The Mind

Just as the arrow-maker straightens his arrows, so also the intelligent man straightens his thoughts, wavering and fickle, difficult to keep straight, difficult to master.

Just as a fish cast out of the water, our mind quivers and gasps when it leaves behind the kingdom of Mara.

Difficult to master and unstable is the mind, forever in search of pleasure. It is good to govern it. A mind that is controlled brings happiness.

The sage should remain master of his thoughts, for they are subtle and difficult to seize and always in search of pleasure. A mind that is well guided brings happiness.

Wandering afar, solitary, bodiless and hidden in the deep cave of the heart, such is the mind. Whosoever succeeds in bringing it under control liberates himself from the fetters of Mara.

The intelligence of one whose mind is unstable, who is ignorant of the true Law, and whose faith is wavering will never be able to develop.

If a man’s thoughts are not agitated, if his mind is not troubled by desire, if he no longer cares for good and evil, this man, wide awake, knows nothing of fear.

Observing that the body is as fragile as a jar, and fortifying the mind like a city at arms, one should attack Mara with the blade of intelligence and should guard carefully whatever has been won.
On the Dhammapada

Before long this body will be lying on the earth, abandoned, as lifeless as a piece of old wood.

Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, whatever a hater may do to a hater, the harm caused by a misdirected mind is even greater still.

Neither mother nor father nor any other kinsman can do so much good as a well-directed mind.

These few verses correspond to all the needs of those whose mind has not been mastered. They point out the attachment that one has to one’s old ways of being, thinking and reacting, even when one is trying to get away from them. As soon as you emerge by your effort, you are like a fish out of water and you gasp for breath because you are no longer in your element of obscure desires.

Even when you make a resolution, the mind remains unstable. It is subtle, difficult to seize. Without seeming to do so, it is continually seeking its own satisfaction; and its intentions are hidden in the core of the heart so as not to show their true nature.

And while not forgetting the weakness of the body, you must try to strengthen the mind against its own weakness; with the sword of wisdom, you must fight against the hostile forces and treasure the progress you have made so that these forces may not despoil you of your progress, for they are terrible thieves.

And then there is a short couplet for those who are afraid of death, intended to liberate them from that fear. Finally there is a last short couplet for those who are attached to their family to show them the vanity of this attachment.

In the end, a last warning: an ill-directed, ill-controlled thought does more harm than an enemy can do to an enemy or a hater to a hater. That is to say, even those who have the best intentions in the world, if they do not have a wise control over
Questions and Answers

their thought, will do more harm to themselves and to those
whom they love than an enemy can do to an enemy or a hater
to a hater.

The mind has a power of deception in its own regard which
is incalculable. It clothes its desires and preferences with all kinds
of wonderful intentions and it hides its trickeries, resentments
and disappointments under the most favourable appearances.

To overcome all that, you must have the fearlessness of a
true warrior, and an honesty, a straightforwardness, a sincerity
that never fail.

28 February 1958