

Positive Thinking

A tool for inner and outer harmony

**An end-of-course Monograph by
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POSITIVE-THINKING

A tool for inner and outer harmony

Abstract:

This essay attempts to cover the following aspects based on my understanding and experience in the Light of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

What is Positive thinking?

What do Inner and Outer harmony mean?

Relationship between Positive Thinking and Harmony.

How to develop positive thinking and what are the ways to develop it?

Role of Imagination, and Power of attitude.

Introduction:

There is a great joy in being healthy and living a positive life. There is a sense of happiness and delight. One feels energetic and lifted up. A sense of well being charges one's mind and it filters throughout one's being. Everything brightens up; one starts enjoying each moment of one's life. It gives meaning to the life and one feels good to be alive and a part of the whole.

But how to free oneself from the burden of innumerable tensions, fears, insecurities and all kinds of negative thoughts? Man being predominantly a mental being, his mind is very active. Constantly busy thinking something or the other thing and is very much influenced by the whims and fancies of emotions, and by the inertia and the dullness of the body. But the Mind is a very powerful instrument in man and with its right use man can change anything and any circumstance in his favour. For whatever mind can conceive it can achieve. But most of the time he keeps it busy thinking negatively about oneself or others, hardly in a day he thinks of any thing that is constructive. He is not even aware of where the thoughts come from. For in many thinking is just a habit, they are not even aware of what is the nature of their thoughts and what atmosphere they create within them. We constantly live in the ocean of thoughts that travel through us as subtle vibration. It is a universal phenomenon of thought traveling from one place to another; all of us might have experienced that there are times when we somehow know what the other person is thinking, without any verbal communication with that person.

Positive-thinking:

Thoughts play a great role to make our life happy and successful, You are what you think! A simple but very acute statement. What we say, what we do, what we feel - all have their origin in the mind. The energy of the human mind is thought. Thought is like a seed, each thought produces its own distinctive flower and fruit. In other words, thought can be creative or destructive, loving or hateful, depressed or happy. When we understand and harness this energy of the mind, then we can master our life by nurturing only those qualities that give us most happiness and fulfillment. It is said in the Dhammapada, that -If a man speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows him as the wheel follows the hoof of the bullock that pulls the cart.¹

Positive-Thinking - A tool for inner and outer harmony:

Now let us see how Positive Thinking can be a tool to inner and outer harmony. When I say Inner, I mean within oneself. Man is a combination of body, emotions, sensation, thoughts, ideas- each of them having its own law and nature, therefore we see a constant conflict in his personality. There is always a war going on, between the reason and feeling or between the emotion and desires. There is a constant disharmony within, I would give my personal example; After joining the course of 'power of attitude', I became more conscious for my overall growth and so I decided to do exercises and go for walks in the morning. For the first week, I experienced the strong will to do that but from the second week, every morning I had to force myself to wake up early in the morning. My body felt so tired and passive, the vital *² revolted by saying that I don't feel like going. Even though my mind knew that exercise and the walk are good for my health, it refused to follow its logical reasoning. Not only that it started justifying the vital feelings by saying: "oh, I am feeling unwell and so I won't be able to walk, it will make me more exhausted". But finally I followed my inner reasoning and by putting a strong mental will I got up and went for the walk.

Thus Man being a Mental being has a 'power to control' these undesirable movements by his reasoning and logical thinking. But he has also the ability to justify and use his mind in a destructive way, So if he chooses to use that power or energy in a positive way for a constructive purpose then that can become a tool to control the disturbing movements of the body and emotions and create a harmonious atmosphere within oneself.³ Once that **inner harmony** is created, then it is bound to reflect outside and create the **outer harmony**. An example: It was a time when somehow I was having difficulty maintaining harmony in my relationship with a friend. Due to the unpleasant feelings for her, a seed of doubt was sown in my mind, and that was enough to occupy my mind with the same nature of thought - thinking negative about her, justifying emotional feelings, and by giving favorable explanations trying to put all the blame on her. There was lack of mental sincerity and strong resistance to look within myself and try to find the real cause and the weakness in

me. I was confused, neither did I know and nor did I want to control the negative thoughts till it reached its peak where it became unbearable to continue with it any more. As I was constantly busy with the thoughts of self-pity which were not healthy for our relationship it created more complicated and disharmonious atmosphere than to improve upon our relationship. It was a miserable condition. It was painful to live in that mess of emotions and noise of mind, but difficult to get out, into the silence of mind. After I joined the 'power of attitude' course, I really understood how much I was responsible for this situation and not my friend whom I always blamed for being rude to me. I understood that first it is I who have to resolve the conflicts within me. With this positive attitude of mine, things changed and today, definitely there is a change in our relationship. I am trying to be always on my guard, whenever I see a negative thought coming or getting into vital moods, I strongly reject it and tell myself that I want harmony, and it helps me to detach myself from the bad thoughts. Now I have seen the results and understood positively that unless there is an inner harmony within oneself and, between all the parts of the being, it is not possible to create or bring harmony outside. That is, in work, with colleagues, and in the family. To bring the harmony within oneself it is crucial for the mind to think in a positive direction always (as far as possible).

Ways to Develop Positive-Thinking:

There are different ways of developing positive thinking, but the first and foremost thing is to control one's mind by disciplining it.

The first step is **to observe**.

The second step is **to watch over**.

The third step is **to control**.

The fourth step is **to master**.

To illustrate this I would like to give an example, Whenever I go to a particular market in the neighbourhood I feel very happy and excited. It is a very colourful and lively place with the freshness of the young crowd. But whenever I return from that market, I always return with a headache. Well, next time, (as I am trying to be more conscious) I decided to observe myself, thinking why do I come back so exhausted each time I go there. So I went with my friend. While we were still in the parking, I saw the board 'the pizza hut' and that was it, again this game of pull and push began. There was a great force to go to the 'Pizza-hut'. When I saw another shop 'The upper-class' I started dreaming about all kinds of clothes. It was difficult to resist going to Reebok showroom. Well... that is what it was, my mind going in one direction, my vital in another, and my body ready to let the vital and the mind drag her wherever they wanted. This is what was my overall **observation**, that my mind, vital and body all of them ready to create mess within me, running after food, after clothes and my body wanting to get into the rhythm of those pulls. But I took a step back and watched

this game within me. As I detached myself from those movements I saw that these had lost their intensity and that they were not part of me. So this is what I **watched** after stepping back. And thirdly, I tried to **control** these movements by rational explanations to myself, that, “look, firstly I am not hungry and for the other things it is not my need .As I have already got enough clothes and a proper pair of shoes, So I don’t need them. Then I firmly told myself, that I have come here to buy vegetables and to get milk so I will only buy that and go back home without wasting time. For the fourth step, I don’t think I will dare to say that I have **mastered** my thoughts and my attitudes, but at least, I have taken a step to be ‘aware of my thoughts’, which is the first step in the process of eliminating negative thoughts.

Thought Awareness:

While in the process of observing thoughts I have learnt, it is best, not to suppress any thoughts. Just let them run and be aware of their nature, make a note of their nature, for normally they come and disappear and leave its impact on the mind. When I became aware of thought process I noticed that most of the negative thoughts are due to worry, anxiety, fear, doubts and self- criticism. I understood, that worrying is a bad habit. It is a waste of time; it does nothing to change the circumstances. Not only it is wasteful but also destructive, dragging one into the darkness of imagined fear and doubts, which are the cause of all negative thoughts and negative self-image in most of us. In the course of trying to put all my worries out of my mind, I came across a very good clue through a friend of mine, to get rid of worries, which I found very interesting to share here. It said:

“Maintain a worry time schedule. Keep aside half an hour each day to do all one’s worrying. During this half-hour, worry to your hearts content, playing out all the possibilities to their ultimate catastrophe. But at any other time during the day, you must not indulge in worrying. Gradually reduce the time. Start with half-hour a day. After a week, cut it down to twenty minutes, then ten minutes. Then eliminate your worry-time altogether.”

It sounds good, doesn’t it? But it is not easy.... I tried it; it was rather too difficult to stick to half an hour! Though it was altogether a different experience. When once I became aware of negative thoughts, it was helpful to write them down and go through them rationally, to see whether the thoughts have any basis in reality. Often it is found that when, one challenges negative thoughts they disappear, because most of the time they are false.

The golden rule of positive-thinking:

“Concentrate on what you want to be and forget as entirely as you can what you do not want to be”⁴ - is a golden rule of positive thinking. Most of the time in our life we are driven by various forces around us, wherever there is a great pull we move towards it but hardly think what we want to be, and where we want to be. When I realized my state, of being a

puppet in the hands of all outer forces having no inner control on my actions, I questioned myself and my situation, “after all where am I going? Is it this, that I want from my life, to unconsciously follow the path and go wherever it leads?” The answer was no, “I want to follow the path of self-perfection and progress”. This forced me to go deeper and ask myself how could I develop into my highest potentials without getting stuck in thinking what I do not want to be. Going deeper and reflecting upon my actions helped me to come up with an action plan to take a step towards my aim. I started visualizing myself confident and sincere in my actions. And gradually I see the difference, my attention is diverted from negatives and I have started gaining faith in myself. Earlier I used to get very upset whenever my weakness would be pointed out but today most of the time I take it as an opportunity to move towards my goal.

Imagination:

Thus visualization and imagination are very important tool or rather the first step to make our ideas and aspirations come true. It creates a vibration or a psychological atmosphere around us, which attracts all the possible opportunities to realize our goal. As it happened with me, During the talks in colleges whenever I was put on the book-sale counter, I was very hesitant to deal with people. I always went with the fear that since I can't speak proper English people will laugh at me. I felt inferior and unconfident. It affected my work. It made me scared to take any responsibility. I had lost all my hopes to gain confidence The day I discovered and experienced this treasure or the inner power of imagination, I decided to use it consciously to gain confidence. Next time before I went for a talk, firstly I relaxed myself and tried to silent my mind and then imagined myself very confidently speaking with lots of people who were coming to the counter. This visualization helped me to gain confidence and strength within and I looked forward to go for the talk. To my surprise the day went without my being conscious of my language and there was an unusual sale of magazines and cassettes at the counter!

Since then I have started visualizing myself cheerful throughout the day. It helps me to be cheerful even in the difficult circumstances. Now I have realized that how much damage negative or pessimistic thought does by taking us away from our own inner strength and the faith in ourself.

Meditation:

Meditation helps to find and experience the silence and discover the true source of our strength.

Mind in its ordinary function always jumps from one place to another. Thus it is very important to rest and silent the mind for some time from its constant noise. For it helps

to organize and reflect upon oneself, and channelize mental energies in a positive way. In my experience, every day spending quiet moments with myself helped me to gather the inner strength and take a step ahead. Gradually, it is helping me to persevere and maintain a peace within during my day to day difficulties.

Conclusion:

Power of attitude: Calm and equanimity are the powers of attitude, which helps us to face difficulties in the right way. And the source lies in a silent and positive mind. Thus it is important to tap the source by our effort and a will. This is the key to all progress.

Footnotes

¹ The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, v.3, pp.183-85 Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry. (1984)

² Vital as Sri Aurobindo uses it is made up of life force, instinct and desires and it seeks pleasure.

³ Harmonious atmosphere within-is when the harmony is created between all the different parts of our being as mind, body, emotions and feelings.

⁴ The Mother - The Sunlit Path, p.110, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry.

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