

6. Students and *Saadhana*

THE power of the Spirit is indescribable. It is limitless. It can raise man from animality to Divinity. All knowledge which one acquires is of no use if it is not put into practice. It is like a lamp in the hand of a blind man.

The sage Naaradha, who was a master of the sixty-four sciences and arts, unable to achieve peace of mind, went to the sage Sanathkumaara to learn about the means of securing tranquillity. Sanathkumaara asked him whether he had tried to find out the truth about himself. Naaradha confessed that was the one thing he had not learnt. Sanathkumaara then told him that this ignorance was the cause of his lack of mental peace.

Today, from the time one wakes up, one is keen to know all about what is happening in the U S., Russia, Punjab and Delhi. The person who is so concerned about the news from everywhere, is not aware of the nuisance arising from within himself. It is only the person who has transformed himself that can reform others.

The ancient *Yoga Shaasthras* (spiritual sciences of divine communion) of Bhaarath have indicated different methods of self realisation. The awakening of the sleeping *Kundalini Shakthi* is one of them. The *Kundalini Shakthi* (dormant spiritual energy in man) is aroused by the process of breath control and is gradually led up to the top where it merges with the *Sahasraara* (the thousand-petalled lotus seated in the brain).

Meditation is wrongly equated with concentration

The vital force that is in man is also known as consciousness. To merge this consciousness in the Universal Consciousness has been described as Liberation in *Vedhaantha* (the concluding essence of *Vedhas*). Today various types of meditation are being promoted in India and outside. Many persons wrongly equate *dhyaana* (meditation) with *ekaagratha* (concentration). There is no relationship between the two. Concentration is a routine everyday phenomenon in life in any form of human activity--reading, walking, or eating. Where is the need to waste one's time on achieving something which comes naturally? What we should find out is how this concentration comes about.

Here is a book in one's hand. We see this book with our eyes. The moment we see it, we are able to read the letters. As soon as the letters are read, the intellect tries to understand the meaning and ruminates on it in the memory. The hand holding the book is a limb of the body. The eyes that see it are a sense organ. The intellect that understands and the memory that taminates are equally sense organs. It is the coordinated action of all the organs that enables us to examine any subject. Concentration thus takes place at the lower level of the sense organs.

Meditation is a process that takes place beyond the senses. Between the concentration at the sensory level and meditation that is above the senses there is a border line where *chinthana* (contemplation) takes place. Contemplation is the second half of *chith* (intelligence), whose other function is discrimination between right and wrong.

Example of rose and the thorns

An illustration will make this clear. There is a rose plant, with branches, leaves, flowers and thorns. Locating the place where there is a flower calls for concentration. At this stage, we are concerned only with locating the flower. But the flower has to be plucked without touching the thorns. Love is the flower. Lust is the thorn. There is no rose without a thorn. How to get at the

flower of Love without touching the thorn of lust is the problem. This is where contemplation is needed. Having plucked the flower, how shall we use it? By offering it to the Divine.

Meditation means offering the flower of Love to the Divine. In the rose plant of our body, there is the rose of pure and sacred Love emitting the fragrance of good qualities. Below the rose, however, there are thorns in the form of sensual desires. The purpose of meditation is to separate the rose of selfless Love from the senses and offer it to the Lord.

Dhyaana (meditation) has been accorded a pre-eminent place in Bhaarath from ancient times. Nowadays people sit for meditation, considering it as a kind of pill which is taken when one has a headache or some other pain. Meditation is not such a simple affair. In the hoary past, sages like Sanathkumaara, Naaradha and Thumburu engaged themselves in meditation as a means of awakening the *Kundalini Shakthi* and leading it up to the *Sahasraara*. Now, meditation should be practised as a means of cultivating pure, selfless love, renouncing all attachments to worldly things.

Do's and Dont's of meditation

Even in sitting for meditation, certain rules have to be observed. The first requisite is to sit in the *Padhmaasana*, lotus posture. While seated in this asana (posture), care must be taken to keep the spine straight and steady, without bending this way or that. Some persons bend their necks during meditation. This is very harmful, as the arresting of the rising *Kundalini Shakthi* at the throat, where some subtle *naadis* (arteries) operate, may endanger the entire physical system. Many have suffered mental derangement on account of misdirection of the *Kundalini Shakthi*. During meditation one should not bend backwards. That is also harmful. The cloth one wears during meditation should be tied loosely so that there is no pressure on the waist. The eyes have to be concentrated on the tip of the nose. If the eyes are open, they are likely to turn in different directions and one's attention is likely to get distracted. The eyes should be half open. If they are fully closed, one may be overcome by sleep.

Before sitting for meditation, the mind should be freed from bad thoughts and filled with sacred thoughts. This calls for control over all the sense organs. The ears should be trained to listen only to matters relating to the Divine and to eschew evil gossip. The eyes should be told to see God. The mind should be restrained from restlessness by making it concentrate on the breathing process and relating inhalation and exhalation to the repetition of the *manthra*, "So-Ham," "So Ham" ("I am He"). By this process, the life-breath is controlled. This reveals the great power of *Yoga*. There is no need to undertake a separate exercise for awakening the *Kundalini Shakthi*. The process of breath control itself will achieve this purpose.

Three stages of meditation upon a Form

Some persons use a *Jyothi* (lamp) as a basis for meditation. The lamp reveals the oneness that is the basis of the Unity or the Divine as well as the multiplicity that reflects the manifestations of the Divine. In this method, the experience of bliss does not come quickly. There are three stages in this type of meditation: *uuha* (imagining the Form), *bhaava* (experiencing the Form) and *saakshaathkaara* (seeing It as a Reality). For instance, if one wishes to meditate upon Baba, he first tries to imagine with the closed eyes the figure of Baba as seen by him earlier. This figure vanishes within a few moments. In experiencing the figure, the process is longer and the impression also lasts longer. In this process, one starts envisaging the figure from head to foot and from the feet upwards. Gradually, by this process the picture of Baba gets firmly implanted

and becomes an inner reality. While the imagining process gives only a momentary glimpse, the experiencing method leads to the complete identification of the seeker with the Divine Form. Awareness of the Divine results in oneness with the Divine (*Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi*).

When we are experiencing the Divine Form, what is happening to our mind? The mind experiences every part of the Lord from head to foot and ultimately becomes one with the Form. It is the process of identification of the mind with the Divine form that constitutes true meditation. Meditation is not merging the Form in the mind. It is merging the mind in the Form so that the mind as such does not exist.

Conserve energy by all possible means

While sitting for meditation in a group, one should not be in contact with anyone else. This is highly important. Meditation is like the process of electrifying a wire. If a live wire comes in contact with something, it will produce a shock. During meditation, spiritual energy is generated. How is this energy lost? It is lost through finger nails and the hairs on one's body. This was the reason why the ancient *yogis* (spiritually advanced persons) allowed their nails and hairs to grow freely. Spiritual energy has to be conserved by all possible means. The *rishis* (saints) practised silence to conserve the energy lost through speech.

Do not develop too close relationship with one another. Such close relationship results in intimate friendship which produces mutual obligations and expectations. From these arise the sense of ego. When expectations are not fulfilled, resentment emerges.. When they are realised, the ego gets inflated. Either way, the consequences of entertaining desires are undesirable. When resentment grows, the discriminating power is weakened. One loses control over his tongue and indulges in all kinds of abuse. Abuse leads to sinful conduct. The whole process is generated by excessive association with one another.

Young persons tend to let their minds wander hither and thither. They should concentrate on their studies and should not give their minds a free rein. They should reduce their worldly concerns and devote some time to meditation every morning and evening. This will help to purify their minds and set them on the road to Divinity like the river losing itself in the ocean, the mind must merge in the Divine. Then there will be no mind at all. That blissful state can be realised only through the path of Love. Love is God. Live in Love. Realisation of the power of Love is the true aim of meditation. That Love is utterly selfless and is dedicated to the Divine.

Methods of meditation are many, but goal is one

In the practice of meditation, it should be realised that all cannot follow the same pattern or method. It varies according to the evolution and circumstances of each individual and his or her capacity and earnestness. Some worship the Supreme as the Universal Mother. Some look upon the Almighty as Father. Some regard God as the Supreme Friend. Some devotees approach the Divine as the Beloved or the Master. Jayadheva, Gauranga and Raamakrishna Paramahansa belonged to the last mentioned category. They did not practise meditation. They felt the presence of God everywhere. Where could they go for meditation? Such was their experience. To the true *saadhaka* evidence of the omnipresence of God can be found everywhere. By merely closing one's eyes, one does not engage in meditation. One must feel one's unity with God in one's inner being.

Prayer is for the mind what food is for the body. Just as wholesome food gives health and strength to the body, prayer purifies the mind and strengthens the spirit. If *bhajans* (devotional

songs) are done in an ostentatious manner, the ego gets bloated. Young people must proceed from thamas (the darkness of ignorance) to thapas (spiritual penance). They must be steadfast in pursuing whatever they take up. There is no meaning in doing meditation for two days and giving it up on the third day. Meditation must become an integral part of one's life. Along with it, all the knowledge and skills required for one's profession or vocation should be acquired.

Being in Swaami's college and residing in Swaami's hostel you are all regarded as exemplary students and respected as such. But you will not win that respect unless, when you go out into the outside world, you maintain the same discipline and strength of character wherever you may be and preserve the sacred atmosphere and sublimity associated with Sathya Sai Institutions.

Discourse to students of Sathya Sai Institute Hostel,

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 11 March 1984

God is no partial benefactor; He gives the fruit from every tree, according to the seed. You have planted the sour mango, hoping to use the fruit for pickles; then, why lament that the fruit is not sweet to the tongue? Do good and aspire to get the fruit of goodness--that is pardonable. It is not as bad as doing bad and blaming God that He has given you the need for evil deeds.

Sri Sathya Sai