

BODYGUARD AND MINDGUARD

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Generally, people keep all the doors of their senses open. Seeing this as an opportunity, troublemaker's *klesha* in Sanskrit make their way into the mind.

According to Buddhist Sutras, the job of these troublemakers is "to churn the mind". This means that the nature of the mind is peaceful and calm, but when churning takes place, it gets aggravated and agitated, resulting in the performing of aggressive acts that cause hurt to self and others, speech that is not the truth, or which makes no sense, and acts that foster hatred.

Hence, looking inward is the essence of spirituality. Adhyatma vidya or inner science is what helps us overcome all these negativities. Observation of moral codes facilitates the mind to remain focused on the work at hand.

Mindfulness and awareness are the guards employed at the door of the senses. When the mind is protected from external interventions, it facilitates concentration on the work at hand. It also results in further perfecting moral practices and rectitude, thus generating higher spiritual qualities like samadhi or equilibrium, and prajnaparamita, perfected wisdom.

Earlier Tibetan Kadampa masters emphasised so much on the importance of guarding the mind that a whole body of literature today known as Lojong came into being. These teachings originally came from the sub continental region. Acharya Shantideva of the 11 century states: "Except the conduct of guarding the mind, where is the need of many conducts" A Kadampa master said, "I have no other practice except standing at the approach point of troublemakers, waiting for them with a spear of antidote.

Formerly a notorious thief in Tibet, Ben Gungyal went on to become a great teacher. After renouncing thieving and cheating and after spending long hours in solitude doing meditation, he became a respected yogi. Once he was invited by a family to their house for a day-long recitation of scriptures. At a point when the family members stepped out of the house for some work, the yogi, who was a tea lover, found the tea he was served a bit too weak.

Looking around, when he found no one nearby, he walked directly into the kitchen and located the tea container in which dried tea leaves were kept. He decided to take some tea leaves without telling the householder. This act was a result of the instinct left behind as residual of his previous deeds. As soon as he put his hand into the container, his awareness came to rescue him. He became aware of this act of his and found himself shouting: "Thief ! Thief !

When others came running towards him in response to his call, they were surprised to find him holding his own hand. He told them "I have caught the culprit." This story is often cited as an example of self-restraint, awareness and guarding the door of senses.

It is a good thing to apportion a fixed time for spiritual pursuits such as prayer, chanting and meditation. But if the doors of the senses are not guarded for the rest of the time, you could become vulnerable to *klesha*. It will hunt you down and churn your mind. Then the few hours of prayer or meditation are less likely to have the desired effect. That is why sages and seers recommend continuous practice and mindfulness.

