

Brooding, a barrier in Spirituality

- Sharath Ramanathan

Brooding is a common difficulty that every person undergoes in his life. In simple terms, based on my experience, Brooding is akin to a self-inflicted mental torture mostly on account of one's ignorance or lack of awareness of some fundamental truths and a lack of awareness of HIS (MASTER) continuous presence in our heart. When we brood, we generally think about that which we are unhappy about. We expected something and something else happened and we are not able to come to terms with it. There is an old saying, "When we do not get what we want, experience is what we get". Without experience, we cannot gain wisdom.

When one is stuck brooding over a considerable amount of time, it has its repercussions in physical level also as it may lead to some health problems too. Brooding over unpleasant things affects our energy levels and motivation. We tend to reflect an unhappy disposition when we brood over our past and are unable to digest it. On the contrary, as an abhyasi, it is our dharma or duty to strictly conduct ourselves according the principles of Ten Commandments. Instead of brooding over the difficulties

or miseries, if we do not accept them as divine gifts, then we are not being true to ourselves and don't deserve HIS paternity. Further, persistent brooding is a sure sign of an unyielding attitude towards the divine. Master says that brooding indirectly amounts to meditation on miseries and sorrows and thereby we take into view their darker aspects.

Brooding implies –

A lack of acceptance or inability to reconcile with the happenings in one's life or the past experiences

It implicitly indicates an unyielding attitude on the part of the person

It leads to unhappiness and sorrow which is not necessary and avoidable

When one keeps brooding about his past or future, he is unable to free himself from those thoughts that have caused huge impact and cast deep impressions on him and repeated thinking on them causes them to sink into the sub-conscious. The sub-conscious could then create circumstances where one's fears could become true.

It is to be understood that it is our bounden duty to remain happy and that is what divine wants from us. Our Master further states that one should be happy under all

circumstances which include the adverse circumstances as well. But then, for some reason or the other, it is a shame that one finds himself sometimes unhappy for no real reason even under happy circumstances. It is nothing but ingratitude on our part if we do so.

When one broods, he is letting the mind go on in whichever direction it wants. It basically means that one does not have control on his mind. When a person meditates properly, his mind gets naturally regulated and it will not be inclined to entertain negative thinking. I would like to recall Master's statement that "Incorrect thinking produces incorrect results" and a lack of control on the mind and curbing of its wayward thinking is a lack of improper adherence to the meditational practices and orientation to Master. I wonder many times, what would have happened to me if not for Master and His system. This leads to compassion towards all people in the world and the imperative need to be sincere in sadhana.

Types of thoughts that we tend to brood on:

General discontentment in life due to expectations that one has from life

Undue attachments

Problems related to work, people at work, our peers, bosses etc.

Personal issues, related to family, relatives, friends etc

Some losses financial or other wise

Other's good luck and fortune

Sour experiences of the company of some people in the past

Recounting one mistakes of the past and dwelling on them

Recounting other's mistakes of the past and dwelling on them

Playing the victim – recounting how we were not taken care or given respect or did not receive what we deserved or our wishes were not fulfilled etc etc.

Thoughts related to some hurt caused to one's ego or mistakes caused by someone that caused some misfortune to us in the past. Intellectually we may feel we are not holding any grudges against anyone, but sub-consciously we may be nurturing some ill feelings. One needs to be watchful, vigilant, and honest to acknowledge them and make a concerted effort to overcome them as these could be extremely detrimental to one's sadhana. Recalling a statement of our Master to this account –

“Thoughts have life and they also work on the lives of others. But the tragedy is that we produce scorpions and snakes by our thoughts and tease others. Under the circumstances they do not serve the spiritual purpose but wade deep in the mire of ungodliness.” Nurturing ill feelings about others will lead to hatred and is not good for spirituality. Sri KCN Sir has once stated in one of his articles, that intellectually everyone knows that they need to do good, but very few actually do good. This is due to lack of love. One should develop love and magnanimity towards others and should use any opportunity to forgive others follies just the way our Master forgives us every time.

Sometimes one also broods on one’s own greatness or success or achievements leading to vanity and pride which are also pitfalls in the path of spirituality. Master says “If we consider ourselves great, we put up a wall to that Greatness, where we have to arrive.”

Perceived problems. We may not build castles in air, but we sure do construct problems in air meaning, we perceive some future problems, and start trying to solve them as though we are visionaries capable of knowing the future accurately. As Master says – “There are miseries all around for the embodied one.” Expecting a

life without miseries or trying conditions is like saying I require a degree but I won't write any exams. If not for these miseries and difficulties, where is the scope for following commandments and developing essential spiritual attitudes like forbearance and fortitude?

Some thoughts on overcoming brooding:

Accepting every circumstance that one goes through in his/her life as the best possible circumstance/opportunity provided by the Divine for one's own spiritual growth and advancement. As Sri KCN Sir puts it, Surrender should become real.

Sometimes, we face problems from many dimensions, work, home and personal front, Sadhana etc. occupying our mind. According to research, human mind can focus on only 2 or 3 things at the same time effectively. So we must be able to accept things as they are and follow the practices with more vigour at these times and deal with situations in a balanced manner.

Instead of cribbing about problems or difficulties, one must become creative problem solver and approach life with zeal, energy, courage and stoic attitude. When Master is there with us, nothing can happen and whatever happens is God's will. Utter dependency on

Master and acting without any expectations but only with a sense of duty is essential to not form impressions. Master has suggested that brooding must be overcome through resignation, dedication and submission to His Will and by laying down our sorrows and ills before him

There is no scope for negative feelings, as Sri KCN Sir has once said that Master's presence may make our doubts come true. Yes, as Grihasthas, there are situations when we momentarily fall now and then. But then, the beauty and the greatness of this system is it helps us to erase these thoughts and impressions and helps us to bounce back quickly.

Everytime I attend a Bhandara, I feel that my past is demolished and a new life is breathed into me such that is no memory or impression of the past. It is but wisdom to not try to recollect the past and own up the conditions bestowed and move further which I am trying every time.

Comparing one's life with that of lives of our Masters of the Order in terms of magnitude of difficulties and efforts in sadhana will help understand one's insignificance and help develop positive attitude in life. That Karma has a role to play and none but the individual is responsible for his destiny and what he or she is undergoing is nothing but the result of their own actions is a basic knowledge that one should understand.

To illustrate an example my father has told me many

times, if a wheel has to move forward, it moves up and it moves down in a cyclic fashion. It moves up and moves down, without which, it cannot move forward. Similarly are the situations in our life. As our life progresses, we have “ups” and “downs”. Without “downs”, there is no forward movement. As a chinese saying goes, “It is better to move slowly than to stand still”.

It is important to develop an attitude of acceptance and stoic attitude to overcome feelings of unhappiness in order to become ONE with HIM.

Remembering Master and dwelling on HIM instead of other thoughts and thinking about HIS qualities and HIS benevolence and kindness and greatness, HIS unconditional love towards us etc will help a great deal.

I read a statement of Master where he said “Whenever you get a negative thought, immediately give a positive thought to neutralize its effect”. When I was going through a phase when my mind was turbulent and disturbed, I carried the Words of Wisdom with me always and whenever I got a negative thought, I took the book from my pocket and read a saying. This helped me a lot.

When we meditate, we are asked to ignore all the thoughts are uninvited guests. When we are out of meditation also, we are supposed to ignore thoughts. To

this effect, the daily inspiration a few days back read: “Meditation only at a certain fixed hour is not enough, for we are thus in touch with the sacred thought only for a while after which we have no idea of God whatsoever and are for most part of the day away from the path of service and devotion.” It is important to practice this to develop the balancedness and have a reasonable control of our mind.

When we brood, we are living in our self. “When we are out of reality we are with Satan”. We have to rise above our self and not let anything affect our sadhana. It is easier said than done and it requires a good conditioning of mind and development of proper attitudes along with considerable practice to achieve this and one should keep endeavouring for the same.

Unless one goes through difficulties and miseries in life, one cannot experience the deeper realms of devotion and love and one should be extremely grateful for that. It is no wonder that saints of the past asked God to bestow all the miseries on earth to them. I would like to mention a few instances from life story of Pujya Sri Dr. KCV in this regard. Pujya Dr KCV had to put up with many situations of insult and disgrace in the hands of management. He was ignored for promotions, his salary

was halved. But he dealt with all the situations with stoic attitude and he became stronger spiritually by the day. All these insults pushed him further into the realms of spirituality and he started to learn the lessons of disgrace, defeat, demotion and developed enormous fortitude and forbearance. His practice of Raja Yoga became more intensified and his journey inside into the deeper depths of consciousness commenced. Instead of brooding over his miseries, he took to his Sadhana more assiduously and more tenaciously. Such was his dependence on the Master that is worthy of emulating when we go through similar trials and tribulations.

With that note, I would like to thank the institute for providing me the opportunity to share some thoughts in spite of my lapses in this regard and I appeal that we all brood only on HIM during this celebrations and carry only the impression of our Master in our heart.

Pranams.

