

From such conditions of extrovertedness, how are we to pull ourselves back to the Centre in us, the peaceful Self? The stages on this inward pilgrimage are described by Ācārya Śaṅkara as thoroughly as a road map.¹

‘Fold back the speech into the mind. Fold the mind into the intellect. Fold that intellect into the ‘witness’ of the intellect. After gaining perfectly the attitude of a witness to one’s own thought processes, this witnessing faculty also should be folded into the tranquil Ātman, the supreme Self...’ so instructs the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* mantra.

Speech here stands for all external activity. Let all the activities be held back at the mental level, meaning, though thoughts will be gurgling in the mind, the seeker must refuse to act. This mental activity should be held in abeyance at the intellect level, meaning, keep the thoughts at desire level only, not allowing any expression of them outside. Thus, when the intellect has changed its values, the mind which is entertaining the thoughts of extrovertedness must necessarily become quiet. If the intellect is still having irrepressible built-in pressures of desires of extrovertedness, merge that restless intellect in the uninterested observer of the intellect. Make yourself only a witness to the various agitations of the intellect.

When we thus refuse to identify with the thoughts, or the desires, no desire prompted travail of activity can ever take place. The desires must naturally die away because we are no more leading our dynamism to it. By continuously remaining as the witness, we are withdrawing all our dynamism from the waves of our desires and so they become impotent.

¹ The ideas declared here by Śaṅkara are echoes of the instructions in the *Upaniṣad*.

yacchedvāñmanasī prājñāḥ tadyacchejjñāna ātmani,

jñānamātmani mahati niyacchettadyaccheccānta ātmani. – Kaṭhōpaniṣad-1.3.13

The instruction of the Ācārya here is to be a witness of the intellect (buddhi-sākṣī), this means remaining as a witness to what is going on in one's own intellect. The witnesshood can be maintained only as long as things are happening. When we are detached from what is happening, and when we cease to lend our vitality to the intellect, thoughts must get slowly reduced. When the intellect is thus merged in the witness, it gets quietly hushed up, until at last when the last thought is also ended, the witness can no longer be a witness. A witness is one who is witnessing something. When the last thought is also ended, there is no object for the witness to watch and, therefore, the witness-hood of the witness ends. Thus, the witness entity, the ego, merges with the pure infinite Consciousness.

This pure infinite Consciousness, while witnessing the intellect, meaning, in Its identification with the intellect and its thoughts had become the witness, the ego. This witness, identifying with its desires, becomes the desirer, the ego. The desirer, thereafter, thinks upon his desires and comes to play as the thinker, the ego. The active 'thinker' becomes the 'doer'. That doer is the final objective expression of the pure infinite Consciousness as the ego. Therefore, retrace the path of fall and rise again to attain the supreme peace and quietude, which is the true spiritual status of man. Thus, fold back the ego into the state of the peaceful Self (śāntātmā).



देहप्राणेन्द्रियमनोबुद्ध्यादिभिरुपाधिभिः ।

यैर्यैवृत्तेः समायोगस्ततद्भावोऽस्य योगिनः ॥ ३७१ ॥

*dehaprāṇendriyamanobuddhyādibhirupādhibhiḥ,
yairyairvṛtteḥ samāyogastatadbhāvo'sya yoginaḥ. (371)*

371. The body, prāṇas, sense organs, mind, intellect and so on, with whichever of these conditionings the mind gets associated, the yogin also gets transformed, as it were, into that.