

## Mental Posture

“Mental Posture” — as written by Raghavan Iyer — is a most sacred topic. It pertains to the posture one must learn to assume in order to become an authentic pupil of the Teachings. In order to become the pupil of the Teacher, one must appropriate the posture of a true learner, a true devotee. Children do not need to appropriate this posture; indeed, they are already in possession of it. They naturally ask why a thing is such. They are true seekers, and often ask the most philosophical of questions such as: Where did God come from? Why are we here? How does this or that work? Why is the sky blue? This is the attitude of the mental posture that the grown up needs to recapture — being full of wonder and questing for the answers we have forgotten.

Iyer teaches that all human beings are in fact seeking wisdom, seeking meaning within the changes whether doing so consciously or unconsciously. Within the very nature of human consciousness is the desire to learn, to know. Every single human is essentially a ray of light that can be seen in the pupils of the eyes especially in the eyes of children (sometimes seen as pure joy). The need and desire for authentic mental posture begins with the realization of its lack. In order to move in its direction one must pay greater attention to the teachings and engage in more regular attempts at self-study, which will reveal the hindrances to a proper mental posture. Coupled with these two regular disciplines must be an attempt at meditation, some form of putting the mind beyond the personal nature and its concerns. Either one without the other, can produce serious imbalances. Thus the development of proper mental posture involves the cycle of going high and bringing back what one can to bear upon one’s self-study. This in turn can be taken into one’s meditation thereby gradually enriching it.

Perhaps the greatest aid in attaining this posture begins when a student chooses a teaching or a Teacher. Devoting the self to the teacher that one wishes to help serve and applying the teachings brings one to correct mental posture in one’s daily life and encounters with others. In addition, such attempts will serve to make the student aware of one’s own ignorance. This furthers the desire to learn and to practice, as best one can, the teachings.

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It is taught that prior to regaining the awareness of one's own ignorance, it is necessary to purge from the mind and from the imagination all that has thus far been taken in and thought to be real. The first step in purging these hindrances lie in the realization that they are illusions and obscurations. They will not immediately disappear, but if one persists in not entertaining them, they will come with less force and less frequency until they are extinguished from one's process. In this process it is important not to judge that which needs to be purged — let alone to take their presence as a reflection upon one's self.

When we are taught by enlightened beings that they are different from us in degree and not in kind, we can (through deeply pondering this teaching) come to gradually realize our own potential to move in their direction. In order to do so, both motive and method must be examined. The Path trod and taught by the Mahatmas, the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, emphasizes the need for a motive inclusive of all humanity, and that one's efforts are not simply for one's self. One teacher stated this motive as seeking "to become the better able to help and teach others." This must, through practice, gradually become the ruling motive for all of one's actions. This is not the work of a day or even, in most cases, of one incarnation; however, one can strive to gain more continuity of consciousness of this motive. At certain points one will, perhaps, realize that in order to continue moving forward, one or more vows are required, vows taken to no external agency but to one's own Higher Self. To be true to such vows is to begin to be true to one's self.

It is taught that the personal, separate sense of self, having a limited, non-inherent identity, a limited past and unknown future is illusory. This illusory sense of self resides within the mind. Thus the teaching: "The mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer." The first sentence in the *Dhammapada*, a compilation of the teachings of the Buddha, states: "All that we are is the product of what we have thought."

The wise teach that the mind (*Manas*, from which is derived the word man) can be viewed as two-fold, the Higher Mind and the lower, personal mind. It is this latter

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which needs to be slain, not in the sense of killing it, but rather in the sense of being able to transcend it at will, to no longer have it as a basis of one's identity. It comes to be seen, like a jacket or a cap, to be something one has rather than something one is. The lower mind with which one finds one's self is one's challenge and responsibility to transmute and overcome. This is not accomplished primarily by engaging the lower mind directly on its own turf. To do so is to further strengthen it. It is, rather, taught that one should spend time contemplating descriptions of true Sages such as the one found in the last nineteen verses of the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Regular practice of this teaching will result in the gradual lessening of force and activity of the lower mind. It will in time, paradoxically, become the servant of the Higher Mind.

Critical to this endeavor is the on-going asking of authentic questions arising out of one's own life experiences. It is this questioning spirit combined with a deep desire to learn, which will, perhaps, at the most unexpected times, bring one further perspective regarding one's questions that in turn will indicate the next series of questions to be pursued. We are not, in fact, pursuing this Path alone. It is said that great and wise beings, in or out of human form, take note of all sincere spiritual aspirants and render help either when karma permits or when it is decided to do so. The latter touches upon the mysterious concept of grace to which there is no Path in the sense that it is not the result of treading the Path however successfully. It has been said, "Grace is never deserved." The important aspect is to keep asking the questions – "the answers will come if your own house is in order." The mental posture we are trying to understand involves all of these variables, and more.

The Higher Mind is impersonal, entertaining only universal unchanging ideas. An example to which most can relate is mathematics, numbers. Their truths do not vary from time to time, from place to place. Beyond mathematics lies the intricate mathematics of the universe, known only to Sages. One can activate and develop the Higher Mind through dwelling upon noble ideas such as compassion, wisdom, light, and truth. One of the most profound manners with which to activate the Higher Mind is to

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dwell upon the attributes of the Sage, the true Teacher. It is taught: “Realization comes through dwelling upon that which is to be realized.”

In the ancient world the Teachers established the ideation that the essence of reality is conscious, compassionate light. This they taught to all who would hear. In the Buddhist tradition, this light is called Buddhi, the source of the light of the mind. Buddhi is the basis for the concept of the Buddha Nature. A Buddha, therefore, is a being who has become one with Buddhi, hence the title Buddha, similar in meaning to the title Christ. Buddhi is initially presented through the concept of spiritual intuition, of which many have had brief glimpses. The Teachers taught that to have fully activated the principle of Buddhi is to live constantly “like a becalmed and boundless ocean that pulses at the core of all manifestation.” This condition is described in Hinduism as Being-Consciousness-Bliss, the three in one. Within this *nirvanic* condition are beings who because of vows taken “for live and for lives” to work for the universal enlightenment of all humanity, have retained the most subtle of vestures, composed of the highest and most refined states of matter in order to continue contact with suffering humanity, through absolute compassion aiding humanity sometimes by taking a human form, sometimes without. The earth with all its suffering would suffer even more were it not for the presence of these beings. Among the Mahatmas the greatest in renunciation are Buddha and Jesus who both taught the need to understand the nature of suffering and the means of overcoming. Another Teacher stated, “Suffering is the keynote of all growth.” A simple way to understand suffering is the Buddha’s statement that “suffering is wanting something you do not have or having something you do not want.” The word common to both aspects is WANT. This want is in turn explained as the insatiable desire for sense experience, which draws us into involuntary incarnation, carrying our wants along with us. It is this wanting which must be overcome. It characterizes the lower mind, the ego. To realize that one’s suffering is self-produced through one’s wants is to correctly diagnose the problem and to begin to sense its solution.

Another perspective is that of Socrates who taught that nearly all human suffering is caused by double-ignorance, which he defined as not knowing; combined with

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thinking one does know. Further that this is the condition of the majority of mankind. Socrates attempted to lead people to see their ignorance, thereby overcoming their double-ignorance, rendering them, therefore teachable. To become, again, teachable is to realize — at some level — the importance of a proper mental posture, questioning combined with increased receptivity, the drawing of fewer firm decisions regarding the nature of reality and of Teachers.

The sages teach that to be a true seeker requires “a certain attitude of mind.” This attitude includes proper mental posture consisting of realization of one’s own ignorance, a firm believe in the existence of “perfected men”, of sages who know and whom one wishes to help and serve in any way one can. To attain continuity of consciousness in this regard is to have become a true student of the wise. Through developing mental posture in relation to the Teachers and the Teachings one will come to increasingly understand both. We are taught that we will at times fall, but that “the only failure is the failure to try.”

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