

MASTERING YOUR MOODS WITH THE THOUGHT-SWORD OF WISDOM



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Millions of people are walking the earth thinking they are free. But are they truly free? They imagine they are doing what they want to do, but in truth their actions are compelled mostly by their moods. Freedom to do exactly what one wants to do, arising naturally from what one ought to do, comes only when the ego's moods are mastered.

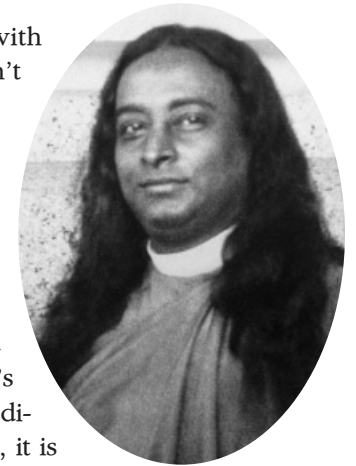
No one really wants to go through life in gloomy moods. It is so much better to be peaceful than to be angry. Yet despite good resolutions to the contrary, as soon as somebody does a little thing that the ill-tempered person doesn't like, his face becomes flushed with anger and he is wholly subject to that ugly mood. From morning until evening most everyone indulges in their different moods. Analyze yourself: Sometimes you are happy, sometimes you are peevish, sometimes you are sad or discouraged, and so

forth. Day after day, you go on living with these ups and downs because you don't know how to control them.

Moods Cloak the Soul

Moods are commonly thought of as a mental attitude or emotional disposition predominating in the consciousness at any given time. But yoga philosophy goes deeper. The Sanskrit word *bhava* is a broad term for mood, or more specifically, one's state of being, ranging from emotions to divine absorption in meditation. Generalized, it is the particular manner of being—the nature, character, temperament, way of thinking or feeling, the state of mind or consciousness—that is an individualized expression cloaking the soul. Thus, there are various kinds of moods, some good and some bad. All good moods should be nurtured; they are those that do not distort the clear expression of your innate divinity. Bad moods are those that destroy divine moods. Restless moods destroy the mood of soul calmness. Anger moods destroy the native peace of the soul. Anything that disturbs the soul's mood of calm happiness is destructive. As soon as disturbing moods come, slay them with the thought-sword of wisdom.

This world is a spiritual hospital, and until you are cured of the delusion relative to the body-bound ego, you won't be discharged. You will be reborn on earth repeatedly until you free yourself from mortal ignorance. Indulgence in harmful moods is the gravest slavery we have created in our delusion. He who is bound by anger and greed and their companionate inclinations cannot pass the gates of delusion into freedom. The yoga of the Bhagavad Gita and sage Patanjali cites the discipline of mind required to attain mastery. [See sidebar on page 7.]



The Wisdom-Realization That God Has Become Your Self

The highest wisdom is Self-realization—knowing the Self, the soul, as eternally inseparable from God. The most pernicious evil is not to see that God has manifested Himself in this world and in yourself. In truth, every unit of finite matter is the expression of God. You don't know it is God, and that is your mistake.

God who is infinite has become the finite. Why couldn't He become one form? He is everything. If you could see into the essence of flowers and gems and every other manifestation in creation—including your own self—you would see that the One Being is at the innermost core of all that exists. “O Arjuna! I am the Self in the heart of all creatures: I am their Origin, Existence, and Finality.”*

It is said, “The tree came from the seed, but the seed came from the tree. Which was first?” Such questions lead to an infinite regress, because the limited human intellect cannot apprehend a First Cause. With our mortal mind we see only one link in the eternal chain of life. The beginning and end of all created things are hidden in the depths of the Infinite; only the middle is visible. In the grand panorama of creation, the invisible Infinite becomes visible in the finite; and those with eyes to see can discern in every finite thing the marks of the Infinite.

To the seer of ultimate Truth, the startling contrasts of good and evil, light and darkness, the demon and the divine man, are *in essence* the same, because he beholds behind those outer manifestations the one God. Just as a moviegoer sees that both the evil villain and the hero are the results of the one beam of light thrown on the screen, so the sage of divine wisdom sees the Infinite Light in all things, and works to bring out that Light hidden beneath the shroud of evil moods in ignorant persons.

* *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* X:20.

Those who follow the devotional approach of worshipping a personal God (*Bhakti Yoga*) know that even the formless Infinite can be realized in a finite form. As the Divine Mother, or Heavenly Father, or one of the Deity personifications known to devotees down the ages, it is the impersonal and invisible Infinite who has become very personal and finite. Yet when God manifests in a finite aspect, the entire Infinite is throbbing therein. Just as the radio vibration which is spread over millions of miles of space vibrates through one radio, so the Infinite can vibrate through one finite form.

It is easier to approach God through devotion to a personal concept of Divinity, for the minds of most persons cannot begin to relate to the formless Impersonal Absolute. For a long time I have enjoyed that personal relationship with God as my Divine Mother and Father and Friend. But at other times I have not been devotional at all; for in personal worship you think of yourself as separate from God. Worship is imperfect union with God; it keeps the devotee apart from the object of devotion. In perfect oneness with God you cannot say you worship Him. You only know, “Thou and I are one. I cannot have any existence separate from You.”

That wisdom-conception of the Infinite is very beautiful too, because in it there is complete unity with God. You do not stand as a slave before Him—a mere created being

“A calm and contented mental clarity, kindness, silence, self-control, and purity of character (bhava-samshuddhi) constitute the austerity of the mind.”

—God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita XVII:16

“By cultivating attitudes of friendliness, compassion, gladness, and dispassion, respectively, toward happiness, misery, virtue, and vice, the consciousness (chitta) retains the unruffled calmness (of the soul).”

—Patanjali's Yoga Sutras I:33

subject to creation's constraining laws—but know yourself as the unconditioned, infinite Self. You merge in the Absolute Bliss, Absolute Existence, Absolute Consciousness. As long as you remain in that state, everything that is of your confining ego-personality is gone.

“Mind nor intellect, nor ego, *chitta*;
Sky nor earth nor metals am I.
I am He; I am He; Blessed Spirit, I am He.
Beyond the flights of fancy, formless am I,
Permeating the limbs of all life;
Bondage I do not fear; I am free, ever free,
I am He, I am He, Blessed Spirit, I am He.”*

That conception is so marvelous! Whenever the idea of sin or trouble tries to ensnare you, anchor yourself in the Divine—do not think yourself separate from God. Drown your personality, your ego, your moods and habits, in oneness with that Infinite Perfection. Affirm and realize: “God is all. I am His manifestation. He is I.”

It is wrong to say, “I am God”; but it is all right to say, “God is myself.” The wave cannot claim to be the ocean; for the ocean can exist with or without the wave. But the ocean has become the wave. So when you affirm the truth that God has become yourself, you can feel the formless Oceanic Spirit that has become the finite wave of your little self. Egotists cannot realize that. When you *think* you are with Him and continue to behave in wicked and selfish ways, know that you are yet in delusion. When you merge in the Infinite, when your consciousness becomes anchored in Him, nothing remains that is of the ego. All thoughts, feelings, actions become pure.

Remember, if you hold on to the truth, “God has be-

*Paramahansa Yogananda translated these lines from a longer Sanskrit chant composed by Swami Shankara; a musical rendition (“No Birth, No Death”) appears in Paramahansaji’s *Cosmic Chants* (published by Self-Realization Fellowship).

come me,” and accordingly behave divinely, you will be liberated from the delusive imperfections of body and mind. No matter if your body is afflicted or diseased—even when death is at your door—if still you do not give up and you can retain that consciousness that you are free, you will be free. Such is the power of thought and consciousness that God has given us.

The Power of Thought Can Create Miraculous Changes

There was a saint who noticed that one of his students was silently critical because the saint once in a while ate meat, even though enjoining on the students a strict vegetarianism. So the master said to this critic, “Can you digest everything I can digest?” The student replied, “Certainly,” thinking he would then be invited to share his teacher’s savory meal. Instead, the saint scooped up a handful of hot nails from the blacksmith’s fire and began to swallow them. The disciple was stunned. The saint had merely changed his thought; to his consciousness, meat or hot metal were identically of the One Spirit. All miracles performed by masters in this world have been done by the power of thought, the underlying matrix of creation.

Thought is everything. To illustrate, close your eyes and visualize a black horse on the left side and a white horse on the right side. Now change the white horse to the left side and the black horse to the right side. See them clearly in your mind. The transposition is easy and instant, just by changing the thought. The black horse is your bad habit, and you change it into a white horse of good habit. See how simply it is done by the power of your own thought.

“Remember, if you hold on to the truth, ‘God has become me,’ and accordingly behave divinely, you will be liberated from the delusive imperfections of body and mind.”

A repetition of thought becomes a habit. And moods are nothing but crystalized habits from the past. Way back in some forgotten incarnation you allowed yourself to harbor the ego-born thoughts of being peevish or angry or sad, instead of quickly evicting those harmful attitudes from your consciousness each time they arose. So today those past-life tendencies or habits burst forth as moods—with or without some outer stimulus of present circumstances. Often you don't know why you are in the mood you are in; you just

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are. Because it has become “second nature” to you, that is why you think you can't get out of it. But you need only remember that your seemingly intractable mood is nothing but a thought that was strengthened by repetition sometime in the past. Why should you let your moody thoughts enslave you? With the thought-sword of wisdom, destroy the thought-cords that bind you. Life is a battle and you must fight to win it. Do not let moods rule you. You have been carrying those tendencies through perhaps hundreds of incarnations. Why allow them to remain with you? Conquer them right now. Determine to do so and it will be done. Do not put it off. If you say, “Tomorrow I will conquer,” that tomorrow will never come. Instead affirm, “Today it is gone,” and it will be gone, because mind is all-powerful.

Moods hypnotize your soul and there begins your downfall. There is no excuse for you to say *I can't*. Whenever I hear a person say that, something rebels in me. “I can't do this and I can't do that!” Who has given you that verdict but your own mood? When you say *can*, who can make it *can't*? These are just two aspects of thought. In creating this world of duality, thought was split into good and evil. So it is as easy as thinking to be good, and it is just as easy to be bad.

In a paradise you can be miserable and in hades you can be a god. That is all done by your consciousness. There is no hades worse than the hades of anger and moods. The devil of moods is inside. As soon as you feel a mood coming on, trample it.

The anger mood is a terrible bondage that must be conquered. The irate person harms himself first—and then he tries to hurt others.* They then retaliate and try to hurt him even more! The only cure is to destroy anger from within. It can be done just by one thought: “I *will* be free from anger.” Say to yourself, “I am the calm imperturbable soul; I can never be angry.” But if you say *can't*, you have given the verdict to yourself that you are a prisoner of anger. And it is the same with greed and with everything else that binds you.

Another mood to be conquered is blasé indifference. Some persons are bored with everything. Why not cultivate an interest in the wonders of life? When interest is gone you are as good as dead. Be fully alive by enthusiasm for noble achievements and divine happiness.

Who can stop you from thinking you are a god? No one. You are your only obstruction. “The self that befriends the Self is its own friend, and the self that is inimical to the Self is its own enemy.”† When you say to yourself that you are a sinner you are finished. Never let anyone tell you you are a sinner. Always affirm the truth: You are good, you are divine, you are free. And then get busy harmonizing your behavior with that truth.

Freedom From Moods Is Found in Inner Calmness

While affirming your goodness as a child of God, do not be blind to the flawed attitudes of your second nature, or

*“Anger breeds delusion; delusion breeds loss of memory (of the Self). Loss of right memory causes decay of the discriminating faculty. From decay of discrimination, annihilation (of spiritual life) follows” (*God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* II:62–63).

†Paraphrase of Bhagavad Gita VI:5.

your moods will be very hard to get rid of. If you have a blot of ink on your face, everyone sees that blemish—everyone but yourself! You do not see your psychological face. Hence the necessity to be guided by discrimination in order to recognize wherein you must change. If you haven't developed that pure discernment, adopt the discrimination of your guru. The guru says, "I am your mirror. There is the ink." Analyze yourself impartially according to the wisdom in his teachings.

I see people who remain imprisoned all the time in their moods. Some cling so tenaciously to their wrong attitudes; and to support themselves they say, "I feel God is guiding me." When delusion is strong, that is when the help of a true guru is so important. His wisdom is the voice of truth; he will never cater to weaknesses nor offer flattery when change is in the disciple's own best interest. He tells you plainly what is wrong, and if you try to correct yourself you will be free from those moods. To be free from moods is to be able to live divinely. I found that by remaining calm inside, in the calmness of my soul, I was a free man. I wouldn't give that up for anything in the world, for without that calmness I can't do good to anybody. It is my most precious guarded possession.

No cannons of moods can reach you if you remain in the fortress of inner spiritual calmness. Your only sanctuary of freedom is that haven within yourself. But people make it very hard for themselves by not trying to remain in that state. Instead, they have the habit of restlessness. They think they cannot sit still and cultivate the peace of the soul in meditation. They would rather be on the go. That is their mood.

The hypnosis of moods keeps people bound more than anything else. Some persons can sit and read shelves full of books, but to sit still and meditate seems terrible to them! To me, reading is a most tedious way to spend time. It feels like an ocean is trying to inundate me as I read somebody

else's thoughts. Meditation comes easier to me; and is far more fulfilling. Two or three hours I sit immersed in one divine thought, and know no time at all. If you make the effort to realize how interesting your soul is, you won't know time when you immerse yourself in that consciousness. Your soul will pour out to you infinite wisdom; you will find that all knowledge is written in that image of God within you.

In the beginning of my efforts to meditate long, I kept reminding myself: "It is not so many hours. For incarnations you were away from your Self; now you must get back there." Just as soon as I strongly impressed that thought on my mind, my consciousness became lost to the body—absorbed in the inner bliss of soul-contact.

You think meditation is so difficult because you have developed the mood of being with the body. This body itself is a mood. It is a delusion God has put over our souls. "Why think we must go into *samadhi*?"

the mind asks. "How nice is the body!" your mood says. But in stark contrast to the soul, I feel the body is most repugnant. It is anything but perfect—all the time giving some trouble and clamoring for attention. It coughs and sneezes and is never all right. Why do you want to love the body? Why do you want to put a garland of adoration on it?

The mood of restlessness is a graft onto your real nature. Your real nature is calmness and freedom. Establish yourself in that consciousness; make it so natural that you feel the Self all the time. I am the Self. I no longer have to meditate to feel my identity with the Self. That realization is always there.

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Most of the time I don't feel the body because I am in the Self. The yogi breathes or doesn't breathe, eats or doesn't eat—no matter what he is doing, he is always cognizant of the Self. He has changed his mood from the mood of ignorance to the mood of wisdom.

Be Free of Moods and You Will Get Along With Everyone

When you see people behaving according to their different or bad moods, finding fault with everybody and everything but themselves, don't add to their difficulty by being intolerant. Rather, help to heal them by the kindness of your right example. I do not ask anybody to conquer anger if I do not conquer it myself. If I were to get angry over someone's misbehavior toward me, I would be lowering myself to that person's level. Find no fault with anyone but yourself. If your behavior is correct, you will also see a change in others.

It is your own fault if you get into trouble with others. Analyze yourself. You will be surprised to see that when troubles come, most of the time it is because you are not acting or thinking rightly. If you control your own attitude, you will get along with anyone. I have purposely mixed with those who have opposite views from mine. I made it a point to win over their feelings of enmity.

To conquer human hearts is a wonderful art; it consists of sincerity and living the spiritual life. Many persons, as soon as they find out someone's weakness, want to rub salt in that wound. But if instead you keep your calmness, saying and feeling in your heart, "I don't want to mistreat you," that person will feel your sincerity. Always treat others sincerely in spite of how others treat you. When you cannot come to an agreement with them, remain silent. You do not go along with their error; you are silent, that is all. Remain centered in your Self, in the good qualities of your soul, and continuously give understanding to people. Then you will be a conqueror of hearts.

The only way you can remain impervious to the moods of others is not to be moody yourself. If you feel insulted, everyone will seem to insult you. If you feel no one can insult you, no one can. I never saw anybody who could offend my Master [Swami Sri Yukteswar]. He was above hatred and insult. He conquered by the spiritual power of his wisdom.

It is important to know how to deal with the moods of people, especially in the business world. If you are going to discuss some business deal and you find the person is in a mood, it might be necessary to change the subject and wait for a better time. Worldly persons are mostly moody because they have never tried to control their tempers. Very few are calm. They say anything according to their mood.

When possible, avoid people when they are in bad moods. Get out of their way. Then, when they are all right, mix with them. And if the situation is such that you cannot leave their presence, still you can be inwardly away from their moods—not in disdain but in mental withdrawal. For example, simply refrain from acknowledging a person's anger. If you recognize and respond to it, then begins the trouble. If you refuse to be touched by it, that anger will be spent to no avail. Anger toward you cannot work unless you accept it.

Most persons know they dare not fight in the office or workplace lest they be fired, so they save their moods until they come home—then they let loose. What inane foolishness it is to indulge in fractious moods and inflict them on others. Your emotions give you a false sense of mastery over others, but actually you are a slave. It is a form of tem-

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porary insanity; you should be in a padded cell. When you feel yourself in a perverse mood, lock yourself away from others and get rid of it. This isn't permission to hide away and take your time wallowing in your mood. It is just better not to show yourself to others while you summon the will and positive thoughts to quickly control your bad mood.

People are such victims of their moods, suffering from them all the time, like a ravaging disease. Even if their bodies are healthy, their character is mutilated by the smallpox of moods.

The healthy mind is immune to disfiguring moods. That state is so grand. When you are completely free from the dictates of your second nature, the flaws of the ego, you anchor in the Truth of your real nature. In that state it does not take any effort of will to be good. Say you are angerless and you are. Say you are peaceful and you are. Your divine soul qualities are at your command. There is nothing to it.

Keep this vow: "I am going to behave perfectly no matter how others behave toward me." It can be done. When you remain in the calmness of the soul, you will know God. And when you know God, you will see in every human being a temple of God.

He who claims authority to be a spiritual teacher is not necessarily so; but he who sees God in all, whose hands remain folded in humble adoration of all, he is a Christ. Regard others' comfort and others' happiness, and behave rightly and sincerely—then you will have the world with you. And even if the world is not with you, God will be with you. Jesus was a king because he made his throne in every heart.

God is the bliss of meditation. Feel that He is the boundless Joy in your heart. Use the heart to find God. The brain and the heart are the doors to God-realization. Instead of using their instrumentalities to entangle yourself in passions and moods, use them to find God and attain your everlasting freedom. □

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