

**Satsanga with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati**  
**Arsha Vidya Gurukulam**

**Mind, Memory, Thought, and Emotion**

*Question*

What is the mind?

*Answer*

The mind is a faculty that enables us to think and feel. This faculty is part of the subtle body that pervades the entire gross body. We cannot say that the mind exists in any one place in the body, but we can say that it is in the brain that it becomes manifest as thought. Thus, the mind is nothing but the flow of thoughts and the brain is the physical location where it manifests.

The brain is the 'locus' of the mind, like the eyes are the locus of the subtle faculty of sight. Similarly, there are other sense organs in which the other subtle faculties of hearing, smell, taste, and touch manifest. Typically, *yoga-śāstra* would claim that the mind manifests in the heart where all thought originates. However, we see the heart to be the locus of feeling and the brain to be the locus of thinking; the head is where the intellect manifests and the heart is where the emotions manifest.

*Question*

Is memory part of the mind or the brain? Is the mind part of the soul that you take with you into your next life?

*Answer*

Memories are part of the mind, but they are also closely related to the brain. What you take with you are not the exact memories, but the effects of those memories. The various experiences that we go through create certain impressions that are stored in the mind. Whatever we learn or whatever wisdom and maturity we gain as a result of these experiences stays with us. The actual memories and events do not stay with us. Thus, we can say that the memory is part of the mind. We also say that the mind manifests at the level of the brain. Therefore, if there were no brain, the memories would not become manifest. When a person dies, the memories are no more. Sometimes, such memories exist in one's unconscious and can be revived. These days they are able to take the patient into the past life etc. through regression therapy and then all kinds of

things are remembered. This shows that memories are there in the mind, but at the time of death all of this becomes part of the impressions that remain with us through successive births.

### *Question*

What is the relationship between thought and emotion?

### *Answer*

An emotion is also a kind of thought. Thoughts are of different kinds. In Vedanta, we talk about four kinds of thoughts: the *manaḥ*, the *buddhiḥ*, the *cittam*, and the *ahaṅkāraḥ*. The *manaḥ* is the faculty of emotion, the *buddhiḥ* is the faculty of knowing, the *cittam* is the faculty of memory, and the *ahaṅkāraḥ* is the faculty of self assertion. The same mind gains four names depending upon the different functions it performs. Therefore, when the mind becomes emotional, we call it *manaḥ*; when it becomes knowing we call it *buddhiḥ*; when it remembers we call it *cittam*, and when it identifies, we call it *ahaṅkāraḥ*.

Thought and emotion are not different; an emotion is but a particular kind of thought. Usually, love, kindness or compassion are called emotions. Anger, greed, etc are also called emotions by some; we see them to be impulses. The very same emotions of love or kindness in their distorted form are called anger or cruelty. In that sense, there is only one emotion, love, which is our inherent nature and this love alone manifests as kindness, sympathy, or compassion, and all of what we call the noble emotions. However, that very same love, when distorted because of ignorance, expresses as hatred or as cruelty. Thus, we find the one emotion of love in its pure form to be kindness or goodness and in its distorted form to be cruelty, anger etc. The Upanishad talks of several kinds of thoughts: *kāmaḥ* or desire, *saṅkalpaḥ* or resolve, *vicikitsā* or doubt, *śraddhā* or faith, *aśraddhā* or the lack of faith, *dṛṭiḥ* or fortitude, *adṛṭiḥ*, the lack of fortitude, *bhītiḥ* or fear, *hṛīḥ*, humility, and *dhīḥ*, knowledge or the intellect. All these are called *manaḥ*. They are the different moods of the mind. So what is a thought? It is nothing but a state of mind. An emotion is also a state of mind. Therefore, an emotion is also a kind of thought<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2005 Arsha Vidya Gurukulam Family Camp *satsanga*. Transcribed and edited by Jaya Kannan, Chaya Rajaram and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.