

## **Editorial**

# **Managing Mind to Master Mind**

Placing a couple of hundred Rand notes on the podium in front of the students of St. Brendan's Secondary School, Limpopo, South Africa (where I minister as the chaplain at present), the motivational speaker put forward a challenge: "Anybody who gives the correct answer can come and collect this prize money. The question is simple - Which is the richest place on earth?" Students were in a frenzy to grab the coveted prize by giving the correct answer. "USA, Switzerland, Japan, Germany, Canada, South Africa..." the litany of nations went on and on. But the speaker declined. After numerous attempts and failures, exhausted students demanded, "Give us a clue." The speaker conceded, "OK, here is your clue. It is not a country." Suddenly there was a fresh surge of answers: "bank locker, gold mine, platinum mine, diamond mine, petroleum well, libraries, art gallery, museums, palaces, temples, churches..." But the speaker was not in agreement. When students accepted defeat, putting the money back into his pocket the speaker declared, "The correct answer is: graveyard." "No...! How can it be? Why?" the students protested. "Yes, I shall explain why graveyard is the richest place on earth." the speaker retorted. "In a graveyard, you will find buried so many unused brains, undiscovered talents, unexplored potential, untapped possibilities, unrealized dreams. There you will find people of every walk of life, every profession, every age, and every talent, so much wisdom that was never utilized or transferred to the next generation. In a graveyard you will find an accumulation of every sort of wealth one can ever imagine. Yes, in graveyard you will find buried, tremendous potential unexploited or wasted."

Then the speaker narrated the story of Wilma Rudolph, an Afro-American girl, who was born prematurely in 1940 as the 20th of 22

siblings. Her father, Ed, was a railway porter and her mother, Blanche, a housemaid. At the tender age of four Wilma was infected by the polio virus and became paralysed. The doctor who examined her said “she is not born to walk.” However, little Wilma was not ready to lie down and accept that as her fate. She was determined not only to walk but to fly. The braces she put on her legs to support walking instead twisted her left foot altogether. But she was not ready to admit failure. She was resolute to rewrite her fate. As if to crush her indomitable optimism misfortune struck her once again in the form of scarlet fever. But, even that could not drain her spirit and resilience. To everybody’s astonishment, at the age of 12, wearing a pair of orthopaedic shoes, she insisted on participating in a 100 meters dash. Falling many times on the way she managed to reach the finishing point as the last contestant. There, she whispered to her mother drenched in tears that her mind is still strong if not her legs. With that steely determination she continued her rigorous practise. As a result at the age of 20, in Rome, at the 1960 Summer Olympics she won three Olympic gold medals: the 100 m, 200 m and the 4 x 100 m relay with record timings. Stunned by her performance the world press hailed her as “the fastest woman in history”. The American press named her “The Tornado.” For the Italians she was *La gazzella negra* (The black gazelle). The French called her *La perle noire* (The black pearl).

### **Underachievement: a Crime against Oneself, Humanity and God**

Over the past few decades a large body of academic research literature has been dedicated to the topic of underachievement among “gifted” students. In fact, each and every one of us is “gifted” in one way or the other. That may be the reason why persons who were mentioned formerly as “invalids,” “crippled,” “handicapped,” “abnormal,” “Mongolian idiots” etc., were later on identified as “physically or mentally challenged.” However, more recently they are referred to as “differently-abled persons.” Notwithstanding their certain physical or mental deficiencies some of these people exhibit remarkable and amazing physical and mental capabilities, which the so-called “normal” people cannot even dream of. Therefore, each and every one of us can be considered a “differently-abled person” – only one of its kind!

Among the numerous definitions of underachievement the one of Reis and McCoach (2000) is generally accepted as comprehensive. It states that “Underachievers are those who exhibit a severe discrepancy between expected achievement (as measured by standardized tests, assessments, etc.) and actual achievement (as measured by grades and evaluations).” Even this definition is perilous because how and

who can categorically determine the potential and the expected level of achievement of a person? In this predicament Jesus can come to our rescue. He expects us to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Now the question takes another turn, “How is it possible to achieve divine perfection?” In this regard St. Irenaeus has an answer, “*Gloria Dei est vivens homo!*” (Glory of God is man fully alive). By being fully human and fully alive, that is, by not burying and wasting our God-given talents and opportunities, we can reach the perfection expected of us. Then arises another crucial question, “What or who stops us from realizing our full potential and possibilities?”

### **We are Prisoners of Our Beliefs**

The great masters of antiquity have told us through the ages that whatever we believe we become. Imagination and determination manifest in various degrees in various people. In some, they are highly developed, and in others, they manifest in a weaker form. Imagination is the ability of the mind to create scenes, objects or events internally beyond what is perceived through the five senses. Imagination makes it possible to experience a whole new world inside the mind. It gives us the ability to look at any situation, both the past and the future from a different perspective. Imagination can take us anywhere at any time much faster than the speed of light. It can come to our rescue during our time of difficulties and from unpleasant circumstances. Imagination is not limited to forming mental images. It includes all the five senses and the feelings. One can imagine a sound, taste, smell, a physical sensation, a feeling or an emotion.

### **Mastering Imagination**

A well developed imagination is our key to success. It strengthens our creative abilities, and is a great tool for recreating and remodelling the world in which we live. Imagination is a creative power that is necessary for inventing an instrument, designing a building or a vehicle, painting a picture or writing a book. The creative power of imagination has an important role in the achievement of success in any field. What we imagine with confidence and feelings comes into being. It is the important ingredient of creative visualization, positive thinking and affirmations. Visualizing an object or a situation, and repeating often this mental image, attracts the object or situation we visualize into our lives. This opens for us new, vast and fascinating opportunities. This means that we should think only in a positive manner about our desires, otherwise, we might attract into our lives events, situations and people that we do not really want. This is actually what most of

us do, because we do not use the power of imagination correctly. If we do not recognize the importance of the power of the imagination, and let it run wild, our life may not be as happy and successful as it could be on the basis of our potential and opportunities.

### **Hereditary and Cultural Bearings of Pessimism**

Thanks to our survival instinct, we are genetically and culturally programmed to think in negative terms. Our focus is rarely on success but failure. In every situation we instinctively look for threats and hazards so that if something goes wrong we can get away. We expect the worst and plan for escape if disaster strikes. This fear and precautions we take instantly send a signal to our adversaries and predators of the availability of a prospective prey. Thus unknowingly we instigate our adversaries to prey on us. If and when that happens, we are convinced that it was destined to happen even though we made it happen. This self-defeating cynical attitude of ours can be altered, and then our life will improve accordingly.

### **Give Wings to Our Imagination**

It is practically impossible for us to spend our wakeful hours without imagining anything. If we spend our time on it, why not use it to our advantage rather than our downfall? To inspire our faculties we should always imagine success. The picture of success should be placed upon all the walls of our mind, so that the powers within us will see success and success only as their goal. An excellent practice is to use our spare moments in creating such pictures in our imagination and placing them in the most conspicuous position of our mind, so that all our faculties and powers can see them at all times. To aid the imagination in picturing the greater, the higher and better, we should “aim for the stars.” The stars may be something quite out of reach for us now, but if we aim for something lofty, our mind will begin to take wings. It will no longer crawl in the dust. The only way to induce our mind to think along new lines, expand its horizon, and to take flight is through imagination. This being the case, it is a pity to use our imagination for any other purpose than for the best that we can think or do.

The failures, incompetence, difficulties, suffering and unhappiness that people often experience are due to the lack of awareness of the power of imagination. The real key to turning imagination into reality is acting as if the imagined scene were real and already accomplished. This is what Jesus taught his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mk 11:24). Jesus gives this very same message repeatedly in Mt 21:22; Jn

14:13; 15:7; 1Jn 5:14-15; etc. Instead of pretending it is a scene from the future, we have to imagine it as though we are truly experiencing it in the present. It is a real event in the now. If we believe and imagine in the now that we are whatever we wish to be then reality must conform. The problem most of us have is that we look at our lives through needy eyes, seeing only what we are lacking and dwell on that.

### **A Russian Experiment**

It is reported that in the 1980 Olympics the Russians experimented with this technique. They split their athletes into four groups: Groups A through D. Group A used 100% traditional physical practice; Group B 75% physical 25% mental; Group C, 50% physical - 50% mental and Group D was 75% mental and 25% physical practice. After the Moscow Olympics and the Lake Placid Olympics these world class athletes' scores were tallied and those in Group D had won the most medals.

What we imagine becomes a pattern for the creative energies of mind and personality, and as the creations of these energies determine what we are to become and attain, we realize that the imaging faculty is one of the most important of all our faculties. If we wish to succeed, our faculties must work successfully, but no faculty can work successfully when filled with fear. It is only when constantly inspired by the idea of success, any faculty or power in the human system can do its best.

### **Mastering Suggestions**

There is a view that suggestions rule the world. We are relentlessly bombarded with suggestions of every kind. Even inanimate things can put ideas into our head! It is beyond doubt that we are all more or less susceptible to impressions. However, those who naively submit to such suggestions are like toys and appliances operated by remote controls. As a result those suggestions decide their fate. If we want to take fate in our own hands, we must learn how to use suggestions intelligently instead of irrationally following what our surroundings suggest. There is a vast difference between blind submission to the desires produced by those suggestions and training ourselves to use them intelligently. Suggestions can assist us to evaluate and reconstruct our mindset. If we wish to be a master mind, we should build up a discerning approach towards the incoming suggestions no matter how sublime they may be. Every impression that enters our mind through the senses should be scrutinized, categorized, evaluated and be made to serve our mind in its decision making process. In this way the original suggestion will not dominate our mind, instead it will become instrumental in giving our mind a number of new and superior ideas. By looking at the suggestions

received from every conceivable point of view, and trying to discern their purpose, intentions, tendencies, possibilities and probable defects we can neutralize the negative impacts of incoming suggestions. If we can think what we want to think, then we are on the way to becoming what we want to become.

### **Mastering Environment**

The famous “Serenity Prayer” attributed to the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr begins as follows, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” A great many people think themselves “misplaced” where they find themselves and believe that they cannot be happy on account of it. This happens mainly because they are stuck with their impressions and opinions and refuse to change their vision of their environment. By imitating the lives, habits, actions and desires of others, they lead a life that is not theirs; that is, they are misplaced. A master mind is never misplaced because s/he does not live to do what others are doing, but what s/he herself/himself wants to do now. An average person requires a change of environment in order to change her/his attitude. The master mind, however, can change her/his thought whenever s/he so desires. A change of scene is not necessary, because such a mind is not controlled from outside. A change of scene will not produce a change of thought in the master mind unless s/he decides so.

### **Mastering Physical needs**

A person is as s/he thinks, and her/his thoughts are patterned after the predominating mental images, whether those images are impressions suggested from without, or impressions formed by the ego acting from within. When we permit our thoughts and desires to be formed in the likeness of impressions received from without, we will be more or less controlled by the physical world and we will be controlled by it. When we transform every impression received from without into an original idea and incorporate that idea into a new mental image, we can use our available resources to our advantage and thereby writing our fate with our own hands. The principal reason why many people do not realize their ideals is because they have not learned to think what they want to think. They are too much affected by the suggestions, comments, and opinions of others. They imitate the world too much, following desires that are not their own. They are therefore misled and misplaced. Whenever we permit ourselves to think what persons, things, conditions or circumstances may suggest, we are not following

what we ourselves want to think. An awareness of our unique potential and possibilities can prevent us from comparing ourselves with others, which is a horrible mistake.

### **Mastering Desires**

Desire is another potent power in human life. It is therefore essential that every desire is accounted for, controlled and properly managed. Desires produced by external influences and suggestions are problematic. Such desires can easily misplace individuals. Instead of permitting our energies to get wasted over the suggestions of our environment, or our own disorganized thinking, we can cause all our energies to focus and to work for the greatest and the best that we desire. The master mind desires only that which is conducive to real life and in the selection of its desires is never influenced in the least by the desires of the world. Suggestions received can be converted into desires that we have already decided upon, and thereby giving our desire additional life and power. We should never close our mind to impressions from without. Keeping our minds open to the actions of all those worlds that may exist in our sphere and trying to gain valuable impressions from every source, while not blindly following those impressions we can rejuvenate ourselves daily. We should use them constructively to build up our own system of original thought.

### **Persona of Master Mind**

The master mind is the mind that thinks what it wants to think, regardless of what circumstances, environment or associations may suggest. The mind that masters itself creates its own ideas, thoughts and desires through the original use of imagination, or its own imaging faculty. Giving the mind something definite to think about at all times is vital so that the mind may be trained to think constantly of that which we really want to think. Through the use of the imagination we can select our own thought and think our own thought at all times. This will gradually give us total control over our mind. The mind that does not master itself forms its thoughts and desires after the likeness of the impressions received through the senses, and is therefore controlled by those conditions from which such impressions come; because as we think, so we act and live. The average mind usually desires what the world desires without considering one's own potential, possibilities, welfare, needs or talents. The external condition always imparts a strong influence on our minds to follow its directives and imitate its patterns. It is therefore evident that the person who permits himself/herself to be affected by suggestions will invariably form artificial desires and

would be misled by such desires. To become a master mind, we need to think what we want to think, no matter what our surroundings may suggest; and continue to think what we want to think until that particular line of thought or action has been accomplished. We should desire what we want to desire and impress that desire so deeply upon our consciousness that it cannot possibly be disturbed by those foreign desires that environment may suggest; and continue to express that desire with all the life and power that is in us until we achieve what we aim at. When we know that we are in the right desire, we should not permit anything to influence our mind to change.

### **Yoga: the Science of Mind Management**

Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* presents himself to Arjuna as the eternal teacher of yoga (4:1). The entire Gita is his exposition of yoga technique, which he classifies into *karma* (action), *bhakti* (devotion), and *jnana* (knowledge). He guarantees Arjuna that through the practice of yoga he can bring his confused mind to rest and make it competent to take the right decision (18:63). As a result of Krishna's yoga instructions, precisely that is what happened (18:73). The mind can keep us in bondage or set us free. When the mind is not disciplined we are merely its slaves and if we harness our mind we are its masters. The mind is a bad master but a good servant. The mind can create a heaven or a hell within us. Giving free rein to the mind can lead one to madness while giving rest to the mind is meditation.

The mind creates both cosmos and chaos. It is the mind that led Gautama to Buddhahood and madmen to the asylum. The mind of a lunatic is active and out of control while the mind of the Buddha is at rest and well disciplined. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa compared the human mind to a drunken monkey possessed by a demon and stung by a scorpion. The mind, drunk with the wine of desire, possessed by the demon of fear and stung by the scorpion of jealousy can never rest. The fears of the past and dreams regarding the future unsettle and disturb the mind persistently.

It is in order to put an end to the activism of the mind that Pathanjali promulgated *yoga* and stated its purpose as: *Yoga chitta vruthi nirodha* (Yoga stops the activity of the mind). According to Pathanjali the mind is constituted of three faculties namely, *manas* (memory and imagination), *buddhi* (intellect), and *ahamkara* (ego). *Manas* is the recording faculty, which receives impressions gathered by the senses from the outside world. *Buddhi* is the discriminative, logical faculty that classifies these impressions and reacts to them, while *ahamkara* is the sense of ego, which



claims these impressions as its own and preserves them as individual knowledge. Pathanjali affirmed that by following the eight steps of the yoga, namely, *yama* (prohibitions), *niyama* (obligations), *asana* (physical fitness) *pranayama* (breathing exercises) *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses), *dharana* (mental alignment), *dhyana* (concentration) and *samadhi* (equanimity) the mind can be brought to rest where it is no more agitated, afraid or apprehensive. The first three steps, *yama*, *niyama*, and *asana* are designed to bring our body under control, while the last four, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana* assist us to control the mind. Consequently both the body and the mind get tamed, trained, and empowered so that a person can enjoy *samadhi* or *sthithaprajna* (equanimity). The mind is neither a substance nor is it confined to a space in our brain or heart, but it is an activity. If it is an activity it is easy to control it by refusing to perform that activity. If 'minding' is like smoking – an activity, just as we stop smoking, we can stop 'minding' as well. *Chitta vrutti nirodha* means disengaging the mind from the known as well as the knowable. People usually think that just not thinking is the state of *jnana yoga* and just not caring is the state of *karma yoga*. But they are a great deal more than that. Yogic mind is a state in which one's mind (*chitta*) has attained *samadhi* or *sthithaprajna* (mental equilibrium) or has evolved to a point where no modifications (*vruttis* or waves) can arise. It is the state in which uncalled-for desire can no longer arise, being eclipsed by awareness of the spirit-Self. Let us keep in mind that underachievement is a crime against our selves, humanity and God. The following words of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa were a constant inspiration and challenge for me, "He is born in vain, who having attained the human birth, so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God in this very life."

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