

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

Positive Thoughts

Swami Vivekananda was a great advocate of positive thoughts. His logic was very simple. He explained that all thoughts begin as a set of waves. These mental waves after going out and floating around for a while return to the source. This is something like flow of electrical current where we have to keep the loop completed.

So Swamiji argued that if your thoughts are positive, as they come back to you, they enrich you. As the story goes, when he was framing the rules and regulations for the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, he requested one of the monks to check whether there was any inadvertent entry of a negative character. If there was one, it had to be replaced by a positive one, of course, keeping the meaning of the sentence intact, he said.

In the *Ramayana* we read a beautiful advice from Ravana to Rama. The epic says that after a fierce battle Rama succeeded in shooting that arrow which will end Ravana's life. The arrow hit its target and Ravana was about to die. Suddenly it dawned on Rama that the time had come when he had to return to Ayodhya. At Ayodhya, as a king, he had to run the administration. Now, the problem was, Rama knew that he had never run an administration. He also knew that Ravana was a veteran administrator. So Rama approached Ravana with a request to advise him briefly on how to run an administration.

Ravana advised cryptically '*shuvasya shighram, ashuvasya kâlaharanam*'. Ravana also pointed out that, as he himself had not followed this dictum, he was about to meet his tragic end. As an example Ravana described that the execution of one of his good thoughts, namely to construct a staircase linking the earth and the heaven, he had not even started, while, one of his bad thoughts, namely the abduction of Sita, he executed very fast. So what we learn from this story is that not only we should have positive thoughts, but also we should be up and doing in giving shape to those positive thoughts.

Swamiji practised this dictum by all means. So many incidents from his exemplary life can be cited to show how prompt he was always in doing good things that would benefit the humanity. For '*shivajnâne jiva sevâ*', at extremely short notice he had sent his brother-monks and disciples to rural Bengal to work among the famine-stricken people. Similarly, he sent them to Calcutta streets to work among the plague-affected citizens, to Haridwar to serve the ailing sannyasins belonging to different sects. Sri Ramakrishna always suggested that we should judge the situation well before we plunge into action. If we have to help somebody, we should help without delay. But if we wish to harm somebody, even if that harm in the long run helps the person, we should think twice. Because there may be alternative means by which the same goal can be achieved.

Positive thoughts also teach us when to stop and where. Each day, each minute we are judged by our restraint, our capacity of self-control. When we are saying something, writing something, looking at something or even visiting somebody we have to be very careful and we have to stop at the right point. We know, in his last days, Swamiji again and again told his brother-monks that time was ripe for him to leave the body. He pointed out that under the shadow of a big tree small trees do not grow properly. So, when the work is done and time comes, one must be ready to quit with a smile. And that was the last message of Swamiji to mankind.