

## The Journey Within

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Every human being, from the moment of birth, has a built-in instinct to go out into the external world and put forth efforts to seek something, to search for something, to try and find something, which is lacking in his life, gaining that which he would feel a sense of contentment and completeness. That drive to search and seek, that attempt to find something in the outside world has become such an important and integral part of the human psyche that its absence is enough to label a human being as not being "normal". This extrovert nature of human beings is a trend, a tradition that can be perceived throughout the ages. Maybe this is a result of the evolutionary process called reincarnation that we as Hindus believe in, where we believe that different kinds of experiences in different lives as different species leave their own imprints and tendencies. For instance, animals have been given an extrovert nature as a defense mechanism or survival kit. They live by the rule, "Survival of the fittest," whether it is hunting or gathering food or protecting themselves from predators or the harshness of the elements and the environment. Sometimes they may even have to protect themselves from their own species too! In this kind of endeavor, each effort is directed towards the outside world. Human beings born as a result of this gradual evolutionary process, who reach the level of human existence, find it difficult to accept the fact that happiness and contentment cannot be achieved from the outside world. So, they continue in their efforts to search for satisfaction and fulfillment in the outside world.

### What is spirituality?

Spirituality is a process of reversal. Mind you, the process is reversing and not "aversing". It is a technique to reverse the focus from the external world to the internal world. That does not mean that we become averse to the world outside. It is just that we reorient our focus to something internal. It is a habit that has to be gradually developed and inculcated. For instance, people in India habitually drive on the left-hand side because that is the rule. When we first come here to the United States and see people driving on the right-hand side and when we ourselves have to drive on the right-hand side, it takes us at least a few weeks to reorient ourselves. For some it may take even longer! So the habit of outwardly-ness which has been a part of our nature through the ages, through so many lives, as so many different species has to be changed to turn inwards. That is called being spiritual.

**Spirituality can be defined as living in the outer world, with the focus fixed firmly on something inside.** As Samarth Ramdas said, "*Andar Rama, bahar kaam.*" Inside is the name of the Lord, while outside is the focus on the day to day activities, never losing sight of the internal focus. Spirituality can be compared to the *śruti*<sup>1</sup> in music. Whichever *raga*, however high the pitch, however difficult the twists and turns, the musician always has the *śruti* in the back of his mind, and immediately brings his voice back in synchronization with that *śruti*. Spirituality is similar to the musician's focus on the *śruti*, where we are functioning perfectly in the outside world as a part of our family, community and society, yet remaining totally and firmly focused on the inner self. This evolution of reorientation to the inner

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<sup>1</sup> Pitch

world, which we have defined as spirituality, has to grow out of the same habit which pushes us out into the world.

### **Why are we extroverted?**

Now let us discuss how the habits that keep pushing us out into the world to do more and more things, to gather more and more patterns, to live that kind of pattern oriented life again and again are formed. Each *jīva*, each soul wants to prove his existence to the world outside. Even before we go into this, let us discuss one more factor, which is even more important - the lack of a sense of completeness within each one of us. Each person feels himself being pushed out into the world because of an inner demand that he is not complete. There is no feeling of completeness, no sense of that complete fullness of being felt by the individual. He runs out into the world gathering different kinds of things, experiences, materials, relations, creating the world of mine and not-mine, so that he can cover up the void within in an attempt to feel that state of completeness.

Let us go back to the first reason - a desire on the part of the individual to prove his existence to the world. We feel that our existence is defined by our status and possessions, "If I have so much wealth, then I can prove my existence to the world. If I have so many people listening to me, following me, then I can prove my existence to the world." Not only do we want to prove that we exist, we also want to prove that we are superior to the rest of the world, "I am great, I am the best, I am the greatest thing happening around here!" Our efforts to prove our existence to the world also lead us to imitate others. We have a tendency to imitate those people who are highly successful, so that we can also prove our existence to the world around us by following the same pattern. In a corner market place we see this one particular shop which is doing well, people start observing its success and very soon we find many other similar stores at the same intersection. That is probably what happened on Belt Line in Richardson where we find the largest concentration of Indian stores in the Dallas area!

The third factor which propels us out into the world is a very strong and pathetic demand of the mind to seek attention from the world, "I want the whole focus of the world to be on me." If a child falls down and knows there is no parent around, he will not fuss much and try to be composed, but the moment he sees his mother for the first time after the accident, he will start crying, showing her the particular place where he got hurt. Similarly, we tend to seek attention in so many ways. We glamorize our pain, we show how successful we are, we show how good we are, all for the purpose of seeking attention from the world. Last but not least, we are motivated by a sense of accomplishment, a sense of achievement, "Yes, I have done this," in an effort to prove that we are worthy. It is not just to prove that we exist, but to prove that we are as good, if not better than the others around us. It maybe that all these reasons look very similar, but then each one has a subtle variation of its own.

### **The human dilemma**

In order to fulfill these different internal demands, we tend to form different habits which push us out so strongly into the world that we forget that the world exists because of us. We start living for the world, thereby giving it a sense of validity. Such a person, who is so engrossed in the world, feels that the world of spirituality is

not his cup of tea! In fact, we also start to feel that the truth is something very distant from us. If the truth was really far away from us, nobody would have tried to achieve it. On the contrary, those who are trying to achieve it and those who have already achieved it have always said that the truth **is** our nature, "You are not part of the truth, you are not a piece of the truth, you are not something born out of the truth, but you **are** the truth itself." This leads us to question, "If I am the truth, how far am I from the truth? What is the difference between me and the truth in terms of space? What is the time difference between me and the truth? In how much time can I reach there?" A person who is asleep and dreaming gets pushed back into the world of waking consciousness by the force of his dream. How far is the dreamer from the waking plane? How far is the waker from the dream plane? Do the waker and the waking plane have a separate existence from the dreamer and the dream plane or do they both exist in each other's absence?

The state of achieving complete awakening is not a myth. It is definitely mysterious, but definitely not a myth. The moment we call this truth a myth, then we call our own self, our own existence a myth. "I know perfectly well that I **am** the truth." The truth is just as far from us as the waker is from the dream. Even while we are dreaming, we are nothing but the waker. The only thing is that we have to remember it, realize it. The moment we wake up, the slightest trace of being a dreamer is wiped out. Supposing we dream that we are badly hurt, the moment we wake up, all the sense of being hurt, facing all that pain is completely lost. All the sense of limitation, lack of self-confidence, sense of fear, which are but natural in that state, vanish into thin air when we wake up into this waking world. But added to all this, we still have so many confusions within; sometimes we are so perplexed by the questions that are born within our bosom. What exactly are we? Who are we? Why does this whole world exist as it exists? Why does everything have a certain pattern? Who manages it? Why does everything have to be ethical, moral and value-based? Why is it when something is not ethical, moral or value-based, it is punished? Why should it at all be considered as unethical, immoral and be punished? What is the kind of existence that we are living in? What is the purpose of it? Who created it? How long will it go on? Is it all just a mere dream? And when so many questions cloud our mind, we are at a loss. It seems to be frightening and we don't know in which direction to turn to get answers to all these questions which keep popping up.

This sense of fear clouds our thinking, we give up pursuing these thoughts, and finally take refuge in a cozy, comforting decision to continue to exist in the same old pattern – trying to prove that we exist, seeking and demanding attention. However, the same questions rise again in our bosom. The moment we understand that there is something so close within, which is an answer to all these questions, which removes the slightest hint of doubt in the heart, which is to be sought out through this process called reaching our own self, this again leads to many internal tussles. For years we have been living in the outer world, leading an extrovert life. We feel a sense of fear, a sense of complete and total loss when we even think of turning inward, of becoming an introvert. When we face the naked truth of this world, which we definitely know is not satisfying, which we definitely know is not fulfilling, which we definitely know is not giving us contentment; we are still expecting that some day it might give us contentment. In reality we know that we are not going to gain that contentment, that fulfillment, that satisfaction from the outer world. In spite of knowing this, we keep running around in the world expecting to find that contentment, that contentment which for eons, for generations, humanity has not found in the outer world.

Many scientists have tried to perfect the world so that we can derive that feeling of contentment. Many politicians have come up with different techniques to manage this world so that we can feel that state of contentment. The scientists, the doctors, the engineers, the politicians, all of them have been trying to do things in the outer world to bring about that state of contentment and happiness which is not available in the outside world. Knowing all these things, we still run out in this world in expectation of finding it since we are afraid to face our own self, face the naked truth of this world that it is not complete in its own self and is incapable of giving us the experience of completeness. As *Naciketas* puts it in Kathopanishad:

*Śvobhāvā martasya yad antakaitat  
sarven-driyānām jarayanti tejah  
api sarvam jīvitam alpam eva  
tavaiva vāhās tava nṛtya gīte<sup>2</sup>*

He talks so beautifully, emphasizing the true nature of the world. The world is *svabhāva*, it does not have a tomorrow; the permanency that we expect out of the world is so impermanent that it keeps changing from moment to moment. *Yad antakaitat* refers to whatever keeps changing, and even if we get involved in that kind of a world, *sarven-driyānām jarayanti tejah*, it will totally sap our energy. Too much involvement in the world will blunt our organs of perception and action. And however long our life, however many years we have to live, we find that span of life to be very short to fulfill all the expectations that we have for ourselves. Do we really need to care about this world which is of this impermanent and changing nature? Do we really need to run after this world which is of this impermanent and changing nature? Do we really need to try and find contentment in this world? Maybe not. Then we definitely have to delve into a different field of experience to gain and gather that contentment. Where do we find it?

### **The Journey Within**

The sages of earlier ages have prescribed a beautiful technique to find that contentment within. That inward journey, the final inward journey wherein we reach ourselves is called meditation. The inner subjective process is known as self-discovery. Self-discovery means knowing oneself and being one's own self, but the mind which is totally running out into the world, whose attention is in the world, wasting and dissipating all the energy out in the world due to the old habits of sensuality cannot help us to discover ourselves. In order to do this, we need to train the body, calm the mind, and educate the intellect.

To understand that which functions through the body, which shines forth through the mind, which acts as the sharpness of the intellect, the entire process has to take a u-turn to understand that great power within, so that we can glide into that state of oneness, which can be defined as meditation. The sages of earlier years have determined this process of turning inward or homecoming. It has been defined in a very logical and scientific manner. Every query, every question has been answered. That is why it is called *darśana*. *Darśana* has two meanings. One meaning is that which reflects like a mirror. The second meaning is logic, a logical process to turn within, to understand oneself and to be one's own self.

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<sup>2</sup> Ephemeral these; O Death! These tend to decay the fire (vigor) of all the senses in man. Even the longest life indeed is short. Let thine alone be the chariots, the dance and the music.

To reach that state of eternal peace we have to understand the equipment that we have been provided with. This equipment that we have should and must be completely analyzed and thoroughly scrutinized even before we start working with it. The equipment provided to us consists of three components - the body, the mind and the intellect. These components by nature and training go out into the world; searching for peace and happiness, feel restless when they cannot find them, whipping themselves to seek something higher and unique in this world, which is next to impossible.

## The Body

The physical body consists of the ten organs of perception and action. According to the Hindu scriptures, the body is broken down into three categories - *sthūla*<sup>3</sup>, *sūkṣma*<sup>4</sup> and *kāraṇa*<sup>5</sup>. Purification of all these three is a must. The physical body is maintained by the food that we eat, which can be divided into four components:

1. The hard material which goes into the formation of the physical structure, the bones and the structure around the bones.
2. The subtle aspect which goes into the formation of blood, bone marrow, etc.
3. The subtlest aspect which goes into the formation of the mind, intellect and memory.
4. Waste product which is thrown out by the system.

While consuming food, we should not only take an interest in maintaining the physical structure and having a good internal physiological system, but also take into account its effect on the mind and intellect and other components which are more subtle. What should we eat and how often should we eat? The food that we consume should be of a

*sāttvic* nature. Fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, pulses, cereals, milk, yogurt are some of the foods that go into the formation of the *sāttvic* diet. It is acceptable to eat some of the *rājasic* foods, but they should be in a proper proportion. Too much salt, too much pungent food, too much hot food, too much burnt food - such things are *rājasic*. Stale food products which have lost their natural taste are classified as *tāmasic*. *Tāmasic* food is to be completely avoided; *rājasic* food can be consumed in controlled proportions, *sāttvic* diet is always preferred and prescribed. Food should be consumed at regular intervals daily, so the internal system is not starved for food. A well-cared for *Madhya Pradesh*<sup>6</sup> results in a balanced *Uttar Pradesh*<sup>7</sup>. Thus maintaining balanced *āhara*<sup>8</sup> is very important for tuning the body.

After *āhara* comes *vihāra*<sup>9</sup>. Where do I go for entertainment? What are the different kinds of places I visit that have an influence on my mind? Visit not those places which are going to have an adverse effect on your intellect, on your thinking, on your

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<sup>3</sup> Gross

<sup>4</sup> Subtle

<sup>5</sup> Causal

<sup>6</sup> A state in the central part of India

<sup>7</sup> A state in the northern part of India

<sup>8</sup> Food intake

<sup>9</sup> Activities

internal psyche. *Āhara, vihāra, āsana*. Talking about *āsana*<sup>10</sup> reminds me of the time Gurudev was once asked, "Swamiji, why don't you teach *yogāsanas* in Chinmaya Mission?" Gurudev gave a beautiful reply, which hit the nail right on the head, "I believe in straightening the mind, rather than twisting the body." We are not going into the details of *āsana*, but we must not forget its importance. The total surface area of the body that comes into contact with the earth is directly proportional to our attentiveness. As the total surface area increases, the lethargy increases. As it decreases, lethargy also decreases. When we are seated in a cross-legged position, with our back straight, head and neck balanced and aligned with the backbone, we are in the optimum position for contemplation or meditation because we are sitting comfortably, without being bothered about anything in the world including our own body. This being the case, the *āsana* or *āsana siddhi*<sup>11</sup> is very important. Through trial and error we can find a comfortable position that allows us to be comfortable and sit without any movement. *Āhara, vihāra, āsana* – proper use and mastery of these three is essential for tuning the physical body.

The other aspect of the body is the sense organs which are very *canca*<sup>12</sup>. This unsteadiness does not allow us to concentrate on the seat of meditation. So the scriptures prescribe a process of training for the sense organs called performing *pūjā* or worship. Worship can be performed of a picture or an idol. During *pūjā* each sense organ is given a specific task, so that it can be trained and tuned by focusing on that one theme of the Lord.

### **The *Antahkaraṇa* (Inner Equipment)**

The *antahkaraṇa*<sup>13</sup> consists of four elements - *manah*<sup>14</sup>, *buddhi*<sup>15</sup>, *citta*<sup>16</sup>, *ahamkāra*<sup>17</sup>. All these four facets of the *antahkaraṇa* consist of the same material, with different functional aspects. Mind is a thought, intellect is a thought, memory is a thought, and *ahamkāra* is also a thought. The only difference is that they are performing different functions. The same thought substance, when it is gathering information from the different sense organs is called the mind, when it is processing the information, it is called the intellect, when it stores all this information in memory, it is called *citta*, and when it adds the label of doer-ship or ownership, it is called *ahamkāra*.

Mind is a flow of thoughts. It functions in the waking plane. It is an agent that gathers all the details from the world outside via the sense organs and passes them back to the intellect. The intellect processes millions of pieces of such information per second and after analysis, it returns the procured information which already exists as memory. That aspect to which the intellect goes to for analysis is called *citta* or the memory bank. Whatever the experience, waking, dream, deep sleep, every minute

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<sup>10</sup> Posture

<sup>11</sup> Mastery

<sup>12</sup> Unsteady

<sup>13</sup> Inner equipment

<sup>14</sup> Mind

<sup>15</sup> Intellect

<sup>16</sup> Memory

<sup>17</sup> Ego

thing goes into the formation of *citta*, and the intellect compares the data it receives to the data in the memory bank to decide, plan and execute the course of action.

The mind is a very tricky thing. It appears as though it is with you, but suddenly it takes off into the world because of its outward nature. The intellect, in its turn, analyzes the information that is passed to it and gives instructions to the mind. With these instructions in hand, the mind runs back to the senses to execute the different instructions given by the intellect. The mind is a sort of bridge between the senses and the intellect. This ought to be the process, but it has been observed that the mind often behaves erratically. Instead of passing on the decisions of the intellect, it starts functioning independently without the permission of the intellect. That is the kind of mind that is not focused. The normal process of the mind should have been that as soon as it is instructed, it has to give those instructions back to the different organs so that they can be executed.

The intellect on the other hand has the capacity to discriminate, analyze, plan and execute. It also has the capacity to go deep into the sphere of the unknown. We might argue that this is the inherent nature of the body, the mind, and the intellect, but then it has been observed that once we train the body, the mind and the intellect, they can function in a different pattern. In *Viveka Chūdamaṇi* it is said that the mind is both the cause for bondage and for taking us beyond bondage. The mind is a very powerful instrument. When focused and trained, it can achieve the impossible. Para-psychic things can also be achieved through the mind. It has the capacity to screen, to decide, to plan, to execute things to perfection, but it is not really being utilized in that fashion.

*Manah, buddhi, citta, ahamkāra.* The last one is *ahamkāra*. With every outward expression in the world, the tag of doer-ship which is added is because of the ego - "I do", "I do not do", "I accept", "I do not accept." These four aspects of our *antahkaraṇa* have to be perfectly tuned and controlled to exist in this world. They are definitely not under our control. After a careful analysis of the equipment that has been provided to us and how it functions, it is necessary to understand the different processes of training and tuning.

### **Methods for Tuning the Body and *Antahkaraṇa***

*Pūjā* (worship), *japa*, contemplation and meditation – these are the four available techniques for tuning the body and *antahkaraṇa*. When we do *pūjā*, when we perform worship, while we are chanting the *mantras*, the mouth is engaged in the *smaraṇa*<sup>18</sup> of the Lord, the hands are busy doing the different *prakriyās*<sup>19</sup> of the *pūjā*. Similarly the other organs of perception and action are completely engrossed in the worship of the Lord with total dedication. In order to train the body to tune itself to the Lord, the practice of *sthira*<sup>20</sup> *āsana* is very important. Unless we master the seat or the *āsana*, we cannot go any further. The best *āsana* would be one of the following – *sukhāsana*, *siddhāsana* or *chidāsana*. We should choose any one of these *āsanas*, which we find to be comfortable, pleasant, without any pressure of any kind because a steady posture is a must.

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<sup>18</sup> Remembrance

<sup>19</sup> Activities

<sup>20</sup> Steady

After having performed the worship of the Lord, tuned the different *indriyas*<sup>21</sup> to the theme of the Lord, the mind now has to be fine tuned. It has been observed that the mind has a direct relationship, a direct link with breathing. When we are angry, our breathing is faster. When we are pleased or happy, our breathing is slow and deep. If we can teach ourselves to breathe slowly, then our thought process will also slow down. Right now the speed and flow of our thoughts is fast and uncontrolled. The technique of being aware, of observing the breath is taught in order to reduce the flow of thoughts. Awareness, meaning that we are completely aware of the breath that we are inhaling and exhaling. In fact, there is no extra effort added to the breathing process since breathing itself is happening involuntarily. While observing the breath, reduce the speed of input-output. The inhalation and exhalation has to be slow and of equal speed. This slow movement immediately controls the speed of the thoughts and reduces the number of thoughts per second. Control of breath does not mean a vigorous kind of *prāṇāyāma*, but awareness of breath. This awareness of breath is otherwise known as *sahaja*<sup>22</sup> *prāṇāyāma paddhiti*<sup>23</sup>. This *sahaja prāṇāyāma paddhiti* enables us to observe our breath, and slow it down. With this slowness of breath, we can gather the mind which is nothing but the flow of thoughts, and focus it as and when needed.

Once we learn how to manage our own breathing process, it is not difficult to manage the mind. Controlling the mind is not to be understood as a tussle or tug of war with the mind, but instead it is a process of dis-identification so that we can make optimum use of the mind. If there is a fruit on an unreachable branch of a tree, normally we catch hold of that part of the branch which is within reach; gently pull it down so that we can get hold of that part of the branch, which is not quite easily accessible. The moment the branch gets closer; we can reach up and pluck the fruit easily. When the flow of thoughts is slowed down, then we can introduce a thought which is self-disciplined, self-controlled. The introduction of this self-disciplined, self-controlled thought by our own awareful effort is called *japa*.

*Japa* is not a mechanical chant of some name, but a scientific process of repeating the Lord's name, which is known as the *mantra*. Once I was asked if it would be alright to chant any word like Coca-Cola. *Japa* is not the repetition of just any word or words, but the repetition of a *mantra*. Every word that we utter is a combination of certain syllables. Each syllable is nothing but a packet of energy. The *mantra* is a formula scientifically proven to have the maximum positive energy because of the combination of specific syllables. This positive energy cannot be obtained by a mere mechanical repetition of any word or combination of words. With a still body, parked in a comfortable relaxed position, preferably in a *sukhāsana*, being aware of the breath which is very normally, naturally going in and out, we should synchronize the *nāma ucchāraṇa*<sup>24</sup> of the Lord with the exhalation of the breath. Repetition of the *mantra* in synchronization with the breath is very important because it immediately calms and stills the mind.

Thus by utilizing the breathing process for chanting the Lord's name, the mind is completely under our control because at any given moment of time the mind can have only one single thought. This being true, as long as we are synchronizing the name of the Lord with the breathing, so long there can exist only one thought. That

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<sup>21</sup> Sense organs

<sup>22</sup> Spontaneous

<sup>23</sup> Method

<sup>24</sup> Chanting of the name

thought is self-introduced so it can be introduced at will at any time. Thus we have controlled the *āsana*, we have controlled the *indriyas*, we are aware of the *prāna*, and we have control over the mind.

### **What is not Meditation?**

After having controlled the mind, then contemplating on the nature of the *Paramātmā*, of the Lord of your heart or the Self, as the non-dual reality is very important. Contemplating on the various *līlās*<sup>25</sup> of the Lord, contemplating on the greatness of the Lord, contemplating on the attributes of the Lord, contemplating on the immutable nature of the Self frees us from doubt, so that our *abhyāsa*<sup>26</sup> becomes more and more firm. But let me remind you that meditation is not *pūjā*, *japa*, *prānāyāma* or contemplation. As Guruji, Swami Tejomayanandaji says:

*Dhyānam nāma swarūpasya sahajam bhānam ucyate  
Naitat karma viśeṣamva saṅgopāsanam japah*

Effortless awareness of one's own nature is meditation. It is not a particular action. It is neither worship nor chanting of the name of the Lord with attributes. Generally meditation is thought to be an action. People ask when to meditate and how to meditate. When we ask when to meditate and how to meditate, we consider meditation as a verb, but in fact, meditation is a noun. Once Gurudev was asked by somebody how long one should meditate every day. Immediately Gurudev gave the answer, "Only for twenty four hours." Therefore, meditation cannot be considered an action because no action can be practiced for twenty-four hours. Some think that sitting still in a particular posture with closed eyes is meditation, but sitting still is not meditation. Some practice concentrating on a flame, sound or a picture. Concentration is required for all actions. It empowers the mind with unimaginable strength and bestows unbelievable powers, but concentration itself is not meditation. Worship of the Lord maybe of a physical nature like *pūjā*, serving society and service of the Lord. At the level of speech one worships by singing the glories of the Lord, at the mental level by thinking of the divine form and qualities of the Lord, but then worship too, being an action, is not meditation. Repetition of the name of the Lord, either loudly, softly or mentally is called *japa* as we have already discussed. Chanting maybe of various names or a single name of the Lord. This too cannot be considered as meditation. However all these processes definitely will and must help the student to grow higher.

### **What is Meditation?**

**Meditation is an effortless awareness of one's own nature.** Generally we think we think we are the body, the mind or the intellect. When we consider ourselves as the body, we are aware of our identity and never mistake ourselves to be animals, even though we might behave as one! We feel insulted when somebody calls us a donkey because we are sure that we are a human being. This conviction is inherent in us and remains in and through all our actions, in all states of experience like waking, dream and deep sleep, in all activities like eating, reading or writing. So the question would be - do I have to concentrate on this awareness? Even the most distracted *unmatta*<sup>27</sup> person also has this awareness of his identity.

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<sup>25</sup> Activities

<sup>26</sup> Practice

<sup>27</sup> Mad

Meditation is not a practice of posture, concentration, worship or chanting. In fact, one cannot practice meditation, it has to be effortless. Just as the awareness of the present identity as a body is effortless, so too **the awareness of awareness should be effortless**. While meditating, we sometimes imagine we see different forms, different kinds of lights, we hear different kinds of sounds. These sounds, these lights, these forms are not meditation. In the true state of meditation such hallucinations do not occur. When someone told me that in the seat of meditation he could see different lights, I quipped, "Donate them to the *āśrama*, we need all the light we can get." As long as there exists an experience wherein there is an experiencer who is experiencing an experience, there is a trilogy of the experiencer, experience and the experienced world. The existence of the experiencer, experience and the experienced world, indicates very clearly a pattern of action.

Thus it should be clear that meditation is not an action. If we really want to establish ourselves in this state of meditation, we have to park our vehicle, meaning the body with a *sthira āsana* so that it does not become a hindrance, tune our mind to the breath so that it enhances our power of awareness, and make it single-pointed by *japa*. Such a quiet mind is then ready to glide into the effortless state of meditation. As Meher Baba used to say, "A fast mind is a sick mind. A slow mind is a peaceful mind. A still mind is a divine mind."

### Goal of Meditation

The culmination of *japa* is to achieve that stillness of the mind where there is a total dis-identification, even with the chanting of the *mantra*, which leaves us completely and totally rejuvenated. Thus being aware of the *mantra*, the words arise from that silence and merge back into that silence, which is our true nature. As the chanting merges back into the silence, we merge into our self, become aware of our self without passing any commentary, and then abide in the stillness of that silence. This is being in the state of meditative poise. Doing *abhyāsa* regularly to reach that state of meditative poise is the goal of meditation. As Adi Śankarācarya says in the last verse of *Nirvānaśatkam*:

*Aham nirvikalpo nirākār rupah  
Vibhur vyāpya sarvatra sarvendriyāṅām*

*Aham nirvikalpo nirākār rupah*. *Nirvikalpa* – I am that stillness and silence which does not have any kind of *vikalpa*<sup>28</sup> whatsoever. *Nirākāra* - I am formless, nameless. There can be no commentary because there is no prior experience to be expressed as an experience. It is a state of pure existence, without any interference or commentary from the mind and intellect. It is this source of energy, this silence which is supporting us from within. Abiding in this silence is called meditation.

Life in its expression is simple, but then being simple is very difficult. **Meditation can also be defined as that state of simplicity where life expresses forth as simplicity**. As Lord Krishna says in the second chapter, *samatvam yoga ucyate*, being in equilibrium, being simple is *yoga*, being simple is meditation. The same simplicity expresses in action as perfection. That which is simple, that which is perfect expresses as joy, peace and success in our lives. As a seeker, when we talk of meditation as a process of cutting ourselves off from the world, that is only half of

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<sup>28</sup> Wavering thoughts

the meditative process. The other half of meditation is when life starts expressing forth in its simplicity. Or it can also be said that this state of meditation once mastered, expresses forth in the world as love. And this love is not something which is limited, this love is not something which can be measured in material terms, this love is an unconditional love. *Svasvarūpa anusandhānam bhaktih*, that love which is an unconditional automatic expression of a higher experience, without any expectation, only giving, and giving, and giving.

Once we perfect the art of being equipoised, balanced, simple, silent, and controlled on the seat of meditation, what expresses forth is love. As Gurudev once said, "You can give without love, but you cannot love without giving." Any process where there is an unconditional flow of giving to the family, to the community, to society, to the world, to the whole universe, that free flowing love is nothing but an expression of meditative poise. This establishment in the *svasvarūpa*, experiencing the *svasvarūpa*, seeing and being with the self wherever we are in the universe, whatever we are doing is called meditation. As Gurudev puts it very beautifully in the pledge, "Producing more than what we consume and giving more than what we take." He also goes on to say, "Devotion to the people is the devotion to the Supreme Self." That is the completeness of meditation. There is no rejection, there is no dejection. The world is not rejected as we may think at the beginning of the process, but completely accepted as one's ownself, *svasvarūpa anusandhānam*, that is meditation. That is the goal of meditation.

There are three kinds of *samādhi*<sup>29</sup> described in the scriptures. *Savikalpa samādhi* where we are still limited by time and space, we sit in the seat of meditation and reach the state of meditative poise. The second is called *nirvikalpa samādhi* where we are not affected by time and space. The third is *sancāra samādhi*, where we do not even need to sit down for meditation, anything that we do is meditation. For such a person, walking is meditation, talking is meditation, laughing is meditation. Every aspect of life is meditation. As Madhusudana Saraswati says in *Madhurāṣṭakam*, *adharam madhuram*, *hasitam madhuram*. Everything about the Lord is *madhura* because it is born out of *sancāra samādhi*. In that state there is nothing that expresses forth other than that *mādhurya*.

**So, meditation can be defined as a state of being and not doing.** Let us understand this and start on the journey within so that we can gain the supreme experience through a total quietude of the body-mind-intellect equipment.

*Om tat sat*

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<sup>29</sup> Balance of mind