

The Goal of Meditation

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The cruelest periods for a sincere seeker during his spiritual life are the moments before the final experience Divine. The pathetic anguish felt by him on the path is called "the dark night of the soul". This stage of extreme helplessness, complete disappointment, total dejection and utter despair, though unavoidable, can be minimized if the seeker, on his meditation-flight to the transcendental, is well equipped and fully trained for this supreme, subjective adventure Divine. It is the unprepared student who falls into unproductive, progress-halting ruts of thoughts and gets torn in the rising storms within him.

Throughout our Hindu spiritual literature there are scattered "pointers and sign-posts" in order to guide the seekers who thus get stranded on the great path. Silhouetted against the dim light of our enthusiasm, each one of them presents but a vague shape of the pointing "hand" of the post. Everyone must pursue the pilgrimage in the direction so confidently shown by the unerring words of the Upanishads: all commentaries and explanations, annotations and discourses are attempts to raise a fluttering candle to the ambiguous cross-road signs left in the scriptures.

Without all the preliminary preparations no one should start for a great pilgrimage. If one does so, it is clear that one has no sincerity, or sense of urgency, to reach the destination. The vehicle must be properly rigged, the fuel filled, the engine, well tuned up, and the tools packed ready before one gets behind the wheel and drives away. The traveler must have the necessary technical knowledge to spot out troubles and correct them en route.

As we travel ahead we must be alert to read the road signs and implicitly obey their directions; nay, at places where one is in doubt, it will always be rewarding to slow down, even stop and get out, meet others on the road, enquire, and ascertain whether one is traveling in the right direction. For a true and sincere seeker all these are useful hints, and a successful meditator of today among us is one who faithfully kept to this general plan of action.

The final peak of success aimed at by a mind in meditation is its own merger into the great "silence," into the dynamic pure Consciousness which is the "matrix" behind all the subtle world of subjective thoughts and emotions, and the gross realm of objective things and beings. The "conscious-thoughts", in their enlivened vitality, give us the apparent illusion of individuality, known popularly as the ego (*jiva*).

Mind is the thought-flow in us. The quality, quantity and direction of the thoughts in an individual determine the type of "flow" in him, and consequently it alone decides the worth, the beauty and the effectiveness of his personality as expressed in life. All the psychiatric treatments doled out today are attempts to jerk the thought-flow of the patient into a rhythm. But the ruts cut by the long periods of wrong flow have created disturbing patterns of thought-gush in the subject, and he has an irresistible tendency to dash back into the old familiar stream of thinking and living. A spiritual seeker, to begin with, must therefore learn to initiate new and healthier channels of thought in himself and thereby, on the whole, etching vividly the desired scheme of a spiritually conducive mental behavior.

The direction of thoughts in a mind is determined by the peculiar sub-surface motivating factors found within the emotional profile of each of us: these are called *vasanas*. When we are conscious of their pull, and when we realize that they are, at least some of them, condition us and dragging us into incompetency and into futile mental and physical dissipations, we call them "mental hang-ups". All of us have many such "hang-ups", and we struggle in vain against them and ultimately, in our weariness, yield to them. A spiritual seeker must conquer these *vasanas* in

order to master his mind. Without this mastery over the "thought-flow", self-expansion and self-experience are mere hopes, false dreams, empty claims, unprofitable bluffs.

The inner and subtler forces are more powerful than the outer and grosser factors ordering our life and our world and, therefore, the *rishis* advise us first to learn to conquer, control and tame the "outer equipments of perception," the sense organs. And they are, in us, miserable slaves in their own chosen harem of enchanting objects. Remember, it is certainly excusable if the physical sense organs seek to fulfill themselves in the physical objects; for there is always a natural affinity for matter towards matter. But the individual personality should not get involved in them. So long as we live identified with the sense organs, and so completely committed to our passions, we can never wean ourselves away from the confusing medley of our riotous sense-appetites for the sense-objects.

In fact, the sense-organs cannot function without the mind; and so, by raising the vision of the mind and engaging the mind entertainingly absorbed at a nobler altar of adoration, the sense organs can be clutched off and their dash into the fields of sense-objects can be slowed down. Yet the remedy suggested here is, in fact, not available to the raw seeker, because the mind as such cannot be readily lifted to a greater vision unless the motive forces functioning in it are purified and controlled.

The force that drives the mind to whip and herd the sense-organs into the cesspool of sense-objects is the intellect, and its various "schemes for happiness" called desires (*raga*). Again these desires gurgling up in the intellect and poisoning the entire personality are themselves manifestations of the ultimate source of all conditionings the motivating urges deep in the "unconscious" in man, called the *vasanas*. This level of our personality is called by the Rishies the "Causal Body", because it is the final determining factor that orders the type of mind and intellect, the "Subtle Body" and all behavior on the physical level, the "Gross Body".

The "Causal" level of our personality, the unconscious depth-layer of our mind, is indicated in the *Upanishadic* discussions as Nescience or Ignorance (*Avidya*). The "ignorance" of the spiritual essence and its infinite glory and perfection in us is the "cause" for our sense of restlessness, loneliness, fear, etc. and therefore- the intellect "desires" for, the mind "agitates" with and the sense-organs "indulge" in the world of sense objects. The sense gratifications bring but more and more fatigue at all levels in the sensuous man, and never a deep, consoling satisfaction. Dissatisfied, the individual's intellect plans yet another desire and the body sweats and toils again to seek and fulfill it—only to discover the same disconcerting sense of emptiness filling his heart, a painful weight of dissatisfaction crushing him in the end!

Sooner or later one realizes, if intelligent, that all the wealth acquired, all objects of pleasures procured, all relationships maintained, name and fame gained, work done, achievements accomplished—none of them has any relevance to the inner actual peace and joy in life. The entire life then seems an empty struggle, a futile exertion, a meaningless mission.

Thus, the *rishis* pithily declare that the pangs of life lived by many are all due to their own spiritual "ignorance" (*Avidya*), consisting of the irresistibly compelling urges of love, to acquire and to enjoy the world around. The removal of this "ignorance" (*Avidya*) is the goal of meditation. With the knowledge (*Vidya*) of the spiritual centre, the Self, this "ignorance" is ended. "Seek the Self" is the silent scream of the highest meditation.

On this grand path of spirituality, hasten slowly.