



Cultivate Positive Samskaras

Karmic impressions or *samskaras* stored in the unconscious contain the secrets of one's personality. If these impressions change for the better, your whole personality changes in a positive way. But if these impressions become negative, your personality finds itself in a world of misery.

According to Yoga philosophy, negative *samskaras* give rise to negative *vasanas* (subtle inclinations or desires), which in turn give rise to negative *vrittis* or thought waves. *Vrittis* are nourished by one's egoistic imagination, and

as a result, they give rise to desires. If these desires are frustrated, they are transformed into cravings that lead human beings to increasing bitterness. If they are fulfilled, they result in feelings of sweetness towards worldly manifestations. Such experiences then give rise to further impressions or *samskaras*. And thus, the cycle continues.

To reach higher states of spiritual consciousness, an aspirant must break this cycle. Promoting positive *samskaras* gives rise to positive *vasanas*, leading to positive *vrittis* of

spiritual aspiration. Spurred by meditation, reflection and enquiry, these tiny waves grow into powerful aspiration for spiritual unfoldment, enabling an aspirant to gather Divine impressions from the world.

Gathering positive impressions is not dependent on favorable conditions in the world. Generally, those who are immature on the spiritual path complain that they could have developed positive impressions if it were not for the negativity in people around them. Indeed it seems logical to the human mind that if there was nothing but sweetness in one's surroundings, positive impressions would form; if there was nothing but a soft spring breeze and the gentle whisper of pleasant words and perfect heavenly conditions, the gathering of good impressions would be easy and spontaneous. However, such is not the case. If there is no challenge from the outer world, one cannot draw the impressions of goodness and spiritual grandeur. No one can gather impressions of heroism without entering into a challenging battle and fighting to overpower one's own negativity.

In order to cultivate positive impressions, a changed attitude within is needed, not a changed world outside. One needs to fight the battle of life, and thus promote impressions of goodness, faith, and devotion. Then one enjoys perceiving Divine Presence everywhere, and tastes the Bliss of inner spiritual expansion.

An aspirant is a gatherer of flowers. He enters the forest of the world, and although passing through thorny bushes and encountering various obstacles, he gathers heavenly flowers of Divine virtues. Then, leaving the forest, he soars into the realms of the Heavens like a swan.

The following points are important in gathering good impressions:

1. Just as white cloth receives dye much more effectively than an already colored one, a purified mind becomes more receptive to impressions that are sublime. Purify your mind by the practice of selfless service of humanity, repetition of Divine Name, study of scriptures and association with the wise. Your mind will then become a magnet drawing to itself the highest form of impressions from this transient world.

But on the other hand, if the mind continues to be dominated by *rajas* and *tamas* (distraction and dullness), it will draw impressions of attachment, hatred, pride, vanity, bitterness, violence, greed and passion. If this continues unchecked, it will promote more and more negative impressions that cause repeated births and deaths, as well as a long, lingering movement in the world of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion).

2. Do not be discouraged if you are unable to succeed in your efforts. In spite of repeated failures, you must continue to strive to gather Divine impressions. You must develop an insight into the fact that even the minutest

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effort on your part is never wasted or futile. Spiritual movement can be best described as a three-dimensional spiral. Although you may feel that you have gone backwards, you are still on a better plane than before, spiralling your way to the Divine Self.

Often it is seen that an aspirant who was insensitive at first to the limitations around him becomes overly sensitive to them after a little practice of spiritual discipline. He begins to recognize much disorder and bitterness around him, which discourages him from pursuing the spiritual path.

It is much like a patient being treated successfully for his blindness. As the person gradually begins to see more and more, he becomes aware of the cobwebs and other ugly things that have accumulated in his house. Rather than being joyous with the recognition of the fact that he is gaining a healthier eyesight, out of ignorance he begins to blame the doctor and to complain about his treatment.

So too, when one's personality is slightly healed of its spiritual blindness, he begins to see so many disorders and discrepancies in the world. But this should not discourage him. Rather, he should continue to pursue his *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) until his spiritual vision is fully restored and the world is seen as a glorious manifestation of the Divine Self.

3. Develop an insight into the law of karma. Do not blame people around you for your misery. If you lack this insight you will continue to develop impressions of *raga* and *dwesha* (attachment and hatred) based upon pleasant and painful experiences and circumstances of the world.

Human beings are spirits playing different roles in the drama of the world-process. Friends are not friends and enemies are not enemies. With this insight, an aspirant begins to gather

impressions of *vairagya* or detachment. The mind becomes increasingly balanced and no longer swings to attachment or to hatred. In a balanced mind the intellect becomes subtle, and soon it blossoms into intuition. The world is then stripped of its illusory veils and is seen as the surging ocean of Divine Glory.

Thus, an aspirant should continue to amass the treasure of good *samskaras* day by day. He must have immense patience and tenacity in his movement. He must develop increasing faith in the saving Grace of God.

At the time of death, he who has been a flower-gatherer from the gardens of the world begins to behold Heavenly gardens before his inner eye. The entire atmosphere is filled with Divine fragrance. The thought of God is the only dominating mental perception, providing a momentum that does not allow him to return to this earth ever again.

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