

RECLAIM YOURSELF

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2. HARDEST TO CONTROL

CONTROL OF TASTE - THE INBOX

The tongue is the most difficult organ to control as it has two aspects. Firstly, there is the physical appetite for taste. It is not the tongue or body that craves for 'tasty treats' but the mind that operates through the tongue. The tongue and the rest of the body are most satisfied with simple, wholesome, nutritious food—the simpler the better.

We know very well that simple natural foods digest easier and give us the nutrition we need but we find ourselves succumbing to the cravings of taste for satisfaction, which only get more tempest with each round. This weakens the willpower as selfhood or the feeling of self is given away to habit. Each time craving arises, it is habit that raises its hood; and each time cravings are fulfilled, habits are strengthened by fulfillment. Habits are patterns rooted in the past so our present and future are hijacked by the past.

This may seem like a crude presentation, but you have to see this in operation for yourself. Taste for tasty treats is taste after all—appetite and appetites are longings that make the mind restless. Here, appetite operates through the tongue for food it likes. The food portion of the equation is questionable at best as foods are supposed to nourish, and most of these tasty things do just the opposite as the ingredients will tell us. The point is not the physical aspect but the craving which operates through taste for these treats, so to say.

This can be taken to an extreme and one could become anti-taste, denying all taste experience, but this does nothing but increase the confusion. There are some people who wash nicely prepared food of all tastes (and nutrients) before eating and then ruminate on the residual pulp for self-control—it is very interesting what they hope to achieve. The body wants nutrition, and good wholesome food can be very tasty also. Actually, when food is not overcooked or over seasoned, it tastes the best. You get the full flavor of all the vegetables and ingredients. The so-called tasty or gourmet foods with the rich sauces drown all natural flavor and present something else that excites the mind for repetition of the experience. This has nothing at all to do with food which is supposed to nourish.

Both extremes are possible; indulging without considering if what you are eating is good for you, and denying natural taste completely and most likely all nutrition too. Both of these are extremes and have the same results—no real nutrition is taken, which is the main

purpose of eating, and it only adds to confusion. But, there is a middle way here too. Why does taste *have to be* tantalizing and mesmerizing for food to be ‘tasty’? This is a false value system that has come about—that something tasty has to be ‘exotic’—unique and unusual—something complex. Simple wholesome food that is not overcooked or over seasoned gives the best of nutrition and the full spectrum of taste. You can taste each ingredient and appreciate the dish fully.

Self-control is not suppression or relegation to the ‘no-fun crew’; rather, it is wisdom in operation to make sure you are getting the best in every way. Control of the tongue through control of taste can be seen as the tongue’s inbox dimension. There is also the outbox dimension and this is control of what goes out *through* the tongue. Control gained through what comes in, aids greatly to control over the hardest thing to control—control of speech.

CONTROL OF SPEECH - THE OUTBOX

This has never been as difficult as in the present times of what is called—being connected. We talk a lot and running out of things to say, mostly talk about others and other’s business injudiciously. It is said that the havoc of the gun is visible at once but the full evil of the tongue lives for many years.

Being always connected, we have to say *something*—and we find our lives are not so interesting any more so we talk about others. Try it, see for yourself. In a conversation, how much of what was talked about was pertinent to the persons talking and related to the present. We talk about others, memories of the past and hopes for a future. In some circles, there is a sort of hierarchal system like the tribal village elders who must know everything about everyone. Communication, which is nourishment of another kind as it can enrich the lives of those who are communicating, becomes mere gossip—the same effects of the tasty treats which have strayed away from being nourishing. What positive value can there be in all of this?

The tongue is a loaded weapon and it can fire salvos of unkindness, anger, malice, envy, bitterness, harsh criticism, gossip, lying and scandal. Just as a knife can be both a tool and a weapon, speech too can be light on the path or a weapon. Sometimes, these are hard to tell apart, as light on the path could hurt the ego, and the tool feels like a weapon of sorts.

Today, speech is not just the spoken word as we communicate in many ways—including email, instant messages and more. In communication, the mind is pouring out and many things can rush out if one is not vigilant. Everything we come to know is not for everyone. In this world of constant contact, we share everything—especially to those whom we consider close. “Why shouldn’t they know? They are my loved ones after all!” So, real vibrant and healthy relationships are going from scarce to extinct. We already know all we need to know about a person before we meet them as we have the ‘low down’ on them—

thanks to our 'friends' who gave us the 'low down' and search engines. We have nothing! Data, someone else's interpretation—which may be and often is completely off the mark—is also fed by secondhand data and search engines.

When everything is known as data or gossip by everyone, we interact based on this gossip. This is a flimsy platform to say the least—it is actually quite hurtful to others and ourselves too as it is not real, alive and fresh. We are all these things; real, alive and fresh and ever changing, evolving—but pre-fabricated images do not allow change or evolution. Gossip or loose talk does not allow for evolution and thus causes degeneration.

Communication is a pendulum that can swing either way. It can enrich each person through real sharing or it can become horse-trading where information is shared, often injudiciously, and this is not enriching.

Communication can be a bridge to discover the underlying unity amidst diversity—if one listens and shares what is wise in the present situation without motive or a feeling of superiority. It is quite different from making a point or arguing. When motive, however subtle it be, and superiority are dropped, there is a flood of sincerity and in this, both people communicating forget their individuality—and in that moment, the underlying oneness is felt through real communication.

Listening and talking has to be without either motive or an air of superiority. Can we listen without trying to figure out the other person? To listen and see for ourselves the substance the words point to takes concentration on what is said and must be free of being linked with ideas of the person speaking or what we have heard about him or her.

Mostly, it is our preconceived notions that listen. We listen to make a point or reassure ourselves of an idea that we already have about the person or his views—both meaning the same thing. Listening with an agenda, or list, is not listening. When we become good listeners, we also discover what is best to be said and this gives tremendous control over the tongue's outbox.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL FASTING

Aside from physical benefits, fasting has many other benefits too. First of all, you are not going to die with a little fasting, so the mind has to be rid of this idea. Giving your system a break allows much house-cleaning and maintenance to take place. But, you get to see the rise of these cravings in their vehemence. If you are successful, towards the end these cravings modify themselves with a celebratory cloak, "Wonderful, let us go and celebrate the great fast..." You get to see all this inner drama and continue to do what needs to be done in spite of the inner dance, thereby freeing yourself of its clutches.

Have you ever tried a mental diet? It is a wonderful thing. You can still have some regular chores, but for a day or longer take a pause, thinking about what is needed: to do new things or simply to do some of the regular chores that need to be done. Communication must be thinned out too as you can see responses clearly when there are interactive situations. The mental fast operates like the physical fast—you slow down the intake or input and have some necessary chores that do not take any motive-oriented thought. Everything that rises and falls on the mind's radar is now suspect—all are uninvited and therefore the wanton activity out of which responses rise are the ego's intolerance to not being able to act out. You are not suppressing anything, you have just taken a moratorium not to act on the springs of action in order to see and understand them better. But, you must have the discipline for the mental fast to be across the board and you cannot be selective in its discipline. This means that you cut off all activity or contact, including to dear ones, just like physical fasts do not have soft exceptions—even input like the news or browsing the internet should be avoided. We get so identified when there is external stimulus of any sort that it is initially difficult to distinguish responses of wisdom from reactions of habit.

Fasting is a discipline where you hold fast—and in this, you begin to gradually understand both the workings beneath the hood and the deeper springs of action which never usually come to the ken of understanding. Try it!

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The tongue is one sensory organ, others operate in the same way with a few variations. Tongue is hardest to control, and its effects are known immediately by us and others in both aspects of its operation. We and others can see our inner discipline when it comes to our physical appetite and the same for our inner state of mind. We often say things that we 'did not mean to'... What does this mean? Did we not mean to express it or did we not mean it at all? If we did not mean it at all, how could it burst to the surface? If you are incapable of harm, you are incapable of harm—no harm can come because you are incapable of harming and therefore—incapable of being harmed. If on the other hand, harm comes, you know immediately where you stand and flimsy apologies cannot cover this as an innocent slip—it was what was actually felt and conveyed beyond one's ability to suppress.

The tongue is a mirror of the mind in both its operations. One need not have a tasty dish or a person to communicate for the workings of the mind to be known. The scope of the tongue's operation reveals the state of the mind by its inflowing and outflowing appetite. Appetites are desires only and they operate both ways; desire for something to be had or something to be expressed. All desires are feelings that are manifested and feelings reflect the health of one's being.

Our relationships give us a live barometer of our own mind if we keep the attention turned within while relating. Then, there is real growth as one discovers the rise of habit and is able to act wisely—freeing oneself of these habits which bind. Though the inner and outer dimensions operate with the other senses, the state of mind is never as transparent as it is with the tongue. We have learnt how to keep a poker face and flash the corporate smile while the inner calculating engine works vigorously. The tongue does not allow this hypocrisy for long and this makes it hardest to control.

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