

Vedic Quote: Watch your thoughts...

"Watch your thoughts, they become words;
watch your words, they become actions;
watch your actions, they become habits;
watch your habits, they become character;
watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."

This is a quote one often sees in the class rooms and other public places and attributed to many scholars like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lao Tzu, Frank Outlaw, Gautama Buddha, Bishop Beckwaith, Father of Margaret Thatcher and Mahatma Gandhi. Sometimes it is attributed to anonymous.

This is also a quote often mentioned by Swami Paramarthananda in his Upanishads and Baghawat Geeta classes. When I inquired, Swamiji indicated that the origin is from Taitreya Aranyaka of Krishna Yajur Veda. Subsequently, I traced the origin of the quote to Taitreya Aranyaka, Chapter 1, Anuvaga 23, Verse 1. Here is a part of the verse in Sanskrit:

Three groups of square blocks are shown. The first group has 3 blocks, the second has 4 blocks, and the third has 5 blocks.

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Shri Jayanthilal Patel, who is my Sanskrit teacher, gave the literal meaning of the verse as:

[illegible]

Because of that whatever one thinks by mind

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that one does

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What is first in the mind as seed

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that later forms as desire

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That is what this proclaimed

The quote, as currently formulated and presented at the beginning of the post, has practical applications by asking to us watch our thoughts, words and action. These three form our habit and character which ultimately determine our destiny. But in Vedanta, it has deeper meaning:

- Each of us control our destiny as we control our thoughts, words and action. We and we alone control our destiny.
- Katha Upanishad states that, atma, our non-changing consciousness, witnesses every one of our thoughts. We generally lose sight of the consciousness and act on our thoughts. This, in turn, impacts our destiny.
- Katha Upanishad gives a wonderful example comparing a chariot to our life's journey. In this example, control over thought patterns and mastery of sense organs are equated to pulling in the reins of the horses drawing the chariot.
- Taitreya Upanishad states that consciousness (atma) is the witness of the arrival and departure of our thoughts, indicating we, our consciousness, control our thoughts.

We may never know who the author of the quote as currently formulated, but it's wisdom is based on the Vedas, specifically Taitreya Aranyaka, Chapter 1, Anuvaga 23, Verse 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda. Maybe that is why sometimes this quote is attributed to Buddha or anonymous.

Value

“Value is a value only when the value is valued by you” – Dayananda Saraswathi

Swamiji in Bagawat Geeta, Class 35

Four Types of People

Swamiji in Class 226 of Bagawat Geeta:

There are four types of people:

1. He who knows not and not knows knows not; fool
2. He who knows not and who knows knows not; ignorant; teach him
3. He who knows and knows not he knows; very intelligent but does not know he is intelligent; wake him
4. He who knows and knows he knows; very intelligent; follow him.

Vedas add one more variety – tamasic – he who knows not and thinks he knows.

Development of Negatives

“Fear is the darkroom where all negatives are developed”

Swami Paramarthanada

Bagwat Gita, 3rd Chapter

Swamiji's Quotes

“What I ever see is never there

What I never see is ever there”

Swamiji' in Atma Bodha Discourse

Need and Greed

“We have enough for human need

But not enough for human greed”

Swami Paramarthananda in Bagwat Geeta, Chapter 3