

## **Prepare To Meditate I** **Swami Chinmayanada**

The variety of sense objects in the world attract the attention of man and his sense organs seek them for his pleasures. A mind, which is not controlled and guided by the intellect, blindly follows the direction of the senses. Such an uncontrolled mind does not possess the capacity to concentrate on any single chosen ideal. Meditation, being the highest form of concentration, is therefore, not recommended for the initiates; it is meant for advanced seekers. Before meditation is undertaken, the mind needs to be well prepared and trained. Only a prepared mind can concentrate and use the technique of meditation to one's advantage and spiritual progress.

The first stage of preparation is to withdraw the mind from its preoccupation with the world and its enchantments. As long as a mind craves for sensual indulgence, it remains agitated and an agitated mind can never concentrate on anything. If such an ill-prepared mind is forced to meditate, the individual develops frustration and, instead of evolving spiritually, will only degenerate.

An agitated mind seeking sensuous joys has three fundamental imperfections. Unless these faults are removed, there can be no effective meditation. The first of them is the excessive flow of thoughts, i.e. the quantity of thoughts entertained by the mind is excessive. Secondly the quality of thoughts in the mind is poor and degrading and lastly, the direction, in which the thoughts are channelized, is towards lower values of life. These have to be carefully dealt with and directed, for, then alone can man gain a relative equanimity which is an essential prerequisite for an attempt at meditation.

The spiritual discipline advised for effecting a reduction of the quantity of thoughts in the mind is *Karma Yoga* or the Path of Action. This discipline is directed to one's physical personality. By *Karma Yoga* is meant selfless actions dedicated to the general prosperity of one and all. It is practiced by surrendering all activities to a higher ideal or altar and working without an ego-centric attachment to the work itself or a craving for the fruits thereof. When one continues to practice this art of right action, the mind, instead of pursuing the senses, maintains the thought of the higher Ideal and thereby succeeds in reducing the quantity of thoughts.

The quality of thoughts is improved by *Bhakti Yoga* or the Path of Devotion, which is prescribed for one's mental or emotional personality. Devotion is the same as love with one difference, that the latter is directed to lower objects and beings while the former is to a higher ideal. Devotion is developed by prayer, by mental prostration and surrender of the *ego* in dedication to the Lord or *guru*. When this is practiced regularly the quality and the texture of thoughts necessarily improve.

Lastly, the direction of the thoughts can be changed by *Jnana Yoga* or the Path of Knowledge. This path deals with the, human intellect in developing the discrimination between the Real and the unreal through the study of and reflection upon the spiritual truths. When a seeker constantly reflects upon the sacred truths, his attention automatically recedes from the fields of sensuality, wherein it was hitherto indulging, and gets more and more established in the higher and nobler values of life.

In fact, man needs to practice all the paths together to subdue the three aspects of his personality. The extent to which each shall be followed would depend upon the nature of his inner personality. When a man is predominantly intellectual, he needs to take to *Jnana Yoga* and spend more time and effort in the study, analysis and reflection upon the contents of the scriptures. But he, who is more emotional than intellectual, requires *bhakti* with more prayer and worship. A third variety is a combination of the intellectual and the emotional temperaments,

where both are almost equally developed. For him *karma* is to be followed, more since it caters to both aspects of his personality. A man, thus pursuing the three paths, slowly gets relieved from the entanglements of the material world and turns his attention to God, With this achievement, the agitations in his mind are reduced and a tranquility is created within. Such an equanimous mind alone is qualified to obtain the best results from concentration and meditation.

If, however, a seeker plunges into meditation without undertaking this initial preparation of the mind, his spiritual personality will not grow and all his efforts will fritter away. This advice is not meant to turn one away from the practice of meditation. It is only to caution the students that a lot of preparation has essentially to be gone through, if they desire to get the best results out of their efforts in meditation. The success in meditation is commensurate with one's preparation and consequent equanimity of the mind.