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The Practice Of Meditation

*Man's life is like a bug-infested cot,
His body is a den of diseases.
How then can joy be his?*

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

In our daily lives, we see that the same object assumes different forms and names. The same seed develops into the trunk, the branches, the twigs, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits of a tree with distinct forms and names and displaying different qualities. Similarly, the same gold takes the form of various jewels and one flame brings into being an infinite number of flames of several hues. In the very same manner, the Primal Light of *Paramatma* is one, but it manifests itself as the *Atma* in all beings of the universe. It is essential that we discern this unity in diversity.

Clay is moulded into a pot and gold is shaped into a jewel. A lump of clay cannot become a pot without the help of a potter. Neither can a piece of gold be transformed into a jewel without a goldsmith. Similarly, to make a train run there should be a driver; and for the automatic traffic lights to operate, there has to be a controlling device. So also, for this vast, complex and intricate universe, there should be someone who has created it and has been controlling it.

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego are the primal substances out of which the universe is made. Mud or clay is the basic substance out of which the pot is made and is, therefore, the material cause for the pot. The potter without whose *sankalpa* (thought) and involvement the pot cannot arise, is its efficient cause. Similarly; *prakruthi* is the material cause for the universe and *Brahman* is its efficient cause. It is the Will of *Brahman* that has created the myriad facets of this dynamic universe with its multifarious forms and innumerable objects. Yet, we must remember that it is *Brahman* that has manifested itself in all this infinitude. Krishna exhorted Arjuna to ignore the diversity in unity and discern the unity in diversity. We have to comprehend the non-dual *Atmic* nature of this world of multiplicity.

Dhyana enables man to cognise this unity and discern both the Immanence and the Transcendence of *Brahman*. For meditation to be most effective, it should

be performed at a fixed time and at a fixed place every day, and according to a well-regulated procedure. Sometimes this routine may be upset, as, for example, when you have to go on a journey—it may not be possible to perform meditation at the usual place or according to the normal procedure. Nevertheless, one must ensure that at the usual appointed hour every day, the meditation is performed steadfastly. If the meditation is done at the correct time every day, the mind will take the subtle body to the usual environs and make the individual go through the prescribed regulations inwardly, thereby cutting away any possible feelings of alienation that could crop up at new places.

The ideal time for engaging oneself in meditation is *Brahma Muhurtham*, that is, the period commencing at 3 a.m. and ending with 6 a.m. early in the morning. *Brahma Muhurtham* literally means the time of *Brahman*. You must choose a fixed time for meditation during the *Brahma Muhurtham* and meditate regularly at the same time every day.

Adopting a comfortable posture, you have to sit straight so that the *kundalini* power is afforded unhampered movement. The *kundalini* power is present in man in the *mooladhara chakra* as a divinely radiant power. Its upward flow to the *sahasrara chakra* or the thousand-petalled lotus, through the intermediary centres called the *swadhishtana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *visuddha*, and *ajna chakras* corresponding respectively

to the regions of the navel, stomach, heart, larynx, and the *bhrumadhya sthana* or the region between the eyebrows, takes man to various levels of consciousness and spiritual awakening.

During meditation, the *sadhaka* should neither shut his eyes completely nor open them wide. He should gaze at the tip of his nose with half-closed eyes and concentrate on the divine radiant power at the *Ajna chakra*. In this blissful mood, he has to keep his hands in the *chinmudra*, with the thumb and index finger joined at their ends and the other three fingers of both the hands kept apart. The thumb represents *Brahman*. The forefinger represents the *jiva*. *chinmudra* is symbolic of the proximity of *Brahman* and the *jiva*. The *jiva* in combination with its *gunas* is conditioned by time. God, however, is beyond time and, therefore, all *gunas* vanish when the *jiva* and God become one.

The purpose of *dhyana* is to unite the *jiva* with *Easwara*. The essence of *triputi* is the integral, unitive reality of *jiva* (man), *Easwara* (God) and *lrakruthi* (world). The divinity of the individual and the unity in diversity can be visualised by adopting the *chinmudra* during meditation.

This blissful experience can also be gained by renouncing the desire for the fruits of *karma*. *Nishkama karma* creates a special bond of love between the Creator and the *jiva*. Let us suppose that we have engaged a coolie in our garden. He works perfunctorily from

morning to evening, collects his wages and goes away. He never really worries himself about the garden. At the same time, a housewife toils throughout the day and though she is not paid anything, she performs her duties with selfless devotion expecting nothing from her husband. The coolie can never be dear to the master of the house as the housewife is. So, too, one who performs action without desire for its results is alone dear to God.

The body is born for the performance of *karma*. *Kala* (time) should be spent by man in the performance of sacred acts. Time is divine, God is extolled as “*Kala Swarupaya namaha*.” Therefore, we must utilise time for performing good *karma* without aspiring for the fruits thereof. The renunciation, however, must be total, not merely superficial.

There was a gentleman who had renounced everything and became an ascetic. Once as he sat in meditation on the banks of the river Ganges, a tourist bus came to halt there. The ascetic heard the tourists speaking in Kannada. He at once stopped his meditation and went towards them. “Where do you come from?” he asked them. They replied, “We come from Karnataka.” The man felt very happy because Karnataka was the state from which he hailed. He became very fond of the tourists because they came from his own state and spoke his own language. He felt so glad that he made further enquiries. He came to know that they had come from his own district, his own *talug*, his own

village, and even his own street. They were, in fact, his neighbours! He was swept by a wave of attachment and he enquired about his father. He was informed that his father had died a few years earlier. Hearing this, the ascetic, who thought that he had renounced all attachments, broke down with grief. All his asceticism was useless. *Dhyana* is of no avail if attachment to body and kith and kin continues to linger. The physical body has to be dedicated to the performance of *nishkama karma* for the benefit of others.

You have to try and experience in meditation the oneness of the *Sarvatma* (cosmic soul) and the *ekatma* (individual soul). *Ekagrata* (one-pointedness) for a single moment does not amount to *dhyana* (meditation). Meditation is sustained concentration and identification with the *dhyeya* (the object of meditation). If you give food to a dog continuously for ten days at a particular time, it will come regularly and punctually every day thereafter. A dog’s loyalty is well known. Faith is very important. In fact, *viswasa* (faith) is like our *swasa* (life-breath). In other words, faith is our *elan vital*. Life without faith is living death.

In the beginning, meditation may be easy and interesting. The first few steps will be encouraging. But when you begin to ascend the higher steps of the stairway of *dhyana*, unforeseen obstacles will crop up. However, one should not get disheartened by these unexpected hurdles. They must be taken in their stride

with courage and conviction. A person should not undertake the *sadhana* of *dhyana* without the strong will to do so.

For the weak-minded persons there is an easier alternative, that of *nishkama karma*. They have to sow the seeds of love in their hearts. They must radiate *prema* (divine, selfless love) and compassion. Pure love promotes peace and harmony among human beings. Selfless love puts jealousy and malice to flight. When the heart is filled with love, there will be no room for hatred. When love is directed towards God it is spiritualized and sublimated into devotion. Man's heart is like a "musical chair" on which only one can sit. Allow *prema* to occupy this chair and meditate on God.