

### Third Concept

The third concept of Sanatan Dharma is Dama:

*Dama means the senses are very fast, and if the mind is turbulent, receiving impressions from different sources, it is quite probable that sensual hunger and thirst may be inflamed because of the beautiful things being seen in the world. So every individual needs to have some control over the sensory appetite and expression.*

This is all about being identified, where our attention is captivated at the expense of living in the present. And Shankaracharya Santanand Saraswati gave us this story which describes this situation which Doctor Roles found very useful.

*There was a king who organised a great universal exhibition. He invited exhibits from all over the world, and stalls of beautiful things were arranged in this exhibition. People assembled there to buy whatever pleased them. There was one particular man who used to move round the stalls and examine them intimately, and yet he bought nothing. He went round day after day. People wondered why this man kept on looking at things but never bought anything. They tried to persuade him but he said he would only buy when something really satisfied him. When only two days remained some people reminded him he had very little time left – he had better make his choice quickly, otherwise he would lose the chance of buying anything at all. He said he wanted to wait to see what really pleased him. This went on till at the last moment when the stalls were about to be closed for ever, he went to the king who organised it all, and he held the king's hand. He said, 'This hand has organised such a beautiful exhibition, I want to buy it', and he asked the price. The king said it was difficult to imagine that he himself was on sale, or that his hand could be for sale! There were other things to be bought but not the king. But the man said, 'It is you who have brought about such beauty so I want you, not the things'. The king said, 'If you really want me you can have me only by love, not by money.' So the man said he was prepared and he surrendered himself with great devotion to the king, and then because he surrendered himself he won the king and then all the things in the exhibition which belonged to the king belonged to him. He had no reason to buy anything because everything was now his own. He could use whatever he wanted whenever he wanted; he did not have to claim, he did not have to collect. It is only by surrender to the Absolute through love that one wins all. That is the way we need to go.*

Our problem is that we have so many different desires that we lack unity and the Atman's voice is often drowned out or put in another way in our western tradition, we have so many different 'I's' that our 'Real I' seldom sits on the throne. In both cases to overcome this predicament we have to strengthen the 'Observer' in ourselves because different desires and 'I's' cannot co-exist with Attention. Either the Observer is present and we are awake, or we are 'identified' and psychologically asleep. That is why it is important to 'Remember one's Self' and take the Shankaracharya's advice to pause and rest between activities. It is only when there is stillness that we are truly aware of the king's hand.

Pause for discussion

The Shankaracharya has shown us that mental hindrances can be overcome by meditation. There is also useful advice of how to hang on to this stillness during meditation and not dissipate it immediately we find it.

*The usual disturbances during meditation are caused by ideas, thoughts, desires, worries and expectations. As long as one of them is there stillness will elude one or be broken. In stillness one is with the Self which is full of energy. Some have no patience and prefer to use that energy instantly by inviting guests like desires and worries to be solved. The stillness is immediately lost. Wisdom says this is not a suitable time to resolve worries, as it is a time reserved simply for meditation. These friendly guests can be entertained later.*

The exhibition set up by the king was full of distractions that could take a devotee away from his main aim of Realising the Self. So it is required that the individual who seeks the king must first rid himself or herself of all the numerous desires which lead one astray. The wise devotee had the discrimination to seek only the source of all the beauty that was available.

Many of the stories told to us by the Shankaracharya, such as 'The King's Exhibition' and 'The Tamarind Tree' indicate the importance of having one over-riding aim, which is to achieve Realisation of the Self and liberation. The man who won over the king had such singularity of purpose, as did the patient Mahatma sitting under the tamarind tree.

In 'Voyage of Discovery' Doctor Roles says:

*The Shankaracharya has worked steadily with me along his own line of Bhakti, by which he means love and knowledge of the Param-Atman. The ordinary translation of Bhakti as “the yoga of devotion” gives a wrong impression to people. So I prefer to approach it through work on “being” by keeping the mind clear and quiet, devoting one's heart to Param-Atman and controlling movement by attention to all one's small actions. This seems to be the only sure way in the turbulent conditions of modern life, and even a little of this kind of self-discipline seems to work wonders and to improve one's meditation. It also seems to be the quickest way of countering our besetting trouble of distraction.*