anger is there, I must understand that there is already an angry person who manifests in the form anger. But it is the mind that really tells us exactly what is going on. Thus, the mind is pointed out in *mano nigrahaḥ*, not the person, because through the mind alone we understand the person. There are varieties of emotions not liked by ourselves, or by anyone. I don't like myself being given to anger, I don't like myself being anxious, frightened etc. But then I am. So how we are going to gain a resolution of this?

There are so many methods. One thing they all have in common is that we have to accept the emotion. If I am frightened, I am frightened. Thinking that I should

not be frightened is not going to help me. Or worse, the idea that I should not have been frightened doesn't help me either. The notion that I should not be frightened or should not have been frightened only confuses the whole situation. And these kind of confusions are rampant, and are promoted by the so-called spiritual teachers. At the same time, the mind being an indicator of me, the person, I do require a mind which is more or less abiding, so that it is available for my understanding, my pursuits, my contemplation. This 'availability' is exactly what is meant here by *śama*, otherwise, there is no need to mention it. When you apply for admission in a school, they don't ask, "Do you have *śama*, do you have *dama*?" If you are applying for an MSc, all ask is whether you have done your BSc., If you have graduated, then you can do post-graduate work. This is very simple; they don't ask for *śamaḥ, dama, uparati, titikṣā, śraddhā*.

But here, the subject matter is me. Please understand the difference. The subject matter of Vedanta, is me, and because it is me, this me, the individual, has to deal with himself or herself. And the emotional person is a very important person. You can't bypass emotion. In this pursuit, you can't bypass anything, not the world, not your body, much less your mind. Even if you bypass a road in order to avoid the congestion due to the shops on both sides, what happens? On the bypass road itself shops come up and you have the same problem. So too here; wherever there is a bypass, there exactly will be a problem, so you are not going to bypass anything.

We don't want to bypass any reality, whether it is subjectively real or objectively real. In every single area there is no bypassing, because when you deal with yourself, you cannot successfully bypass anything. In bypassing a problem, you are not bypassing the problem, really, you are bypassing *solving* the problem. Therefore here, we don't bypass anything.

What are the things that will give you *śama*? That we have to discover in our study of the *Gītā* etc.,

Let us first understand what is *śama*. One thing I can say here is that *śama* is a resolution of the mind. It is not that the mind becomes blank, but rather, it is a mind that is available for you. Nothing more. Don't add anything more to this; it is just a mind that is available for you. When you sit in contemplation, it is available for you, when you study it is available for you, when you are sitting and listening to me, it is available for you. When it is available for you, why do you bother about the mind? The mind is serving you. You may say that sometimes it is cognitively available for you, and sometimes it disturbs you. It

looks like it disturbs you, but, in fact, it is already a disturbed mind, and it wants to get rid of the disturbance. An old disturbance comes in the form of fear, for instance, because there was a fear locked up underneath. That fear gets released.

We have to understand this kind of situation very clearly. The more we understand, the more *śama* we will command. That fear, for instance, you can now look at as a fear released, rather than a fear gained. You can look at anxiety as an anxiety released rather than an anxiety gained. You can look at it either way. If you look at anxiety as a new gain, then you are going to conclude that you are anxious and nothing is happening in terms of your understanding. In fact, nothing needs to happen. Let the old anxiety go, let the old pain go, let the old the hatred, jealousy, whatever is there underneath, all go. They are going more than coming, especially when you are addressing the problem. When you are not addressing the problem, you don't know what is happening. When you are depressed, you are depressed; that's all.

Here, you are addressing the problem, because you are the subject matter in the study of Vedanta. You are looking at yourself, so naturally, whatever is there will come out. The more I am able to look at it all, with a sense of surrender, the more *śama* will be there. Surrender to what? Surrender to the order, which includes the psychological order. That order is *Īśvara*. Through our prayers, through our meditations, through our *japa*, through our duties and anything that is necessary to nourish ourself, we take care of the mind.

Śama, then, is the availability of the mind for you to perceive. And also, there is mental time available. Physical time may be available, but mental time may not. If mental time is available, then physical time will accommodate, always. Mental time is not available for people because the mind is too busy. Thus, the resolution of the mind is taken here as a qualification, *śama*.

Originally, when life was structured, and one lived a religious life, it was easier to command *śama*. One who has a religious life has found a certain bonding with *Īśvara*, and that person can relax and thereby, find a certain resolution. It is purely by devotion, by bonding with *Īśvara*. This is a topic that has to be dealt with very sensitively and responsibly, so that it is understood properly. Here, I just want you to understand that *śama* is not mind control.