

Outreach

VOLUME 7 EDITION 3



Our Mind: A Friend or Foe?

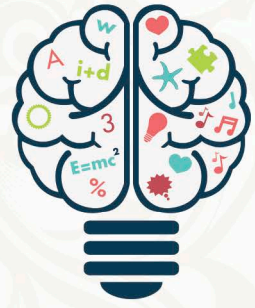
There is one organ in our body that is truly remarkable. It is soft, mushy, and weighs only three pounds. And yet, it is much more powerful than the world's fastest supercomputer. It is our brain. Containing 125 trillion connections and over 100,000 miles of nerve fibers, the brain has been described by researchers to be the most complex machine in the world.

Our brain performs millions of calculations each second. Not only do our brains maintain our bodily functions, but it also helps us think. Our minds help us think, remember, comprehend, analyze, and decide. In fact, according to the National Science Foundation, the mind generates anywhere from 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts in a single day!

Even though the brain is so powerful, let's ask ourselves: Is my mind supporting me to help me reach my goals, or does my mind rebel and hinder me from reaching my goal? Is my mind a friend or a foe? To better understand this, let's consider a short tale which describes the nature of the human mind.

One day, a farmer was overwhelmed with his daily chores. So, he decided it would be best to have an assistant help him. With no one available to help, he

needed another solution. So, he learned black magic and summoned a ghost to help him. Through various mantras and rituals, the farmer learned the techniques to make the ghost as a servant. Soon after, the ghost had become his personal servant and the farmer was more than delighted.



The farmer ordered the ghost to perform all the duties required to maintain his crops. The ghost would do all the chores. In fact, the ghost was so well trained that the man decided to stop working. For routine chores which would take the farmer weeks and months to finish, the ghost would finish in a matter of days. As time passed, all the chores were finished.

Then the ghost turned to the farmer and barked, “I need something to do. If you don’t give me more work, I will devour you.” Fearing for his life, the farmer quickly assigned a few petty tasks to the ghost, but it was done in no time.

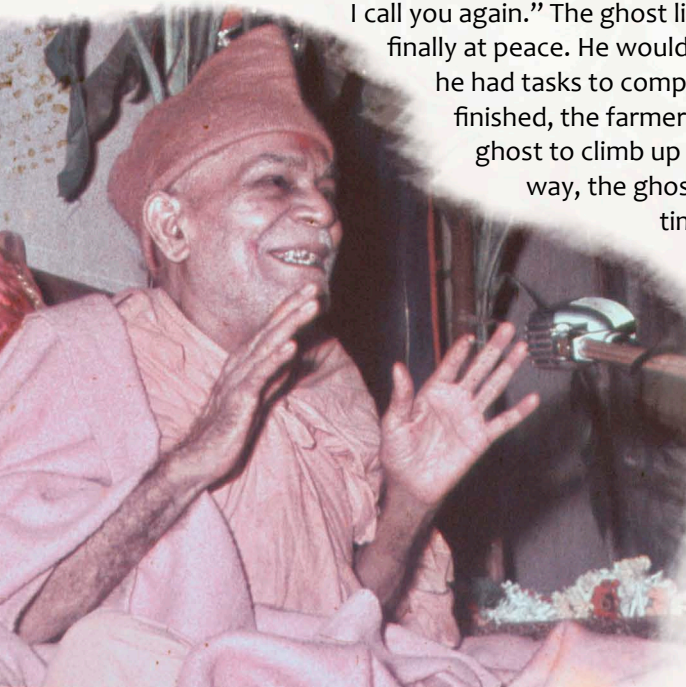
As the ghost again demanded more tasks, the man continued to think of a better solution to his problem. He lost sleep and was barely eating. He decided to visit a saint for advice. He explained his situation to the saint and begged for help. The saint calmed him down and gave him a very unique solution.

The farmer returned home with a smile on his face. Just then, the ghost angrily demanded more work and threatened him. The farmer told the ghost. “Find a pole and erect it into the ground.”

The ghost quickly finished this task, and in a ridiculing manner, the ghost responded, “You will have to do better than that to keep me busy.”

Then the farmer told the ghost, “Continuously climb up and down the pole until I call you again.” The ghost listened and the man was finally at peace. He would call the ghost whenever he had tasks to complete. Once the tasks were finished, the farmer would simply order the ghost to climb up and down the pole. In this way, the ghost would remain busy all the time – either by climbing up and down the pole or by helping with the chores.

In this tale, narrated by Guruhari Yogiji Maharaj, the ghost symbolizes our mind. If we keep our mind engaged in productive tasks,



it will be our friend. It will help us achieve great things. But if we keep the mind idle, it will certainly be a foe, because it will lead us in the wrong direction. As the famous slogan goes, 'A free mind is a devil's workshop.' So depending on how we train it, our mind can be either our best friend or our biggest foe.

Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji recognizes that this is a common obstacle among today's youths. He routinely advises a simple phrase to youths, "Navra nahi rehevanu [Never remain free]." Constantly remain engaged in performing constructive activities that will take you closer to your goal. Ultimately, it is up to us whether we want our remarkable mind to be a friend or a foe!

Cool Fact

Whenever we think, dream, see, laugh, move, or do any activity, chemical and electrical signal are generated. The activity in our brain never stops, even while sleeping. And while a single neuron generates only a tiny amount of electricity, all of our neurons together can generate a lot of electricity.



In fact, when awake, our brain produces enough electricity to power a 20-watt light bulb! So, the misuse of our brain is literally a waste of energy!

Laugh Out Loud

Employee: Sir, this is \$100 less than my salary.

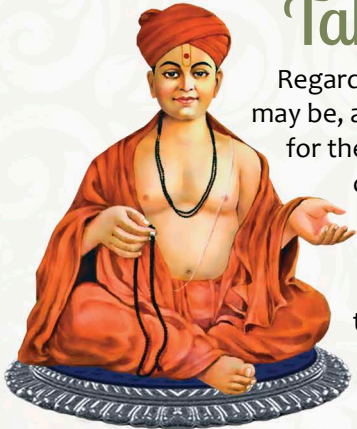


Boss: I know. But last month, when you were overpaid \$100 by mistake, you did not complain!

Employee: Well, I do not mind an occasional mistake, sir, but it seems to be becoming a habit now!



Taking Control of Our Mind



Regardless of how intelligent, strong or successful a person may be, almost everyone has one major weakness – it's difficult for them to control their minds. In describing the nature of our mind, Gunatitanand Swami has stated, "An idle mind is like a monkey that keeps fidgeting. It will keep wondering and will not become stable for even a single second (*Swami Ni Vaato* 6-170)." Countless thoughts are constantly running through our mind. And it seems almost impossible to stop the flow of these thoughts.

If we have too much free time or if we fail to keep our mind engaged, then we will fall victim to the urges of our mind and indulge in undesirable actions. Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji knows the dangers of an idle mind, and so He routinely advises youths to channelize their mental energy. Such was an incident involving a youth from London, England.



A young, highly capable youth excelled in finishing an advanced degree and he secured a prestigious job at a multinational company in London. He was sincere and dedicated with work and *satsang*-related activities. He was quite aware of Swamiji's teachings – mainly regarding keeping the five senses positive and keeping the company of the right friends.

In March of 2014, due to an unfortunate lapse of judgment, this youth's mind became attracted to a female colleague at work. This simple attraction slowly turned into a strong infatuation and unexpectedly led to an intimate encounter between the two individuals.

This youth, although highly capable and intelligent, was overcome and overpowered by this attraction. He deeply regretted his actions, knowing that this situation was preventable. Moreover, he knew his actions violated moral values and he felt that this would displease Swamiji.

He was in contact with a close friend named Chiragbhai, who is the youth leader in London. He confessed and openly spoke to Chiragbhai about the unfortunate incident. Chiragbhai consoled him and advised him to openly speak to Swamiji.

A few months later in July of 2014, when Swamiji visited London, the guilt of his mistake still lingered in the youth's mind. One day, after Swamiji finished His *thaal*, the youth got the opportunity to meet Swamiji. He gathered the courage and openly confessed his mistake to Swamiji with a heartfelt intention of seeking forgiveness.

The youth wholeheartedly prayed to Swamiji, “I have made this big mistake. Please show me a way to repent for this mistake. What should I do now?”

Swamiji looked at him with loving eyes that were filled with compassion. Swamiji never made him feel guilty. Swamiji then asked him, “Do you regularly read any of the three *granths* (scriptures)? Do you do 30 minutes of daily *bhajan*?”

The youth answered, “Sometimes. But when I sit down to do *bhajan*, I get harassed by disturbing thoughts that fill my mind.”

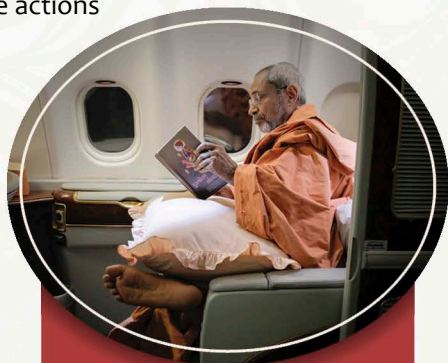
Swamiji then gave him a unique spiritual solution, “You should never leave your mind idle! Whenever you get time, read either of the three *granths* and think about *prasangs* from the lives of *Gunatit Purusho*. Then do 30 minutes of *bhajan*.”

Swamiji then said, “And still, even after reading and doing *bhajan*, if your mind still remains idle and if you have free time, then never remain in a private place by yourself. When you are alone, the mind can easily drag you in the wrong direction. So when you are alone, go and spend time with positive-minded friends, or go to the temple and engage in *seva*. But never leave the mind idle.” The youth was overjoyed.

By making an effort to follow Swamiji’s advice, we are automatically gifted with the blessings that go along with it. The youth followed Swamiji’s advice, never letting His words fall. He would go to the temple to perform *seva*, read the three *granths*, or do *bhajan*. As a result, he was freed from the burden of guilt and emotional bondage. Within a couple of months, he started to experience true joy and happiness.

For many youths, most of their regrettable actions have occurred while in privacy. Hence, it is important to seek the company of the right friends and stay with them to ensure we avoid falling victim to our minds. Staying busy may seem like an ordinary solution, but in fact, it is the solution for many problems that arise.

The *sanskars* from our previous births directly influence our thoughts; and these *sanskars* start to dominate our mind and take control of our actions the moment we keep our mind idle. If we stay engaged, both physically and mentally, in *satsang*-related activities such as *seva* and weekly *sabha*, then these *sanskars* will not influence us!



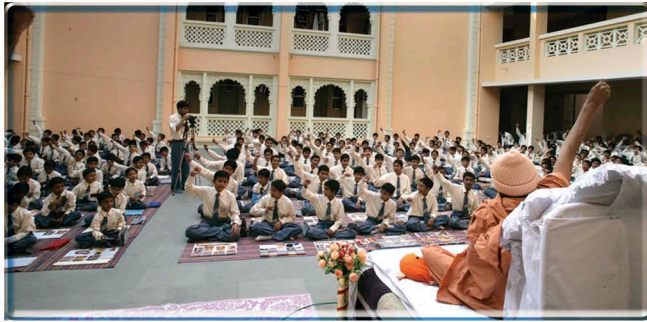
- * Vachanamrut
- * Swami ni Vaato
- * Purushottam Bolya Prite

Learning from Our Friends

Swamiji, whose life is an inspiration to thousands of youths, founded a residential school in India called Atmiya Vidya Mandir (AVM) where students receive both world-class education and moral values. These students look to Swamiji for inspiration and guidance and due to Swamiji's compassionate care, many youths are living such a moralistic life that even adults would find inspiring.

One student in AVM named Smitbhai, was attending daily prayer in the morning. During the prayer session, Smitbhai learned that his favorite chocolate was going to be distributed after the prayer session. Knowing this fact, he constantly thought about indulging in the chocolate and was unable to focus on the prayer.

When the prayer session ended, the students stood in line to receive the chocolates. But Smitbhai did not stand in line. He was standing on the side. After all the students received a piece of chocolate, the teacher approached Smitbhai



and offered him a piece. But Smitbhai politely shook his head and refused to take it. The teacher again lovingly offered the chocolate, but Smitbhai still declined. So the teacher curiously asked, “Why are you not accepting this delicious chocolate?”

Smitbhai humbly replied, “During the prayer session, I should have been thinking of God and offering sincere prayers. However, my mind kept thinking about the chocolates. I was not able to control my mind. Gunatitanand Swami stated, ‘How many of us are being played by our minds and how many of us play with our minds (*Swami Ni Vaato* 4-123).’ So, I want to punish my mind by not eating these chocolates.”

Not accepting the chocolate was like climbing Mt. Everest to the boy, but he did it to control his mind. With Swamiji's grace and our efforts, an erratic mind can be controlled and trained to focus on a single aim.



Keep The Right Company: Having friends who avoid distractions and live focused lives can help us eliminate harmful distractions from our own lives. By associating with these people, we can help make their good qualities our own.



Find Hobbies: While schoolwork and a job are important, having a diverse set of interests is also essential because it keeps our mind focused. Hence, the mind will divert any free time into these hobbies. But make sure the hobby is productive!



Attending Sabha & Mandal Seva: The mental peace and bliss that can be experienced at the *mandir* (temple) is unparalleled. It is the perfect place to meditate, do *bhajan*, and to reconnect spiritually with the supreme.



Dwell into Katha-Varta: The easiest way to stabilize the mind is by engaging in *katha-varta* (listening to Swamiji's speeches or reading either of the three *granth*s). It provides inspiration and wisdom to live a purposeful life!



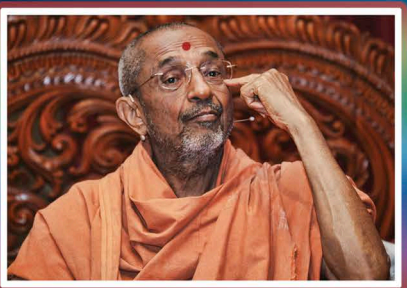
Techniques to Ensure Your Mind Stays Productive



Lasting Thought

"The mind itself does not disturb us, but it is because we pollute our mind through the five senses that our mind generates uncontrollable urges. If we give the mind impure input through the senses, it will disturb us."

~ Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji



A Divine Glimpse



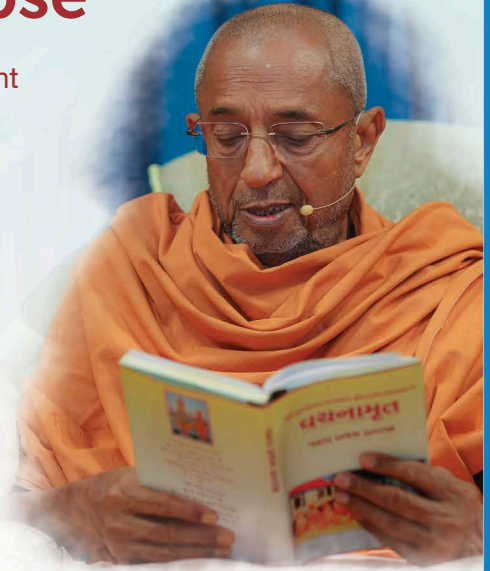
Our biggest and most important responsibility right now is to increase our *nishta*.



In Vachanamrut Gadhada Pratham-1, Bhagwan Swaminarayan is trying to say that even for a single second, we do not have the right to critique or judge the actions of others.



If you develop the habit of constantly engaging in *katha-varta*, then you will be able to fully comprehend and experience the true *mahima* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan; and, if you refrain from snooping into other people's lives, then within only one month, you will reach a state wherein you can perform 30 minutes of *nirvikalp bhajan*.



~ Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji
Yogi Prathana Hall - March 8th 2015