

Gunarchana / An offering of our inner qualities



Focus of the month

February



Indriya Nigraham (Sense Control)

Ponder on:

Why we have been blessed with the sense organs?

Using each sense organ only for its true purpose

Use discrimination

And understand

What is truly right and what is truly wrong

Points based on study of quotes on sense control

1. Sense control is using the senses for the purpose God intended them for.
2. Aspire and strive to become a *pasupati* or master of the senses, not a *pasu* or a slave of the senses.
3. To control the mind, we should control the five senses. Only then will we be able to realize God.
4. Senses can be controlled only by Love.
5. Controlling speech and observing silence is one of the easier forms of sense control. It reduces the vagaries of the mind.
6. Master the mind and be a mastermind. Sense control and ceiling on desires will help us see God all around and experience bliss. Therefore, we have to keep our desires under check.
7. Everything has reaction, reflection, and resound, and it comes back to you in some form or the other. Hence, exercise control over the tongue. Silence is golden. Observing silence is one of the ways of silencing the mind.
8. Use discrimination to control senses and cleanse the mind. Reference was made to *antahkarana* (the inner instrument) and that *manas* (mind) must be detached from sensory input through discrimination.
9. Sense control can be achieved through several means, including prayer, *bhajans* and practicing a mantra such as *soham*. The main purpose is to direct the mind toward God and there by reduce desires and wayward and evil thoughts.
10. To reconcile and harmonize the demands of the senses, treat both good and bad with equal-mindedness.
11. Body (which is endowed with the senses) and mind are inter-dependent, but the senses cannot function alone without the mind directing them. Hence, the mind should be controlled first (by our inner conscience) and constantly reminded and trained to control the use of the sense organs only for their intended purposes.
12. One member felt we feed the senses with all sorts of food and therefore commit excesses and suffer ill health.
13. The significance of the tongue: He also tells us of the proverb "A slip of the foot may not cause much harm, but a slip of the tongue may take you to hell." *Royal road to realization*, Summer Course in Brindavan on 23 May 1990. If people

watch their words, many other problems may not arise at all! If one can conquer the tongue, he will be the master of all the other senses.

14. Some of the devotees considered sense control to be one of the most difficult, especially the sense of seeing. While smelling and tasting of food can be tempting, we are constantly being bombarded with visual temptations and diversions from TV, computer site advertisements, and the dress of many people.
15. Spending time to understand both: The transitory nature of all material things helps in sense control as also questioning what the true purpose of senses should be. This is the starting point. Every time we defeat that purpose, it should be understood that there would be an effect for that cause.
16. Basic changes in our attitudes are a good starting point. It will help us to address a lot of sense control issues: seeing good, talking good, hearing good, thinking good, and doing good will all help us to steer clear of “bad” things (that have a more lasting effect on our senses!).
17. The practice of *pranayama* (breath control): It lessens the velocity of the mind and slows down the wheel gradually. Perfect control of breath will bring the wheel to a standstill.
18. Positive vs. non-positive stimuli: Alcohol, meat, *rajasic* foods, cinema, novel reading, obscene songs, obscene sights, evil company, and obscene talks will make the wheel of mind revolve very rapidly whereas fruits, *sathwic* food, company of great souls, study of religious books, solitude, saying the name, concentration, meditation, enquiry of “Who am I?”, etc. will slow down the wheel and eventually bring it down to a standstill.
19. Fix the mind on one thought. You will have to discipline the mind daily. Eternal vigilance is needed in thought-control.
20. Substitute, do not attack, non-positive thoughts with positive thoughts: The substitution method is easy and effective in destroying evil thoughts. Cultivate positive, virtuous thoughts of mercy, love, purity, forgiveness, integrity, generosity, humility, etc., in the garden of your mind. The negative vicious thoughts of hatred, lust, anger, greed, pride, etc., will die by themselves. It is difficult to destroy the

evil thoughts by attacking them directly. You will have to tax your will and waste your energy. Follow the conscience/inner voice all the time.

21. We can ask ourselves, before doing anything, whether such an action will please Swami; if not convinced about it or are in doubt, desist from that action.
22. *Mounam* (silence) is an important practice. If not silence, at least speak less. Silence of the mouth will lead to silence in the mind. Be aware of yourself and act as if someone is video taping — behavior changes when no one is watching.
23. *Swami is watching*. Swami is in us, around us, above us, and below us and is witness to every thing that we think, say, or do. Always remember the mantra.
24. We don't seem to follow tradition and traditional practices. Several important practices were developed to help us control senses. Fasting, keeping a vow of silence, giving up a favored food at a holy place — these are some examples. They signify austerities undertaken as spiritual practice and surrender to God. God is in you. The mind is fooling you when you break promises made to yourself.