

THE PURPOSE & PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

Day Retreat
At HELIANTHOS YOGA UNION
Athens, January 14, 1996

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Swami Dayatmananda

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* * *

asato-ma sad gamaya
tamaso-ma jyotir gamaya
mrityor-ma amritam gamaya
OM Shantih Shantih Shantih

Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real.
Lead us from ignorance to illumination.
Lead us from death to immortality.
OM. Peace, Peace, Peace be unto all

* * *

Friends,

I am very glad to be with you all today and I heartily welcome you to this one-day programme of meditational retreat.

It is very kind of Mrs. Nota to arrange such a beautiful place where we can all meet. My special thanks also to my friend John Manetta, and other devotees like Anna, Kathy and other devotees. So, we shall try to discuss today, about the purpose and the practice of meditation.

Introduction

I am sure, that the subject of meditation is not absolutely new to you. But still, we cannot claim that we fully understand what is meditation, what is involved in meditation, and what preconditions are necessary if we want to succeed in meditation.

So, it would be nice if we can discuss this subject.

As you know, the words “meditation” and “yoga” have become extremely popular these days. It would not be an exaggeration to say that we are all trying to discover the dimensions of both yoga and meditation—and there are so many different types of yoga and also many different types of meditation. Even though there are different types of yoga and meditation, the central purpose of both of them is the same.

Many of us are taking to yoga and meditation. Why?

Definitely it indicates that we are in search of something. In a way, we are not satisfied with ourselves as we are. And so we are searching for something. We do get some idea of what we are searching for, through books, through talks, through our own thinking, and we hope that through the practice of yoga and meditation we will get hold of what we are really seeking.

Today, we shall try to focus our attention on the theme of meditation. As you are aware, ever since Maharishi Mahesh Yogi popularised the word “meditation”, thousands of people have been taking to this aspect of meditation. And, I can say, that the interest in both yoga and meditation has been growing enormously. Yet, peoples’ understanding about yoga and meditation is not commensurate with the interest that we find. There are quite a lot of misunderstandings, both about

yoga and meditation.

What Is Meditation?

First, what is not meditation?

I know. People come, sit in a posture, close their eyes and try to do something.

So far as that goes, it is fine. But, what happens after one sits down in a meditation posture? Often one goes to sleep. So, it is clear that sleep is not meditation.

I heard about an incident that happened in England, at our Centre in Bourne End. There was a man who had been meditating for many years. Once he came with his wife to our Centre and he was accommodated in our guest-house. He used to come morning and evening into our shrine-room and slowly sit down. After a few minutes he used to put his head on the lap of his wife and start snoring. His wife used to say, "Don't disturb, my husband is in samadhi."

It is not uncommon to have the misconception, that the type of unconsciousness relating to sleep is a state of deep meditation. This is a gross misunderstanding.

Why I brought up this subject is this: when a person goes to sleep at night, say after ten or eleven o'clock, we clearly know that it is sleep. But, when the same man sits in a meditational posture and then becomes unconscious, rarely people understand that it is a type of sleep and has nothing to do with meditation.

This is the first thing we have got to understand: just to become unconscious of time and space—which happens in sleep—has nothing to do with meditation.

The second misconception about meditation is that meditation is not merely concentration. If a person trains his body and mind to concentrate on a particular object, it is quite possible that the mind will learn to think of the particular object and that the person will achieve a certain degree of concentration. But, that concentration itself, has nothing to do with meditation. Concentration is a *part* of meditation, a very necessary and important part. Indeed, concentration is very necessary to achieve greatness in any field. But, concentration is only a power, it doesn't mean anything about meditation. If that power of mind, which is called concentration, is directed towards a spiritual goal then only, it becomes meditation.

So, we are now clear about two things: First, that meditation is not sleep in a yogic posture and, second, it is not mere concentration.

Now, what is meditation? We will come to that subject.

As some of you will have read in the system of Yoga propagated by Maharishi Patanjali—I am sure some of you have studied it—meditation is just one step before samadhi. And the purpose of samadhi is to find out who we really are. The Vedanta Philosophy, and indeed every religion, tells us that we are not what we appear to be. In each one of us there is a spark of God; we are part of God, we are God, we are Divine. We have forgotten it. We think we are not divine, we are mortals, we are limited beings, we are human beings, we are unhappy beings. And meditation is the process which leads us to the realisation that we are divine.

The practice of meditation must finally lead us to that realisation. In other words, the purpose of meditation is to make us spiritual. This process of meditation involves three

steps. The first step is self-awareness. The second step is self-transformation. While the third step is to actually realise that we are Divine.

Perhaps we can understand this through an analogy. Supposing a person is sick. Then the first step would be to be aware that he is sick. The second step would be to get rid of the sickness. And the third step would be to remain healthy, to be centred in health.

Meditation involves all these three processes. Many people that I have come across, who speak of meditation, are not willing to take the first and the second steps, but they want to jump directly onto the third step. In addition, you will find that many people have very vague ideas about meditation. If we ask them why are you practising meditation, they say, “Oh, I get a little peace of mind”, or, “I feel relaxed with the meditation”, or, “I want to get rid of nervous problems”, or, “I want to get rid of conflicts which are there in the mind”. All these are fine, but that is not the real purpose of meditation at all.

Meditation certainly helps one to achieve relaxation, peace and harmony. But these are not its true goal. The only purpose, the ultimate purpose of meditation, is to discover our true nature and achieve total freedom. So, if that purpose is not clear in our minds, however much we practice meditation, we are always bound to encounter problems. The purpose of meditation is not to solve temporary problems, but to reach a state where there would be no problems at all. Naturally it needs tremendous will-power, understanding, perseverance and patience. In other words it involves total life. We shall be discussing some of these points in detail.

What I would like to do today, is to go into the real pur-

pose and the conditions necessary for successful meditation. Please do not expect that I shall show you a very short and easy way of meditation, whereby you can immediately merge in *samadhi*. Once you understand the meaning of life, its ultimate goal, and the paths that lead to that goal, then you can adopt whichever method suits you and slowly progress from there.

Meditation Involves Total Life

The first point that I would like to discuss is that meditation involves total life. By total life I mean that not only the whole of our life is to be dedicated for the purpose of meditation, but I also mean that there is no division such as, “this is my office life”, “this is my family life” and “this is my spiritual life”. There is no such division. Meditation involves the complete life, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, as long as we are alive. It may be a bit discouraging—such a horrible thing, no holiday—but that is what meditation is. But it has its benefit too. Its long and permanent benefit is there, if we understand what it is.

Before undertaking the practice of meditation we must examine ourselves, to find out: “Do I really want to meditate?” “How much time do I want to meditate?” “Am I prepared to pay the price?” Because there is 'no free lunch', as the Americans say, the result we get is exactly equivalent to the amount of effort we put in, no more no less.

So, this is the first point, and it should be very very clear. Meditation involves total life.

An Attempt To Rise To A Higher State Of Consciousness

The second important point is that meditation, our pro-

gress in meditation, is always a *movement in consciousness*. From a lower state of consciousness we rise to a higher state of consciousness. That alone is the indication of progress in meditation and nothing else. Many of us are not aware that there are many many levels of consciousness. Sometimes, some of us are dimly aware that there is something, a higher state of consciousness. At some rare moments in our life for some unknown reason we suddenly rise for a moment to a higher state of consciousness, when we feel that the entire universe has become one with us. It may come perhaps by witnessing beautiful scenery like a sunset or sunrise, or while listening to a beautiful piece of music.

Sometimes this experience can happen even while witnessing a completely commonplace scene. I remember an incident when I was in Bangalore. At that time we were constructing a temple. We had employed some women to work as coolies. They used to come at about eight o'clock, work till about twelve o'clock and have a lunch-break. One day at about twelve o'clock, I had gone to see the progress of the work, when I saw a shriveled old coolie woman with a small baby. She had brought the baby to the work-place and put it under a tree. At lunch time she came eagerly, took the baby in her lap and was suckling it. I was passing that way and happened to look at the face of the mother. Such a wonderful expression I found in that old woman; I cannot forget it. For a moment, I had forgotten the existence of the world, while being absorbed in that expression. It was so marvelous. An ugly old woman, but she was feeding her baby and the way she was looking at her baby was so marvelous.

I felt that there existed nothing in the universe but love. And that moment remained so much in my memory, that even today, I remember it so vividly.

Would to God we can abide all the time in that state! That would be the state of Divinity. That would be the state of God. There was no conflict, there was no time, there was no space, there was no separation, that was one of the highest states of consciousness. Unfortunately, these states do not come to us whenever we wish. They just come triggered by some external event. The purpose of meditation is, to consciously capture this state of consciousness and to abide in it for ever.

So, there are different levels of consciousness. And each level of consciousness has its own effect on all of us. As we ascend to higher and higher levels of consciousness, the more is the sense of peace, happiness, fearlessness. And each level of consciousness has a fixed amount of happiness. Whatever effort we may make to increase that happiness at a particular level of consciousness, is bound to fail. So, the only way to achieve higher happiness and peace is to ascend to higher levels of consciousness. This means that the only way to ascend to higher levels of consciousness is to give up the lower levels of consciousness. And meditation is the process which helps us transcend lower states of consciousness, by giving them up, and this enables us to ascend to higher states of consciousness.

All our efforts in life, or work, or meditation, are only meant to remove the obstructions; they do not to create any new kind of experience. What I mean is, that we don't create any higher type of consciousness, we don't create any higher type of happiness; we already have the highest type of consciousness, the highest type of happiness within us.

Meditation is an effort, which merely removes the obstacles. As soon as the obstacles are removed we attain to

higher levels of consciousness. When I said before, that it is a movement in consciousness, this was what I meant.

Usually we feel that, when we can forget the outside world, i.e. time and space, we feel an experience of joy. This is a negative type of experience not a positive type. For example, we have deep sleep and we experience such a tremendous amount of peace and rest in it. Why is that so? Because we do not have the problems that we have to face when we are awake.

This is not a real positive experience of happiness, it is just closing our eyes to problems. The same thing is done, either through drugs, or alcohol, or through playing cards, or through watching T.V. This is just killing time, not overcoming it. This explains why drugs, sleep, or alcohol, which seem to give us a momentary, a temporary type of peace or happiness, in the long run leave us much worse than before.

But, meditation is a process whereby, we face these obstacles, overcome the problems, expand our consciousness and slowly ascend to higher and higher types of consciousness.

Meditation is not running away from reality by closing our eyes, but directly facing problems and overcoming them. And that is the only way to attain permanent and higher happiness.

The nature of consciousness is such, that the higher we ascend, the whole world seems to become all the more unified; we become united by transcending both time and space, and we become one.

Ordinarily, what we call consciousness is, awareness of time and awareness of space. In space we are aware, 'I am

different from you, this table is different from me, everything is different from me”. Consciousness is therefore, as it were, getting itself divided, more and more, in the form of space. As for time, we divide it into past, present and future. And the more we are aware of these divisions of time, the more unhappy we become. Let us for a moment consider the concept of happiness.

The Nature Of Happiness

What is this which we call “happiness”? When we become united with a thing and forget our separateness from it—that is what we call happiness.

Take a simple example: Suppose I like nice cakes, and that I feel hungry and wish to eat a cake and be happy. Slowly, my imagination works. The more I imagine, the more I succeed in forgetting other things. So, either the cake comes to me, or I go to a shop to buy it. Slowly my mind is becoming more and more concentrated on that. Then, comes a moment when I take the piece of cake and put it on my tongue, and then I say, “I am very happy”.

Now, here is something which all of us need to think about, and it is equally applicable to all types of happiness. There is a *split second*, at the moment when the cake becomes one with me, when I forget everything—time, space, everything—and that is the moment when I experience happiness. But it lasts for a very very short time. Next moment the *memory* of that experience comes; but, already, the moment of happiness has passed away. What we call happiness *afterwards* is not the experience of happiness but the recollection, the memory of that experience. And as the memory becomes more distant our experience of happiness also becomes less and less

I will try to give another example, because most of us do not understand the nature of happiness. Let us suppose that on a fine evening, when it is neither cold nor hot, you are at the top of a beautiful mountain. And you are sitting there watching the setting sun. As you are watching, there comes a moment when you forget everything, maybe for a split second, but you forget everything. At that split second you have become one with that experience; you are not experiencing, are one with the experience. After a moment the experience passes, you become separated from it. You feel, “I am the experiencer. Here is an experience”. At the moment of experiencing, there is no mind which stands aside, separately, and says, “This is very nice”; you have absolutely no mind. When the mind becomes separated from the object of experience, then you say, and describe, mentally, “How beautiful, how wonderful, how marvelous”.

Now, try to understand the nature of the experience where the experiencer becomes one with the experience. That is the moment of highest happiness. When you come down from that state, what happens is, that you recall the experience and try to say, “Yes, it was wonderful I am very happy”. Now, that experience—which you had for a split second—you can call it *samadhi*. It has got two characteristics. One, you have become totally detached from everything that you call the “world”, which means “time and space”. And, second, you have become absolutely united with that which you call an “object”, “event”, or whatever. This is the nature of happiness, of any happiness. What happens whenever we ascend to any higher level of consciousness? The experience of our limitations becomes much reduced; our capability to abide in that higher experience becomes more pronounced. That is how our happiness becomes higher

and higher.

* * *

Naturally, the precondition for experiencing those higher states of consciousness is the gradual detachment of our identity from the lower states.

Our Vedantic teachers have divided the human personality, which consists of consciousness, into roughly five levels. And as we go on ascending to higher and higher levels or states of the personality, our experience of joy and happiness also increases to that extent. It also becomes more expansive and more abiding.

So, the purpose of meditation is to ascend from lower levels of consciousness to higher levels of consciousness. How this is done, what methods we could adopt and what conditions we have to fulfill in order to succeed—that, we will try to discuss as far as possible in our next class.

To summarise what I said today:

Meditation is not sleep, and it is not mere concentration. Meditation involves total life and it is a movement in consciousness from a lower state of consciousness to a higher level of consciousness. I have also said that the human personality consists of five parts. If we want a higher level of happiness, we have to give up the lower levels of consciousness and slowly ascend. There is a definite system which can help us to do this. If we are truly, sincerely determined, the way is open to us.

* * *

CASSETTE No.2

Questions & Answers Session

Q. – ___?????

A. – It is a very important question but also presumes that we must have a clear understanding of the subject.

What actually is meditation? I said, that it is a movement in consciousness. What I mean is: in the process of meditation we are trying to ascend to higher levels of consciousness.

Now, at this moment, we are conscious that we are human beings, isn't it? Throughout the 24 hours, whatever you may be doing, you never lose the consciousness that, "I am a human being". Right? So, now, our problem is that we are not happy with this consciousness. As human beings we have limitations; although our body is changing, we want to be in the same state of health and happiness—but, it is not so. So, the purpose of meditation is to bring about a new identity within us, in the form of, say: "I am a child of God", or, "I am part of the Divine Being", or, "I am a devotee of God". So, what we are trying to do at the time of meditation is: we are trying to feel that, "I am not a human being, I am Divine". This is the consciousness we are trying to impose on our normal consciousness. So, that will be the test.

Suppose I am working or talking. It implies that I am thinking, "I am a human being." It means I am not really in the state of meditation. I have come down to my normal state of being. If we can maintain a stream of consciousness which enables us to say, "I am a child of God", or "I am Divine", that means we are maintaining a level of meditation. This is a clear test of whether we are meditating or not. Do you un-

derstand? So, meditation is not merely sitting in a particular posture, but making our consciousness identify itself with a particular level of being.

* * *

Q. – Would you say it is enough to keep constantly in mind that we are part of the Divine as the first step of meditation?

A. – It is not the thought. It is the identity, to feel that “I am God”; in which case my behaviour automatically changes. If the behaviour doesn't change, I may think I am Divine yet I may go and cut someone's throat. That is of no use. That is why it is very important to repeat these ideas again and again. As I said, it is not an act of just sitting and concentrating. Meditation is a movement in consciousness. Consciousness means identity of what we are. It is this 'identity' that has to change. So meditation is not merely thinking. Thought is a product of consciousness, but consciousness is not a product of thought. Thought comes from consciousness, and consciousness is the origin of that which we call “I”, “I”, “I”-consciousness. That has to change its identity.

I will give you a small example, it may be a little bit detailed, but it's nice:

Suppose I think that I am a man. Naturally, I will think better of men and I will have something against women: “Women are inferior, or this or that”. But suppose by meditation I think that I am not a man but I am a human being. Then what happens? My bias against women disappears. If, again, I can feel that I am not a human being, but I am a being with life, then I will have no bias against any being, be it an animal, or a bird or a plant or anything. I feel myself identified with everything living. If I go still further and say: “I am not only a being with life, but I am one with existence itself. Then, the

sun, the moon, the stars, the wind, the water, the flowers, living and non-living, everything becomes one with me. So, that is how this identity with this limitedness becomes broken and we attain a wider identity. That is what I meant. Movement in consciousness means absolute identity; it is not a thought, not mere sympathy, but complete identity. That is the state of the Saints, say Saint Francis, for example. He is not sympathising, he knew. “I am one with everything, with the bird, with the plant, with the sun, with the moon”. That's why he could love all.

Now, a very important and interesting point comes here: we normally think that living beings have consciousness and say that this chair or this table has no consciousness. But all the Saints tell us that everything is permeated with the consciousness of God. But, because we cannot understand that idea, they advise us to divinize everything. So they gave different names: the earthgoddess, the moon-goddess, the sun-god, the mind-god. Instead of just calling something non-living, it has been divinized. The idea is, that ultimately there is only one pure consciousness which, because of our limitedness, appears as different, whereas, it is actually one alone.

That is called God. That pure consciousness is God. The purpose of meditation is to reach that consciousness which is called pure consciousness, which is called God. If you are aware that you are not this particular body, you are not human, you are not this living being, but you are pure consciousness, then your meditation is alright; but, the moment you forget it, your meditation is not going the right way.

Because this state cannot be attained at one jump, you are told: sit quietly, forget everything. Sit in a particular posture and try to think of God they say; that thought must be

transformed into a permanent experience. That is the goal.

That is the answer. Is it alright?

* * *

Q. – In order to reach this state of pure consciousness, we must make a meditation of: “We are God”, “We are love”, “We are everything”. Is this the only way for everybody, or is there maybe a personal one, that each one should pass through, in accordance with his soul, his psychology ..., some personal soul conflicts ... and in this sense, I would like also ... that sleeping is not meditating... But maybe through dreams for example, this whole soul talks to our personal conscious to give us some light.

A. – But even in dreams, if the soul has to talk to us, we must be prepared to listen, isn't it?

Q. – Yes, Yes.

A. – Now, dreams are the reflections of our everyday thoughts. Dreams are like fruits. If you want fruits, first you must bring a good seed, and make it grow into a good tree, and then the fruits will be nice. Just so if you want to have good dreams then the conscious life must be made good. Only then can we have divine dreams. So we must control our conscious life first, and then it filters through dreams or whatever you call it. Otherwise, suddenly, it won't come. Can a wicked man have a wonderful dream of God? That doesn't happen. We should remember that.

* * *

Q. – Concerning the identity, you said that the first thing we must overcome is this human identity, in order to identify ourselves with God or the One. But, we are constantly reminded of our identity. I know I am a woman, I am from this

country etc., and I receive from other people's looks a constant reminder of this identity. I can't forget it. So, practically, how can one diminish this strong identity-feeling? Are there some ways to overcome it?

A. – Yes. Not one, but there are many ways, many paths. All these different paths are roughly divided into four categories, which we call Four Yogas. The meaning of the word Yoga is to connect ourselves with God. Any path that connects us with God or, in other words, with pure consciousness is called a Yoga. And there are four such important paths. I am sure you have heard about them. In Sanskrit, we call these Yogas: KARMA-YOGA, BHAKTI-YOGA, RAJA-YOGA and JNANA-YOGA. These are the four paths. Depending on which faculty is predominant within us, we try to connect it with God. Each one of us has all these four faculties. We have the faculty of action, the faculty of emotion, the faculty of intellect, and the faculty of will.

If the *faculty of action* is predominant we can't keep quiet. We have to work. But, instead of working for my own benefit, for my own livelihood, if I can say that “I am rendering service to God”, that becomes the Yoga of Action. If I can feel that whatever I am doing is a “worship of God”, that becomes the path that slowly takes us from that limited identity and expands it.

The next thing that we have is the *faculty of emotion*. It expresses itself in the form of love, hatred, friendliness, enmity, jealousy, goodness, in so many ways. If these very emotional expressions, can be connected to God, then every emotion becomes a spiritual emotion that changes our identity.

In our scriptures we call this BHAKTI-YOGA. What we are

asked to do in this path is: if you want to be angry, don't be angry with other beings, be angry with God. If you want to love, don't love any human being, love God. If you want to be jealous, be jealous about God, not of ordinary human beings.

So, the idea is whatever emotion it may be, if it is connected with God, you are only thinking about God. So, in the course of time, if we can constantly think of God through these various emotions, then, ultimately, we reach God, we become one with God. This is the path of emotion, Bhakti-Yoga.

Then there is the *faculty of intellect*. The chief way of this path is to discriminate constantly. Sometimes we say, "This is my body"; at other times we say, "This is me". Now, if you understand language, that which is called "I" or "me", and that which is called "mine", these are not the same. For some reason we are constantly confusing between "me" and "mine". People ask you, "How are you?" "Oh, I am not well". "What is the matter?" "My stomach is aching". One moment you say, "I am not well", the next moment you say, "My stomach is not all right". You are confused. You don't say, "I am not well because my stomach is not all right". Do we say that? (Sometimes, yes, we say that.)

People ask, "How are you?" "Oh, I am not well, I am not happy." "Why?" "Oh, my son is not all right, he is ill." Your son and yourself are not the same, but the identity is so close, that whatever happens to him also affects you. In the same way, we say, "This is my hand"; but if something happens to the hand we say, "I am not well". Suppose this hand is cut off. You don't say, "A part of me is gone". Do you ever say that? We don't say that. We always confuse.

Similarly, the man who has a predominant intellect, con-

stantly discriminates: “I am not the body, I am not the sense-organs, I am not the mind, I am not the ego”. After discriminating and denying everything, whatever remains, that is the real self. There is no further thing that can be said, “This is not me”. He alone remains. That is the path of knowledge, of discrimination.

The last path is the RAJA-YOGA. The speciality of Raja-Yoga (and of Karma-Yoga too), is that there is no need to believe in a God, there is not much need to discriminate, there is not much need for emotional expression. What the Raja-Yogi has, is tremendous willpower. So, he puts his mind on any object, maybe a flower or, it may be a bird or, it may be a book, and just goes on concentrating, with full consciousness. That is important, with full consciousness, The more he develops his power of concentration, the more the object gets rid of its many qualities until, finally, its pure substance, which is pure consciousness, reveals itself to the meditator.

So, these are the four practical ways. In daily life, we can take the help of all these: a little discrimination, a little devotion and a little bit of meditation, and of course doing our day-to-day duties without too much of expectation, without being affected. That slowly brings us to the goal.

Is it clear? Let us never forget that the purpose of any spiritual practice, is to change our identity. We should not only think about the method but the result. The final result is to change our identity. Many times we make this mistake, we take the spiritual practice as something equal to spirituality.

I'll give you an example.

If you dress a monkey in a nice coat and tie, will it get a job in an office? I give you this example, because in life that is what is happening every day. Here is a practical example:

There are many, many clerks and each one of them wants to become a manager. Maybe one of them gets promoted to a manager position. And, very soon he has a nervous breakdown. Why is it so? Because he has changed his dress as a manager, but his identity as a clerk remained the same, he has not identified himself as a manager. He is trying to do managerial jobs, but his identity is a clerical identity, that's why there is a conflict. He cannot cope with it, and very soon a nervous breakdown is the result.

The same thing happens in spiritual life.

What happens when we go into a nice shrine room, and sit and meditate there? Very nice meditation. But the moment we come out of the shrine, there is a conflict with our day-to-day world. What happens is that, although we can have some nice thoughts of love, peace and other things in the shrine room, we have not changed our identity. The moment we come out, we get back our old identity.

There is a conflict between the worldly and spiritual life. This is what I observe in many of the so-called yogis and saints and famous gurus. They fall. Either there is a scandal, or corruption. Because they have not changed their spiritual identity, they are still the same worldly people.

Cultivation Of Virtues

That is why, to avoid these dangers we are advised to cultivate certain virtues.

Before we take to spiritual life, we should cultivate truthfulness, honesty, sincerity, love, and unselfishness. These are the virtues which help us. Then only, our spiritual journey starts.

Raja-Yoga calls them *Yama* and *Niyama*. Few want to practice them. Everyone wants to go straight to the top, to the seventh floor. So, to practice spirituality in day-to-day life, we start with *Yama* and *Niyama*. Do you know what are *Yama* and *Niyama*?

YAMA consists of five virtues:

First is non-injury (*ahimsa*)

Second is truthfulness (*satya*)

Third is non-stealing (*asteya*)

Fourth is observance of continence (*brahmacharya*)

Fifth is non-acceptance of gifts (*aparigraha*)

NIYAMA, again, consists of five virtues:

Purity (*Saucha*)

Contentment (*Santosha*)

Austerity (*Tapas*)

Study of scriptures (*Swadhyaya*)

and lastly, if you believe in God,

Self-Surrender to Him (*Ishvarapranidhana*).

Do you know what these are like? Suppose you have a car. First of all you must put good tires and then good engine and then the doors etc., must be nicely fitted. First get the car workable. After that, you tune the whole thing so that it is in perfect harmony. It's not enough to have a tire, it must have the right type of pressure and air and everything. Everything should be in harmony. Then you can sit in the car. But you don't reach the goal immediately. You must know where to go, you must know how to drive, you must know the path. Then you start driving. Then only, slowly you reach the goal. Similarly, we start our spiritual journey by cultivating the ten

virtues, *Yama* and *Niyama*. Without this firm foundation there could be no success, no hope of success.

First start cultivating the virtues, then start prayer, meditation, and then take up any specific path you like. The path starts only after these initial preparations.

Don't be discouraged! This is the price we have to pay, because what we are going to get is so priceless, and it is eternal, and permanent. Once we reach there, there is no coming back. That's why the preparation is long and it is an arduous journey. But there is no short-cut. I don't know of any shortcut. If I did, I would have taken it myself!

Purpose Of Brahmacharya & How To Practice It

Q. – Does it mean, we must not get married? Or we do get married, and after having children, we must not have sexual intercourse? Is that what you mean?

A. – Yes. But, let me explain a little. It is an important point.

As I said, the purpose of spiritual life is to change our identity, from this human identity to a Divine identity. So, this particular virtue which is called *brahmacharya*, is a desire connected with the body. If there is no body, there would be no sex-desire at all. The mind has no sex, it is neither male nor female.

If somebody goes on indulging in this desire, then he can never get out of the identity with the body. So the idea is that, gradually, we must overcome this. Let us be under no illusion, that one can have hearty sexual life and at the same time spiritual life. But many people cannot overcome this desire, in the beginning itself. For them, the indication is that

they must marry, have a good family life, and practice self-control. Let them have one or two children. After that both the husband and the wife should live like brother and sister. This is the teachings of the Saints. I know a number of couples who lead a pure life, without having any sex connection. If anybody teaches you that one can indulge in sexual life and be also spiritual, do not believe him. It is like the man whose one leg is going to the East and the other leg is going to the West. That is why some people became monks.

* * *

Cassette No.3

asato-ma sad gamaya
tamaso-ma jyotir gamaya
mrityor-ma amritam gamaya
OM Shantih Shantih Shantih

Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real.
Lead us from ignorance to illumination.
Lead us from death to immortality.
OM. Peace, Peace, Peace be unto all

So friends, I am sure you had sufficient break from the intensity of thoughts and meditation. You know that modern man is incapable of paying attention for a long span of time. The maximum that one can pay attention is only just about 20 minutes—this shows how restless we have become.

Meditation is just the opposite of this trend. It is said in the Yoga Philosophy that the mind is like a a mirror, on which are falling the images of the world. These images that we see, are actually images of the one pure consciousness. If we can still the mind, then we don't see man or woman or an-

imal or plant or anything; we see the pure reflection of pure consciousness. That is the goal of Yoga.

Q. – Do you know what is the definition of Yoga? Anyone?

A. – *Cittavrittinirodha*.

It means suppressing the thoughts arising in the mind. That is the purpose of meditation. So we said in the morning, that meditation involves total life.

And it is a progressive upward movement, from the lower consciousness to the higher consciousness.

If we want to progress in meditation, we need to fulfill another condition: *We need intensive seeking*.

There is a wonderful question raised in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: “When does a man reach the goal of Yoga?” What was the answer given? ... One must remember what one has read ... The answer given was: “*It depends upon the intensity of the seeker.*” The more urgently a man seeks, the more quickly he reaches the goal. That is the answer.

Obstructions To Inner Harmony

We would like to reach that goal, we would all like to see God. But something seems to be pulling us back. Isn't it? What is it that pulls us back?

There are three things, three obstructions, which pull us back: The first thing, is what we call disharmony. This refers to the mind, which seems to be divided into two—the conscious mind on one hand, and the unconscious mind on the other. Our conscious mind says we must progress. But our unconscious mind pulls it back without our consent and scatters it. Is this not a common experience? We sit for meditation

with good intentions, full of hope, but next moment we find our mind has gone out somewhere.

The reason for this is our intense attachment to the world. Patanjali again, classifies this attachment into two categories. He calls it RAGA and DVESHA.

RAGA – means intense attachment.

DVESHA – means intense aversion.

Now, you may say, attachment is attachment; how is aversion, an attachment?

Attachment works in two ways:

Positively, it works in the form of attraction.

Negatively, it works in the form of aversion.

How do we know that what we call hatred or aversion is also an intense kind of obstacle, an attachment? We know it by its effect. For example: You sit for meditation. Supposing you have a child whom you love very much. What happens as soon as you close your eyes? The form of your child comes into your mind and, “Mummy, mummy, I am here, don't forget me”. So, your mind cannot concentrate on God, or on any special object you decide upon.

Suppose you hate someone. Even that thought comes, and it distracts you from concentration. So, both likes and dislikes, in their effect on our concentration, are the same. They are destructive. The remedy to overcome them is:

First – to think more of God;

Second – not to be affected by the objects which attract or repulse us; and

Third – we must develop a witness-attitude.

If we can practice thus, then the unconscious and the conscious will slowly become integrated.

This brings us to a very important point. For many of us meditation is not a bed of roses; it is more of a battlefield. That is the reason why, we prefer do anything but sit for meditation!

This dispels the popular misconception that as soon as a person starts meditating, he becomes a person of peace and harmony and integration, and all love and good feeling. We should never entertain such a notion. It's a lifelong battle. If anybody comes and says, "Oh! Ever since I began meditating, I am calm and quiet, and peaceful", don't ever trust such a person's opinions. He has not yet started meditating.

For many of us, then, as soon as we dive in a little, meditation is like churning muddy water. Water may appear to be very, very clear, but, take a stick and start churning, and see what happens! So, if any of you have begun meditating seriously, and you've come up with problems—and feel that before taking up meditation you were much better persons, whereas now, after beginning to meditate, you have become more short-tempered, more intolerant, more restless—then, rest assured; you have truly started meditating!

The only way to attain the goal of Yoga is to go deep into the mind, churn it, bring out all the dirt and filth that has been accumulating there for ages, and clear it away. Then only do we reach the goal. Only after a long time, when the unconscious becomes clear, does it become one with the conscious. Only then, do we discover what is meant by 'integration of personality'. Harmony, inner harmony, develops only then.

Then only, does real spiritual progress start.

Conversion

In Christian theology, this integration is what we call ‘conversion’. When a person becomes converted to God, there is no conflict between his outer and inner mind.

How do we know that we have reached this *inner harmony*! There are three characteristics.

First, there is no conflict between the unconscious and the conscious.

Second, it is not a temporary phenomenon, it is permanent.

Sometimes, certain ideas take hold of our mind for a few days. Our inner and outer mind becomes one, but only for a few days. After that, the mind gets disrupted again. That is what we see in most of the modern seekers. They are seeking some spirituality. They come across a guru, maybe with a long beard, and they are highly impressed by his personality. They become intense devotees and for few days they are in heaven. After a few days the illusion breaks and they give up that guru and seek somebody else. This type of few-days effect is not good for meditation. It is similar to modern marriage. There is so much love between the man and the woman that they are not separated in their sleep also; and after few days they can't look at each other's face.

This should not happen in spiritual life. Once the mind catches hold of an idea, it must be seen through. It must be seen through the whole life. That is what happens in conversion; a real conversion makes the effect permanent.

The third characteristic of conversion is, the mind is integ-

rated because of a holy idea, a sacred idea, and never by any worldly idea.

You see, it is also possible to become integrated in the worldly life because of hatred, because of jealousy etc. Or it could even be a positive idea. A great scientist maybe so much interested in discovering some scientific fact, that his whole life is dedicated only for that purpose. But even such a type of integration, even though it is permanent, is not going to bring him illumination, because it is directed towards a worldly object, not to a spiritual object.

So, to summarise, the characteristics by which we can know whether a real spiritual conversion has taken place, are:

- First – there is an integration of personality,
- Second – this integration is permanent, it's for life, and
- Third – this integration is always towards what we call God or a spiritual object.

This integration is one of the conditions necessary for the success of meditative life .

External Harmony

I talked about inner harmony, now I must also speak about external harmony.

What I mean is, you see many times, external circumstances may not be favourable to us: the persons with whom we live may not be spiritual, the places where we happen to live may not be convenient, and it may be that we are not living in harmony with the external world. If we fail to live in harmony with the external world, then to that extent our battle becomes that hard.

So, here too, the body, the physical concept of the body, is involved. We must eat what is right for us, in the right quantities, at the right time. And in the social circumstances in which we are placed, we must develop some type of harmony. The idea is that we should not feel anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., towards the external circumstances or objects.

There are two reasons for such disharmony.

If we are not in harmony with the external world, one reason is that we are not harmonised internally with our own hearts. The other reason is that we do not have the right conception about the world. What I mean is that in this world, one should not expect only the sweet and the light, the good side only. In the world, there will be sweetness and there will be bitterness, there will be light and there will be darkness, there will be life and there will be death. That is the nature of the world. To expect anything else from it would be wrong. Therefore, as far as the external world is concerned, we should be a bit philosophical.

There is a nice story illustrating this:

There was a Chinese farmer who had a son. One day, the son had gone into the forest and there, he found a lot of wild horses and so he brought them in. And the neighbours came and said: “What a good fortune your son has brought to you!” This farmer was a philosopher. He said, “Who knows, good fortune or bad fortune”, and let it at that. A few days later, one of the wild horses, kicked the son and broke his leg. Again the neighbours came and said, “What a misfortune!” The farmer said, “Who knows, good fortune or misfortune”. After a few days, the King of that country came and conscripted all the young men of the village; only, he couldn't take the young man because his leg was broken. The neighbours

came and said, “So fortunate you are”, and the farmer said, “Who knows, good fortune or misfortune”.

So, under all circumstances maintaining a philosophical attitude, helps us a lot in achieving this harmony. When we can achieve this type of harmony, the mind becomes very very restful. If we analyze our minds, we see that most of the time it is in a state of restlessness, and the cause of this restlessness is always disharmony. We are always grumbling, “It is cold or it is hot, or this person is good, that person is bad, or why I don't have this, why I don't have that, etc.”

If we can develop some amount of philosophical attitude, the mind becomes quite peaceful. I can tell you that.

Now, apart from that, there is another type of harmony, which we call lower harmony. There are some persons who seem to be quite content in life. They are not Yogis, they are not practising meditation, but they seem to be quite happy. They go to work, they come back, they earn a little money, their families are there, they seem to be quite content. But we, who start practising meditation, are always in a state of agitation.

So, sometimes we think “What is this? That man is not practising meditation, yet he seems to be quite happy. But I am practising meditation, I am supposed to be more happy, but I am not.” The reason for that man's contentment is not because he has achieved calmness of mind, but he has surrendered his will to what we call “collectivity”. He goes the way of 99% of the people. He is like a slave, he doesn't exercise his brain, and think, “What is life, what is the goal, what should I do?” This type of calmness and quietness is of no use, either for him or for others.

The second type of lower harmony is: there are some

people, a few people, who are very stoic. They have sufficient reasons to become unhappy, but they say, “No, I am not going to express my unhappiness to anybody, I will bear it with gritted teeth”.

In both these cases, the result is the same: they are not trying to overcome the situation, but they are trying to appear calm and quiet and contented. Such people cannot progress in spiritual life at all.

Spiritual life starts with what we call a “divine discontent”. We are not happy to live in the way others are living. We want to rebel against the world's way and turn back to its very source. That's why it is a tremendous battle; it is called “*The unseen warfare*”.

Now, there is another obstacle in the path of harmony. There are spiritual aspirants who want to fight, who want to walk the way of spiritual path. That is to say they want spiritual freedom. But, they are terribly afraid of taking responsibility. You see, the concept of freedom is always linked with the concept of responsibility.

As an example: if you are working in an office under somebody, you just have to do what the man asks you to do. You are not free. But if you start your own business, it gives you complete freedom, but you are responsible for the good or evil, whatever is the outcome. And many people are afraid of this responsibility. This is one reason, why people very easily fall in line with other people's behaviour than rebel, even though they desire to do that.

To summarise this concept of harmony:

First of all there must be an inner harmony. Then we must also know how to achieve external harmony, which means

that we should not surrender our will to collectivity. Nor should we be afraid of taking responsibility for ourselves. If we fulfill this condition, then we have taken a great step forward towards meditative life.

Self-Identity

Now, the second thing that is an important accessory to achieving success in meditative life is: one must have some kind of self-identity. What I mean, is that most of us, as we are now, do not know about our inner self.

If somebody tells us, “You are a good man”, we get elated. If somebody says, “Don't do this, do that”, we are quite prepared to obey. In other words we don't say, “I am a complete individual in my own right. I have a right to think for myself. I have a right to decide what is good and what is not good for me: I have a right to choose what I think is good, and I have a right to follow it, whatever the external world thinks of me”. In other words, I must have definite ideas about my own personality, and I must have definite principles to live by.

This is very important in spiritual life. I should not be moral because of the police fear, nor should I be good because of public opinion. I must have these principles of my own free will. In order to have this self-identity, I must have a strong power of analyzing myself and try to understand my weaknesses and my potentialities as well.

Much of our unhappiness is caused by the lack of self-knowledge. By self I do not mean the Divine Self. What I mean is our psychological self, our mind, our personality. This lack of self-knowledge: how much misery it can bring to us! You only have to just open your eyes and look at your family

members, at your neighbours—the lack of self-knowledge is enormous. Sometimes we have to go to a psychoanalyst and pay lots of money, just to be told that, “You are a good man and have lots of potentialities!”

This self-knowledge is very important, because the goals that we can set for ourselves, even in spiritual life, much depend upon the knowledge of the self. We have, each one of us, certain defects or certain weaknesses, and we have certain wonderful potentialities. If we have right self-knowledge, only then can we know how to overcome our weaknesses, and only then can we know how to set realistic goals. It's very important to set realistic goals. If we do not have this self-knowledge, we live in a world of self-illusion. And the result could be disastrous.

Here a spiritual teacher can help us a great deal, and this is where the greatness of a teacher really comes out. A real teacher understands the personality of a disciple and sets goals and guides him accordingly. And that is also the reason why the teacher, although the teaching is the same, presents it to the disciples in accordance with the capacity of their individual ability, digestion and practice.

And self-knowledge is also important for another reason: if we do not have proper self-knowledge, we are often forced to indulge in self-fantasy.

An example: We love to watch T.V. Do you know why? Unconsciously, we are identifying ourselves with the heroes and the heroines we see on the screen. The reason for this is: if we are incapable of fulfilling our expectations in actual life, we are drawn to fulfill the same reality by proxy, on the screen or in imagination. If we do not have proper self-knowledge, we become incapable of discriminating between what

is fantasy and what is reality. And the result will be a terrible failure in actual life. You only have to open your eyes and see how many people have fallen frustrated in real life only because they have fallen from their life of fantasy, and not from actual life.

If anyone has at least some amount of self-knowledge, he'll be a happy man in this world, even if he doesn't seek spiritual life.

Our Concept Of God Is Based On Our Self-Image

Now, understanding of our own self has a great spiritual benefit. It is a law of the spiritual world, that our goal in the spiritual world entirely depends upon the concept we have regarding our own self. This is a deep matter to be thought of. Many people cannot conceive of God. So, they cannot set spiritual goals, not because they don't want to, but because their self-knowledge is so inadequate that they are unable to *imagine* something higher. But, if any man has adequate self-knowledge, he cannot but understand that there is a Divine Spark within each one of us.

There is a point which has nothing to do with our topic, but it is a very interesting point.

You know that there are hundreds of opinions about God. And everybody thinks that his idea of God alone is right. But the truth is that each one is trying to conceive of God according to his own self-image. If somebody has a very strong sense of justice, then he thinks God is Supreme justice; and if somebody else has love, he thinks that God is of the nature of love.

So what we are quarreling about, is not about God but about concepts of God. But if anybody has got adequate self-

knowledge, he would be intelligent enough to understand that all these quarrels are useless, because they are based on our own self-concept. And that is a great benefit in itself.

Meditative Life & Moral Life

We come to one more point in this class and then we'll stop. This is the connection between meditative life and moral life. By meditative life I mean spiritual life. Spiritual life is based on moral life, but spiritual life is not moral life. Moral life, is like a foundation of a building. Without a foundation there can be no building. But if you just have the foundation, it is equally useless.

Many people mistake a good moral life for a spiritual life. They think, "Don't bother about God, live a good life and that is enough." That is good as far as it goes, but such a person is far, far away from perfection. A moral life is very necessary for spiritual life, but mere moral life is not enough.

This is a point that spiritual aspirants need to understand, because after starting a little meditative life, one becomes more sensitive, loving, and sympathetic.

Cassette No.4

Such people become so sensitive that if they have to be harsh, even though they are justified, they feel terribly guilty.

Simplicity Of Conduct

There is another point of importance. Usually spiritual aspirants try to be truthful, gentle, loving and considerate. So they make certain rules and try to follow them. Sometimes, however, they may not be able to follow them. Then they fall victim to restlessness, and suffer unnecessarily. What we

need is a general guideline for our behaviour and we should try to put it into practice. If for some reason, we are not able to do that, we should not bother too much about it.

Just to give an example: Suppose you feel that any guest who comes to your house must be treated extremely well. That is a very good rule of conduct. Supposing a guest comes to your house and for some reason you don't have enough things to offer him. You don't have to fall over your heels, and go on apologizing to the man, feeling uneasy in your mind. Simply offer whatever you have with simplicity and love, and finish with that affair. Otherwise, endlessly we go on, "Oh, I don't have anything, I am so sorry". After that you phone, "Oh, I am so sorry". After that you write, "Oh, I am so sorry". All this is complexity of conduct. Such behaviour soon turns into snobbishness.

To give another example, this time from spiritual life. Supposing that you make a rule: "I will bathe and then only sit for meditation". Perhaps one day, there is no water. You don't need to worry whether God becomes angry with you because you haven't taken a bath. Just wash your hands and go and sit and pray wholeheartedly. The idea is simplicity of conduct should not become a burden on our minds, taking away all our time and energies.

This also applies to our inner meditative life. Supposing we make a rule, that we should not think ill of any person. Maybe one day we are sitting for meditation, and some bad thoughts come about others. So, what do we do if we are snobbish? We go on blaming ourselves over and over and over again. This is an obstruction to meditative life. What we should really do is, take notice of the thought, and say: "This thought should not have come", and continue our medita-

tion. That is the way to progress in concentration.

If, the conditions we discussed in the morning are fulfilled, then we are in a fit condition to enter into meditative life. When we are fit and ready, a teacher comes, invariably, to guide us; he points out the appropriate path, and sets us in that direction. From then onwards we have to struggle to progress in spiritual life.

Levels Of Consciousness

Now, how do we know that we are making progress in spiritual life? As I told you in the morning, it is not mere concentration that indicates our spiritual progress. The real test is, whether we are reaching the higher levels of consciousness.

What are these higher levels of consciousness?

Our scriptures divide the human personality into five categories: it is like a man who has a five-storied house. Spiritual progress is like going from the lower floor, progressively, to higher and higher floors. In the Tantric lore these are called *chakras*, and in Vedantic lore they are called *Panchakoshas* (five sheaths).

The lowest of these sheaths (*kosha* means a sheath, or a covering) is called *Annamayakosha* or the *Food-sheath*. As long as we are identified with this body, as long as our consciousness is confined to this lower level of food-sheath, all our desires, expectations, hopes, are always in terms of the bodily desires only.

By observing the thoughts, the desires that come into our mind, we can understand whether we are at this level or not. Even if God comes to us and tells us, “You can ask any boon, I am ready to give it to you”, we cannot ask for anything that

does not pertain to our body.

The next higher *kosha*, is what we call the *Vital-sheath*, made up of *prana*.

When a person's consciousness ascends to the second level, which is the vital-sheath, then his vision of the world is changed into a vital world. At that time, the differentiation of sex, caste, and “this is a human life”, “this is an animal life”, falls down. And a *great* sympathy extends to the *entire* living world.

At this stage one also develops great psychic powers, like traveling in the sky, becoming small, becoming big. In the yogic lore these are called “*ashtasiddhis*” (eight attainments). Anybody who has a little control over this vital power, develops great capabilities such as healing etc.

Besides the psychic powers, he can develop the power of hypnotising others, attracting other people, becoming a great leader etc. And sometimes, you see, we are so credulous that, if we find somebody displaying some miraculous powers, instantly we consider he has reached the peak of spiritual perfection and we fall into the delusion of worshipping him as God. The only test by which we can know whether a person is spiritual or not, is not his powers, but his conduct. If he is pure, if he is unselfish and if he has no worldly desires, then he is a spiritual person.

This is one test but, more than that, the other test is: such a person always directs everyone that comes to him only towards God and to nothing else. Anybody who talks about anything other than God, is not a spiritual person, however great he may appear.

Higher than the Vital-sheath is, the *Mental-sheath*. Anyone

who has reached the mental-sheath lives in the world of ideas. But even then, they could be only worldly ideas.

Higher than this mental-sheath, there is a sheath called the *Intellect-sheath*. Anybody who lives a great moral life or a life of principles, lives in that sheath. This intellect-sheath, has nothing to do with what we call the intellect. This intellectual-sheath is more closely allied to what we call the creative sheath, the creative level. It is from this level that great discoverers like Einstein, great artists, and great poets, derive their inspirations. Even though these people are deriving these wonderful ideas from this sheath of intellect, they need not be considered as spiritual. Because of their intense concentration, and because of their training and a particular faculty—maybe aesthetics, maybe science, as it were, at times, they suddenly get a glimpse of this intellectual sheath, and derive their enlightened ideas from there.

That is the reason why, these great people, who we think received their extraordinary ideas from this sheath, appear to be profoundly unhappy in this world. Sometimes, they commit even suicide, or go mad. That is where perfection and moral life comes into its power. Those who practice moral virtues and have a spiritual ideal and practice meditative life, only they reach this sheath of intellect, and live in a higher spiritual world. For others, it is just an accidental glimpse, and after some time they fall down again. Any talented man, however great he may be, cannot go beyond the sheath of intellect.

But, a spiritual person can go beyond the sheath of intellect into a higher sheath which is called the *Sheath of Bliss*. Even though it is called a sheath of bliss—and it is called the sheath of bliss because it is like a very thin glass case where

the light of the Divine percolates unobstructedly—still it is considered as a covering. What I mean is, even if a person reaches that sheath of bliss, he is still in bondage, because the light of the Divine is above all these sheaths. But if any person persists, through prayer and self-surrender to God, to go beyond this sheath, he breaks this last barrier and becomes one with the Divine, and that is the state of eternity and perfection.

Test Of Spiritual Progress

So, the way to understand whether we are progressing spiritually or not, is by identifying ourselves with successively higher states of consciousness. When a person reaches these higher states, his self-identity, or his self-image is totally identified with that particular sheath. Hence his behaviour also automatically changes accordingly. It becomes natural for him to behave in accordance with that particular identity. This is one way to understand whether we are progressing in the spiritual life or not.

Otherwise, from outside, there is no way of knowing whether a person is spiritual or not. Sometimes we make the mistake of giving out our judgment so easily. We see somebody who is very good, very loving, very meditative, and we think, “This is a Saint”. We can make mistakes. Only we can know whether we are spiritual or not. Each one of us has to find it out for himself.

Because we can sometimes think we are spiritual, while not being spiritual, one sure test for this is: anybody who is spiritual can never commit anything wrong. But, anybody who doesn't commit anything wrong, may not be necessarily spiritual. A moral man, who never does anything wrong, may not be spiritual. But a spiritual man will never do anything

that can do any harm or any wrong to other people.

So, it is only the spiritual teacher, and one's own experience which can confirm the spiritual progress. This is the reason why, our scriptures state that the following three things are considered necessary to confirm one's spiritual progress: (1) the teachings of the scriptures, (2) the teacher's (one's spiritual teacher's) experience, and (3) one's own experience. This is also the reason why teachers and scriptures are so very necessary .

If we are sincere and really eager to realise the spiritual goal, then, invariably, God sends a spiritual teacher wherever we are. Have no doubt about that. It is upto us to ask ourselves whether we are genuine seekers or not.

And anybody who is really sincere is sure to reach the goal. This is the evidence of all past Saints and Mystics, and we can bear witness to this fact in our own lives.

I tried to discuss according to my understanding what conditions are necessary for a good and fruitful meditative life. I have not indicated a single practice of how to do actual meditation, because, if we are sincere, the path will be shown to each one of us at the right time.

However, does it mean we should not sit and try to meditate? No.

Vipassana Meditation

What we can do, is to start practising right now with the little we know. And, in the course of time, this practice of meditation will help us develop those conditions necessary for true meditation. And one of the most important things in this preparation, is to become more self-conscious. Most of

the time we do things so unconsciously. We talk unconsciously, we breathe unconsciously, we read unconsciously, we listen unconsciously, we eat unconsciously, it seems 99% of the time our mind is not on what we are doing at any given moment. So, one big way of reversing this process, is to develop the faculty of being AWARE of whatever we are doing.

In this respect, the Buddhistic meditation called VIPASANA is very practical and highly useful to us.

I shall try to tell briefly what it is.

The easiest way to start this process of meditation is, set aside mornings and evenings at least 15 minutes of time. Sit in an undisturbed place, just *relax for a few minutes* without doing anything. And when I say, “without doing anything”, I mean without doing anything, and by that I mean keeping first of all the physical body calm, quiet and unmoving. And by that also I mean not to go on looking at our fingers, or scratching etc. All these are expressions of restlessness.

Just go on watching the body, see that it is completely relaxed, calm, quiet, tranquil, unmoving, just for 2 or 3 minutes.

Then, try to *focus the attention on various parts of the body*. Through our mind let us be aware: “Here is my left hand, here is my right hand, here is my right leg, here is my left leg, here is my back, here is my head, etc.” Go through every single part of your body with your mind, and try to be aware of its state. Is it relaxed or is it tensed? How is it? If it is in a state of tension, try to relax it.

This is a very relaxing, restful type of meditation. If you can do it morning and evening for 2 or 3 minutes you will un-

derstand how much tension we are creating to the physical body without our knowledge. And, if you succeed in relaxing, a great energy is released both in the body and in the mind.

And I can tell you also how to have a nice sleep. Usually we are accustomed to just lie down on the bed and try to sleep. Most of the time we fall asleep by habit. But there is a way, if you practice, by which you can have a very restful deep sleep.

Lie down on the bed and don't try to listen to any music at that time. Falling asleep while listening to music can be a great obstruction to a real good sleep. If you want to listen to music do it before lying down, in a sitting posture and with full consciousness. So, lie down, and spread out the legs and the hands. Don't go on twisting them like this; you know, some people twist and turn and creating tension. Just release the limbs, feel separate from them and slowly, relax, limb by limb. Just try it, starting from the head, "My head is relaxed, my eyes are relaxed, my back is relaxed, my hands are relaxed, my legs are relaxed". Go through this process four, five, six—as many times as necessary. You will see that at some point of time, you will consciously fall asleep; and the sleep which you then get is a real restful sleep. Of course I do assume that you don't have too many worries in the mind. That is a precondition. So, this is one way of falling asleep nicely; you'll get up rested and fresh, which again helps in your meditation.

Now, coming back to the VIPASSANA meditation. Sit down without doing anything, then, slowly relax all the limbs of the body and, after that, try to observe the breath. Don't control it. Don't prolong it or shorten it, let it flow naturally. And one good test of concentration here would be, try to

count from 1 to 10 at each breath. But see that no other thought comes, only the thought of observing the breath. When you have succeeded in counting from 1 to 10 without any interfering thought, then count up to 20, then make it 30, then make it 40, then make it 50. You don't need to go further than that.

Next, instead of simply observing the breath, try to think it is not the air which is going out and coming in, but it is OM which is going out and OM which is coming in. This is a very good meditational exercise because, the OMkara is one of the most wonderful *mantras* that has ever been discovered by the ancient Rishis (Seers).

If this doesn't appeal to you, you can have another variation on this theme. You can imagine that there is lot of impurity inside the mind and there is lot of purity and the light of God outside. When you are breathing out, think: “My hatred, my anger, my grief, my lust etc., are going out, and I am breathing in peace, devotion, love, strength”.

Another variation on this same meditation: if you have been initiated into any *mantra* by any guru, you can link the *mantra* with the breath. You breathe out the *mantra*, you breathe in the *mantra*. This is a wonderful way of attaining calmness, quietness.

Now, this is only the beginning of the VIPASSANA meditation. The idea of Vipassana meditation is to slowly develop awareness of whatever you are doing, to slowly conquer the unconscious habit of doing things. And this also helps to clear the mind from undesirable thoughts. Because, if there is some obsessive thought, by becoming aware of it, its power is cut into half. When you have, to some extent, become successful in this process, you must direct your attention to the

mind. Try to witness what thoughts are rising in the mind. If you succeed in doing this, you have two benefits. First you know what is going on in your own mind, and secondly you get a clear idea of your own nature.

This is a simple technique of VIPASSANA. It can be done by anyone, at any time. It can even be done by someone who does not believe in God. And, after that, if you still persist, a teacher will come and guide you in your own appropriate path. From that time onwards, you are alone with your own guru, and you travel with him to God.

I think certain things have been indicated to you according to my knowledge. Now it is up to you.

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