

Chapter III. The Goal of Meditation

Living is either pleasant or unpleasant, depending upon one's basic attitude toward life. See how the same object becomes pleasant once and unpleasant on another occasion! The thing welcomed with great fondness at one time becomes hateful at another time and there is not even the desire to see it. The condition of the mind at those times is the cause of this state. Therefore, it is necessary to train the mind to be always pleasant.

Control the temper of the mind

The waters of a river leap from mountains, fall into valleys, and rush through gorges; tributaries join at various stages, and the waters become turbid and unclean. So too, in the flood of human life, speed and power increase and decrease. These ups and downs might happen at any moment during life. No one can escape them. They may come at the beginning of life, at the end, or perhaps in the middle. So, one has to convince oneself firmly that life is necessarily full of ups and downs and that, far from being afraid and worried over them, one should welcome them as adding to one's experience. One should not only feel like this, but one should be happy and glad whatever happens! Then, all troubles, whatever their nature, will pass away lightly and quickly. For this, the temper of the mind is essential.

Concentration and one-pointedness are the keys

Every minute, from inside and outside, promptings and temptations arise and accumulate in people. One cannot attend to all of them at the same time, so one fixes attention on only the most important one. This is called concentration (*avadhana*). Concentration is needed to grasp any subject well. Purposefully directing attention on a subject and fixing it there is one-pointedness (*ekagratha*). This is also a condition of the mind. Concentration and one-pointedness help to focus effort on any selected task.

Concentration is essential for all. It is the foundation of all successful endeavour. It is needed not only for meditation but even for worldly affairs and ordinary living. Whatever the task one is engaged in, doing it with concentration will develop both self-confidence and self-respect, for they are the result of the attitude of one's own mind. The mind may lean on either the bad or the good, and concentrated attention must be employed to keep the mind attached only to good prompting. Success or failure in the good task depends upon one-pointedness.

One-pointedness will increase power and skill. But it cannot be won without conquering the worldly cravings that distract the mind. This one-pointedness, this conquest of the mind, is acquired by the exercise of meditation.

Yearn for the right thing!

There are two types of people: one set on accusing themselves as sinners and the other flattering themselves as great. Both types are being worried by their own mental aberrations! What they both need is mental satisfaction, and this can be obtained by meditation. Through meditation, understanding will increase and wisdom will grow.

For this, a person should develop interest in and a taste for meditation—that is to say, a yearning that admits of no other step and that will not tolerate any obstacle. Of course, one may yearn to hear music and derive joy

therefrom, or see the bodies of near relatives who have died and derive sorrow therefrom! Yearning may thus have pleasant or even unpleasant consequences! Yearning must have the strength to inspire endeavour. In fact, yearning is but dormant endeavour, and endeavour is yearning in action. When yearning is weak, endeavour declines; when one is strong, the other is also active.

Meditation gives concentration and success in all tasks. Through meditation alone, great personages and sages (*rishis*) have controlled their mental activities, directed them toward the pure (*sathwic*) path, established themselves at all times in contemplation of the Lord, and finally succeeded in achieving union with the Godhead. First, yearning, then selection of the goal, then concentration, and, through the discipline, conquest of the mind—that is the object of meditation.

One must give up the craving for material comfort and the attachment to sense objects. One must direct the false fears, the absurd desires, the sorrow, the worries, and the artificial pleasures that now fill mind. That is to say, one must discriminate and train oneself to realise that everything is as illusory as the ghost in the well! Everyone needs this self-education. The pathetic condition of everyone is due to its absence. Meditation is the remedy for this state of mind.

Reaching the goal through meditation

Through meditation, it is possible to bring into memory the paradise that is one's empire, discarding the transitory creations of the mind as a dream and a delusion. By engaging oneself systematically and calmly in meditation. Meditation can be made effective and tranquil. Thus, the road toward the highest experience is laid. A new understanding dawns, clear and unruffled. When the heights of meditation are reached, this understanding becomes so strong that one's lower nature is destroyed and burned to ashes! Then, only "You" remain! The entire creation is a delusion of your mind! One alone IS truth (*sathya*), the Lord, Being-Awareness-Bliss (*satchidananda*), the highest *Atma*; the ONE is the Self (*Sivoham*).

The truth (*sathya*) is so subtle and so soothing. Once it is reached, there is no meditation and no meditator; all merge into One. That is the fixed, illumined experience. Exulting within that one is pure knowledge, the wise one (*jnani*) will be aware only of *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-anubhava*). That is the goal, the fruit of immortality. Attaining this transcendent experience, the *yogi* finishes meditation and moves among people resplendent with divinity! In the *yogi*, the *Vedas* find fulfilment. The *yogi* is transformed into a pure being. Only meditation has the capacity to make one transcend the vicissitudes of time and space and make one ever the same equanimous individual, as if one is another Creator himself.

Once the individual (*jivi*) is on the way toward the goal, the individual will derive full contentment from themselves and discover within themselves the source of bliss. The cravings and ambitions, delusions and falsehoods, and animal needs and antics that were worrying the individual till then all vanish. Since the *Atma* pervades all, equally and steadily, the individual also loses the "I-ness" and gets immersed in its inherent divine status. Such a person is the real great soul (*mahatma*), a liberated soul (*jivan-muktha*). Fullness is bliss (*ananda*); bliss is peace (*santhi*).

Those who do not give up the path of discrimination (*vichara marga*) receive the grace of the Lord, and they also realise the *Atma*. They will always be seeking the eternal truth that lies behind the dream-like illusions of this world.

Control the senses (*jnanendriyas*), which run helter-skelter; then, the origins of the disease will be destroyed. Let the mind keep a watch over its gymnastics; dam up the mad flood of thoughts and plans and schemes; then there will be no room for worries and anxieties in the mind. To diminish the wanderings of your thoughts, repeat the name of the Lord; that will keep out your sorrows and troubles. Without the effacement of the mind, spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) cannot dawn. The full person is one who has succeeded in this.

Gain inward vision

The spiritual aspirant must first learn the secret of the “inward sight”, the “vision directed inward”, and take the attention away from the exterior. You have heard so far little about the inner world, but divine life is nothing but this method of “inward living”. Just as the baby, after learning to watch and understands, tries to toddle here and there at home, so also the spiritual aspirant learns to toddle in the inner world and understands it. A healthy baby in the cradle waves its arms and legs in glee and lisps in joy, watching the lamp on the wall. Similarly, the spiritual aspirant, also healthy in body, mind, and soul, lying in the cradle of life, watches the inner world and claps the hands ceaselessly in great glee at that inner joy. This has to be done.

Besides, every thought, every word, every deed has to proceed from the full consciousness of knowledge. Direct your intelligence not to wander about but to dwell constantly in the inner world! This is the inward quest (*antar vimarsha*), and meditation (*dhyana*) is the most important instrument needed for this.

The spiritual aspirant can enter the inner quest through the gate of self-examination. That gate accords welcome into the highest and holiest status possible in life to every aspirant who is endowed with humility and devotion.