

PERSPECTIVES

HARNESSING MENTAL ENERGY

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Importance of Mental Energy

What we would be without the power of our mind? Nothing. A fossil.

When we look around the world, we find that the difference between animal and man, and also between man and man, lies in the difference of their respective mental power. The greats of every field seem to have had access to the infinite source of mental energy. Sages, scientists, artists, poets, politicians and every such path maker became great because

of the simple reason that they could tap the infinite within them. Naturally it is the concern of all to understand the nature and dynamics of mental energy to find the ways and means of conserving and also increasing it.

The need to understand the art and science of mental energy does not end with a simplistic approach because a proper understanding and application of this art can take one to the highest level of evolution, and also beyond it, that is, mukti. The mind is the subtle agent that governs every movement of our physical organs and the body. All our acts, thoughts and words are rooted in our mind alone. Our sense of bondage, limitations, passions, weaknesses and also the power to be free, to create and to be good and all such things are operated only by the mind. So, if we want to overcome our weakness, if we want to become good and noble and if we want to be anything in life, then we will have to reach the very fountainhead of all our energy, and we will have to harness our mental energy.

Emphasising this need, Swami Vivekananda says, '...Now, a good deal of our physical evil we can get rid of, if we have control over the fine parts; a good many worries we can throw off, if we have control over the fine movements; a good many failures can be averted, if we have control over these fine powers. ... The utility of this science is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean.'

Problem of Non-rejuvenation of Mental Energy

Every being is usually at his energetic and creative best till a certain age (normally 25), after which begins the journey to dissipation. Add to this the blows and betrayals by the

world and you will find a grown-up person sapped of vitality and vigour resulting in gloom, pessimism, despair and depression. The creativity of such persons gets lost, which is as bad as becoming inert.

However, by proper training and care even the worst cases of disintegration can once again begin their journey towards perfection. In fact it is a wonder that when the doors to all that is good, noble, joyful and stimulating are perpetually open, why does one refuse to walk through them and, instead, sits idle in his personalised black hole, accompanied by his dark thoughts alone! It beats rationality. We refuse to accept that all our negative emotions, feelings, words and acts are rooted in our failure to harness our own mental energy. We also forget that we can get reestablished in all glory by merely shrugging off our despair.

Fortunately, it is never late to begin. And, even a little effort that goes into the noble task of building the mind power never gets scattered like the autumnal cloud.

The Source of Mental Energy: According to Science and Spirituality

In passing it may be mentioned that the very approach of science and spirituality towards the mind is exactly the opposite, which causes no less amount of confusion and conflict. Every religion believes that the universe has come out of intelligence, and out of that intelligence came the gross matter, which we call world. On the other hand, all scientists and most Western philosophers believe that intelligence is the last to come in the chain of evolution. According to them, unintelligent things slowly evolve into animals, and then into men. They thus claim that instead of everything coming out of the cosmic mind (of which we all are a part), mind itself is the last to be evolved.

So, according to religion, all powers (including yogic, extraordinary, the sixth sense etc.) are already in the mind of man because this mind is a part of the universal mind. For the same reason, each mind is connected with every other mind, and hence each mind is in communication with the whole world all the time.

The science of today is the cataloguing of observability, which itself has a severe limit. Brownian motion puts a limit to observability, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle puts a limit to predictability. This sticking to observability, duplicability and predictability puts such a severe constraint on science that it refuses to admit the obvious and misses the trees for the forest. It refuses to accept that a man is divine by nature, has infinite potential and has all the wisdom and power within him, and any of his achievement is due to the uncovering of his limitations that he had set himself.

The Sixth Sense

It won't be out of place here to mention a word or two about the sixth sense, which is also known as intuition.

Science believes that the mind grasps data through five senses alone. And yet there are

innumerable cases of a person's coming across some important data without the intervening medium of his five senses. For example, Jim Corbett describes in *Man eater of Chowgarh*, 'This sense that warns us of impending danger, is a very real one and that I do not know, and therefore cannot explain, what brings it into operation. On this occasion I had neither heard nor seen the tigress, nor had I received any indication from bird or beast of her presence and yet I knew, without any shadow of doubt, that she was lying up for me among the rocks... this knowledge was confirmed a few moments later.'

What has been described here is not something unique. We all have our own personal data of such encounters, but we refuse to believe their authenticity simply because many times our intuitions have gone wrong. We do not realise that such psychic phenomena require a lot of mental purity, solitude and discipline. Without these, our mind stays immersed in the surrounding noise of the mental waves and fails to listen to what is being conveyed softly. Like the effort of waking up Kumbhakarna from his sleep with the help of great noise, we also require the screams of our senses to become aware of the happenings around us. We are simply not capable of hearing the soft whispers of the mind. That is the reason why many of our intuitions get covered up and convey the wrong things.

Highlighting the importance of solitude to develop mental powers, Swami Vivekananda says, 'It seems to me that when a country becomes very thickly populated, psychical power deteriorates. Given a vast country thinly inhabited, there will, perhaps, be more of psychical power there.'

When a person learns to become quiet, and stops creating his own mental din through memories and wild thinking, his power of perception, judgment and action increases a thousand fold. The goal of every person should be to get connected with the universe directly, without the aid of the telescope and stethoscope of his senses. That is when the real power of the mind shines in all brilliance.

The Potential of the Human Mind is Infinite

Given the right training, there is no end to the power that a man can obtain. One of the most authentic and enlightening pieces on this subject comes from Swami Vivekananda, who narrated his experience of mind power as follows:

I once heard of a man who, if any one went to him with questions in his mind, would answer them immediately; and I was also informed that he foretold events. I was curious and went to see him with a few friends. We each had something in our minds to ask, and, to avoid mistakes, we wrote down our questions and put them in our pockets. As soon as the man saw one of us, he repeated our questions and gave the answers to them. Then he wrote something on paper, which he folded up, asked me to sign on the back, and said, 'Don't look at it; put it in your pocket and keep it there till I ask for it again.' And so on to each one of us. He next told us about some events that would happen to us in the future. Then he said, 'Now, think of a word or a sentence, from any language you like.' I thought of a long sentence from Sanskrit, a language of which he was entirely ignorant. 'Now, take out the paper from your pocket,' he said. The Sanskrit sentence was written there! He had written it an hour before with the remark, 'In confirmation of what

I have written, this man will think of this sentence.' It was correct. Another of us who had been given a similar paper, which he had signed and placed in his pocket, was also asked to think of a sentence. He thought of a sentence in Arabic, which it was still less possible for the man to know; it was some passage from the Koran. And my friend found this written down on the paper.

Another of us was a physician. He thought of a sentence from a German medical book. It was written on his paper.

Several days later I went to this man again, thinking possibly I had been deluded somehow before. I took other friends, and on this occasion also he came out wonderfully triumphant.

Another time I was in the city of Hyderabad in India, and I was told of a Brahmin there who could produce numbers of things from where, nobody knew. ... He had only a strip of cloth about his loins, we took off everything else from him. I had a blanket, which I gave him to wrap round himself, because it was cold, and made him sit in a corner. Twenty-five pairs of eyes were looking at him. And he said, 'Now, look, write down anything you want.' We all wrote down names of fruits that never grew in that country, bunches of grapes, oranges, and so on. And we gave him those bits of paper. And there came from under his blanket, bushels of grapes, oranges, and so forth, so much that if all that fruit was weighed, it would have been twice as heavy as the man. He asked us to eat the fruit. Some of us objected, thinking it was hypnotism; but the man began eating himself - so we all ate. It was all right.

He ended by producing a mass of roses. Each flower was perfect, with dew drops on the petals, not one crushed, not one injured. And masses of them! When I asked the man for an explanation, he said, 'It is all sleight of hand.'

Whatever it was, it seemed to be impossible that it could be sleight of hand merely. From whence could he have got such large quantities of things?

If these words had not come from the authority of a person like Swami Vivekananda, we would have laughed away the whole description as imaginary. But there is no way that we can ridicule Swamiji's words, and hence we cannot laugh away the concept of special powers.

We are thus forced to accept that there is no end to what a person can do, provided he knows how to do it.

The Practice

When we talk of someone's personality, we actually talk of his mental power, which comes not through his words, nor through his intellect, but by the sheer pattern of his mental energy. These two, the personality and the mental energy of a person, are one and the same thing. When we bow down before a saint, or before a man of integrity, we actually bow down before his mental power, whose external form is that personality.

Whatever the mental power of a person, ultimately it has to work through the brain. Formerly it was believed that the brain is hard wired to do certain things, and that it is not possible to change the wiring after an age. But, all that has changed with the discovery of neuroplasticity, which means that thinking, learning and engaging in activity can physically alter the brain. It is now confirmed that these can affect DNA and turn our genes on or off. No one yet knows how this occurs, but it is an established fact that when a person thinks thoughts repeatedly, he turns on genes to make proteins that change the structure of the neurons and increase the number of connections between brain cells. Similarly, many instances have been reported by doctors and nurses when someone condemned leading a crippled life changed his very brain structure, and consequently the concerned limb, by a strong will power and vigorous exercises.

We thus realise that nothing is impossible for a person to achieve, particularly if he practises certain things. Here we mention some of the more important and common practices, although there is no end to this list.

- Trifles bring perfection: To be successful, one has to learn to pay attention to the most trivial of the task in hand, which normally get neglected. This includes one's life itself. In actual practice, it is seen that we apply all our attention to the bigger things and completely neglect the minor details of our life. How we dress, how we walk, how we eat and all such things add up to build our personality. Also, slipshod work creates a great amount of mental irritation, of which we are not even aware most of the time.
- Importance of balancing act through negative thinking: In recent times too many books on positive thinking have made us forget the importance of negative thinking in maintaining the balance of life. A large many disasters come in one's life simply because the warnings associated with negative thinking were ignored, particularly by the overenthusiasts.
- Regularity, discipline, automaton: A lot of mental energy is saved by delegating the non-essentials to the subordinates. Similarly, once a person gets down to performing certain daily tasks as a routine and in a disciplined manner, he will be surprised to see how much time and energy he is saving. Things that can be done through automaton must not be performed through the process of selection and choice.
- Plural is good, singular is better: Multi-tasking is an excellent way to show off one's capabilities, particularly in young age, but it is a hopeless blunder when it comes to the control of mind. Gita says *bahusakha hi...*, a person who applies his mind to too many things, is not a yogi.
- Symphony, cacophony: The thought, words and actions of a person must produce a harmony, and not a cacophony, as it normally does. Then alone a semblance of optimisation of energy can come in his life.
- Sharpen your sickle through rest: There is a true story about a landlord, who was new to farming. On his first day of inspection, he forced his labourers to work throughout the stipulated 8 hours without allowing them the time to sharpen their

sickles whilst harvesting. No wonder that the landlord was surprised to find that although time had indeed been saved, productivity had badly suffered.

- Law of delayed action: How terribly one tends to lose all that he has earned, simply by an imbalance of his mood. Mood swings are something natural, and even essential. But, a little delay in expressing one's emotions can do wonders in interpersonal relationship and in storing up the mental energy.
- Importance of grit: Nothing can be achieved by nibbling at things. To be successful, one has to learn to stick to a task till it is finished. Sri Ramakrishna tells the story of a well digger who dug many wells, but each one only a few feet deep and consequently never got any water.
- Four types of energy: Every person has physical, emotional, moral and spiritual energy working within him. Of these the physical energy is the crudest and the spiritual energy is the subtlest. When a person is weak in any of these energies, he should focus on the energy higher in subtlety. This is the best way to make oneself strong.

For example, if a person is devastated emotionally due to a sudden loss, he can overcome his weakness by reminding himself that whatever might have happened with him, he has been morally correct all along, so he need not despair. He will thus find himself raised to a higher level of strength soon. Similarly, if someone has been making too many moral compromises resulting in severe gloom and depression, then he should pray sincerely to God for forgiveness or he should remind himself that whatever he might have done, he has not sinned against God. He will then soon find himself uplifted. Prayer to God is one of the best ways to build up mental energy.

- The 10 great virtues: The yogis are credited with the best kind of mental energy with the help of which they have succeeded in achieving the most surprising feats. According to them it is essential that a person follow the 10 virtues to master the internal and the external nature. These are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, non-acceptance of gifts, internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God, which should be cultivated by everyone, irrespective of caste, culture, religion and society.

At times we mistakenly feel that we are established in one of these 10 virtues, simply because we do not steal or do not go on a killing spree. But that is not really correct because if a person is truly established in a virtue, he always gets certain supernatural mental power, as described in the Yoga philosophy. For example, if a person is established in non-stealing, then he can get all the wealth of the world by a mere wish. Similarly, all violence ceases in presence of a person who is established in non-violence.

The Last Word

In essence, every mind is supremely powerful; in practice, a common mind is as bad as the behaviour of an unruly child; and in fact, every powerful mind is disciplined and clean. It is only through a rigorous cleansing and disciplining of the mind that one becomes capable

of attaining the superhuman state. The goal for everyone is to stop the birth of every unnecessary mental activity.

All that we discussed in this article are mere words till they are put to practice. All of us know what is good for us, but we fail to practise them out of sheer laziness. It must be remembered that only through a constant practice of these virtues over a long stretch of time, we can aspire to succeed.

Author's Profile

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