

## Chapter II. Chanting God's Name and Meditation

Spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*) all over the world will naturally be engaged in repetition of the name (*japa*) and meditation, but first one has to be clear about the purpose of repeating the name and meditation. Without this knowledge, people believe them to be related to the objective world, capable of satisfying worldly desires, and hope to demonstrate their value by means of sensory gains! This is a grave error.

Repetition of God's name and meditation are for acquiring one-pointed attention on the Lord, for casting off sensory attachments, and for attaining the joy derived from the basis of all sensory objects. The mind should not be wandering in all directions, indiscriminately, like the fly. The fly dwells in the sweetmeat shop and runs after the rubbish carts; the fly that has such a mind has to be taught to understand the sweetness of the first place and the impurity of the second place, so that it may not desert the sweetmeat shop and pursue the rubbish cart. When such teaching is imparted to the mind, it is called meditation!

Look at the other type, the bee! It has contact only with sweetness; it approaches only flowers that possess nectar; it is not attracted to other places; it does not proceed there at all. Similarly, one has to give up all inclinations toward sensory attraction, toward the rubbish cart of the untrue and the impermanent. As far as possible, one has to direct the mind to all holy things, which yield sweetness and the joy associated with the Lord. To attain these, time is needed, of course. How long that time will be depends on the activities of thought, word, and deed as well as on the motives that impel those actions.

### Gauge meditation by its inner impact

The main things to be considered are not at what expense one has prayed to the Lord, nor the number of years one has been engaged in it, nor the rules and regulations one has followed, nor even the number of times one has prayed over. The main considerations are: with what mind one has prayed, with what degree of patience one has been awaiting the result, and with what single-mindedness one has craved Godly bliss, regardless of worldly happiness and delay, with no lassitude and with constant attention to oneself, one's meditation, and one's task.

If one examines deeply the success in getting rid of all idea of self, one can oneself gauge the progress made. Instead, if one is engaged in counting the rules and adding up the time spent and the expense incurred, such meditation can belong only to the objective world; it can never come into the subjective and spiritual fields.

Repetition of God's name and meditation (*japa* and *dhyana*) should never be judged on mere external standards; they are to be judged by their inner effects. Their essence is their relationship to the *Atma*. The immortal *Atmic* experience should never be mixed up with low activities of the temporal world. Such activities deserve to be avoided. If room is given for them, and if one sways between impatience and sloth, and if one always worries oneself, feeling, "Why has it not come yet? Why is it still far away?" Then it all becomes simply repeating the name and meditation done with intent to gain, with an eye on the fruit thereof.

The single fruit of repetition of divine names and meditation is this: the conversion of the out-faced into the in-faced; the turning inward of one's eye, the inward eye seeing the reality of *Atmic* bliss. For this transformation, one has to be always active and hopeful, regardless of the time taken and the difficulties encountered. One should not count the cost, the time, or the trouble. One should await the descent of the Lord's grace. This patient waiting

is itself part of the austerity (*tapas*) of meditation. Sticking unflinchingly to the vow is the austerity.

### **The three paths of meditation**

There are three ways by which aspirants try to enter the path of meditation: the path of truth (*sathwika-marga*), the path of passion and emotion (*rajasika-marga*) and the path of ignorance (*thamasika-marga*).

**The pure, serene (*sathwic*) path.** On this path, one considers repetition of the name and meditation as a duty and suffers any amount of trouble for its sake; one is fully convinced that all this is just an illusion, so one does only good under all conditions and at all times. One desires only the good of all and is always loving toward all; one spends time uninterruptedly in the remembrance and meditation of the Lord. One does not crave even the fruit of repeating the name and meditation; one leaves it all to the Lord.

**The passionate, restless (*rajasic*) path.** Here, one craves the fruit of one's act at every step. If the fruit is not available, then, gradually, laxity and disgust overpower the spiritual aspirant and repetition of the name and meditation slowly dry up.

**The ignorant (*thamasic*) path.** This path is even worse. The Lord will come into the memory only in times of danger or acute suffering or when one is the victim of loss or pain. At such times, such a person prays and vows to arrange this worship (*puja*), offer this particular food, or build this kind of temple to the Lord. One will be calculating the quantity of food placed before the Lord, the tribute offered at His feet, the number of prostrations performed, and the number of times the shrine was circled—and ask for proportionate awards! For those who adopt this attitude in meditation, the mind and intellect can never be pure.

Most people now follow only the passionate, restless (*rajasic*) and dull, ignorant (*thamasic*) paths in repeating the divine name and meditation. However, the very intention of repeating the divine name and meditation is to purify the mind and the intellect. In order to achieve this, the first path is best: pure, serene (*sathwic*) meditation. When the mind and the intellect become pure, they will shine with the splendour of the understanding of the *Atma*. He in whom this understanding shines fully is called a sage (*rishi*).

The knower of *Atma* becomes the *Atma* itself (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi*). The goal of life, that which makes life worthwhile, is the understanding of the *Atma* or, in other words, the basis of the individual soul (*jiva*).

### **The need for bodily and mental training**

There is a close mutual relationship between the attitudes of the body and the attitudes of the mind. So, people's inner feelings will be evident from their physical bodies. The stance and the appearance of the body help us to discover these feelings. Take one example. With the loins girded, the sleeves of the shirt rolled, and the palms rounded into fists, it is not possible to exhibit love or devotion. With bent knees, the eyes half-closed, and the hands raised up over the head with the palms joined, is it possible to show one's anger or hatred or cruelty? That is why the ancient sages used to tell the spiritual aspirant that it is necessary during prayer and meditation to adopt the appropriate bodily pose. They saw that it is possible to control the waywardness of the mind by this means.

Of course, for the expert spiritual aspirant, meditation is easy in any pose; but for the novice, such physical means are essential. This bodily and mental training must be undergone only to be later discarded as but a means to attain the true and eternal *Atma*. Until this is realised, spiritual discipline has to be consistently practised.

Until the goal of meditation is achieved, the well-established discipline of sitting postures (*asanas*) has to be followed. The curriculum has to be adhered to till then. After attainment of the goal—that is, after the mind (*manas*) and the intellect (*buddhi*) have been conquered and brought under control—one can be immersed in meditation wherever one finds oneself: on the bed, in the chair, on a rock, or in a cart.

Once you learn to ride a motorcycle, you can ride on any road and under all conditions. But when you are just learning to ride, for your own safety and for the safety of those around you, you have to select an open parade ground. And you have to follow certain principles of balance; this is essential. So too, those who engage in meditational practice (*sadhana*) have to follow a certain course of training. No change can be made in this. So, the passionate, restless (*rajasic*) and the dull, ignorant (*thamasic*) forms can never be considered meditation. If the spiritual practice becomes fully pure and serene (*sathwic*), that is best.

To describe anything in words is difficult; it might even cause boredom. But to demonstrate it by deed is easier and more pleasant! To make people understand by doing meditation is better than by talking about it! My writing on it and your reading it will not make it easy.

Through meditation, people reach the divine experience of realising the *Atma* within themselves. Through meditation, spiritual aspirants are able to cast off sheaths of ignorance, layer after layer. They withdraw their sense perceptions from contact with worldly objective experiences. The process that aims at this holy consummation deserves to be called meditation.

For this process, one must be equipped with good habits, discipline, and high ideals. One must be full of renunciation toward worldly things and their attractions. Whatever the situation, one should conduct oneself with enthusiasm and joy. Whatever is done must be dedicated not for the eking out of a livelihood but for earning *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*). One should train oneself to adopt a good sitting pose (*asana*), to avoid tension of the body, and to ease the mind from the weight and pressure of the body. This is what deserves to be called pure meditational practice (*sathwika dhyana sadhana*). Discipline is very necessary for this.

### **Everyone has the right to spiritual success**

The troubles and tribulations that come in the wake of an attempt to destroy the undesirable activities of the mind will disappear through the strict course and rules described above. What remains is only putting them into actual practice by the spiritual aspirant. Even the most powerful drug cannot effect a cure when it is brought to the bedside of the patient. The sufferer has to take it in, little by little, as per schedule, with all the attendant care, and try to assimilate it into the system. The healing principle of the drug must pervade the entire body; the body must be suffused with the drug. Similarly, the authoritative texts (*siddhanthas*) and the *Vedanta* have no power to destroy individual faults and 15 weaknesses.

If full results are wanted, then one must give up all false and low feelings and act according to the true teachings of the *Vedanta* and the *siddhanthas*. If one does, one will attain the fruit. The secret of success in meditation lies in the purity of the inner life of the spiritual aspirant. The success is proportionate to the importance the spiritual aspirant gives to right conduct (*san-marga*).

Everyone has the right to achieve this high degree of success. I do not say this in just a quiet tone; I declare this loud enough for all quarters to hear. Knowing this, meditate and advance! Do meditation and progress! Realise the *Atma*!