

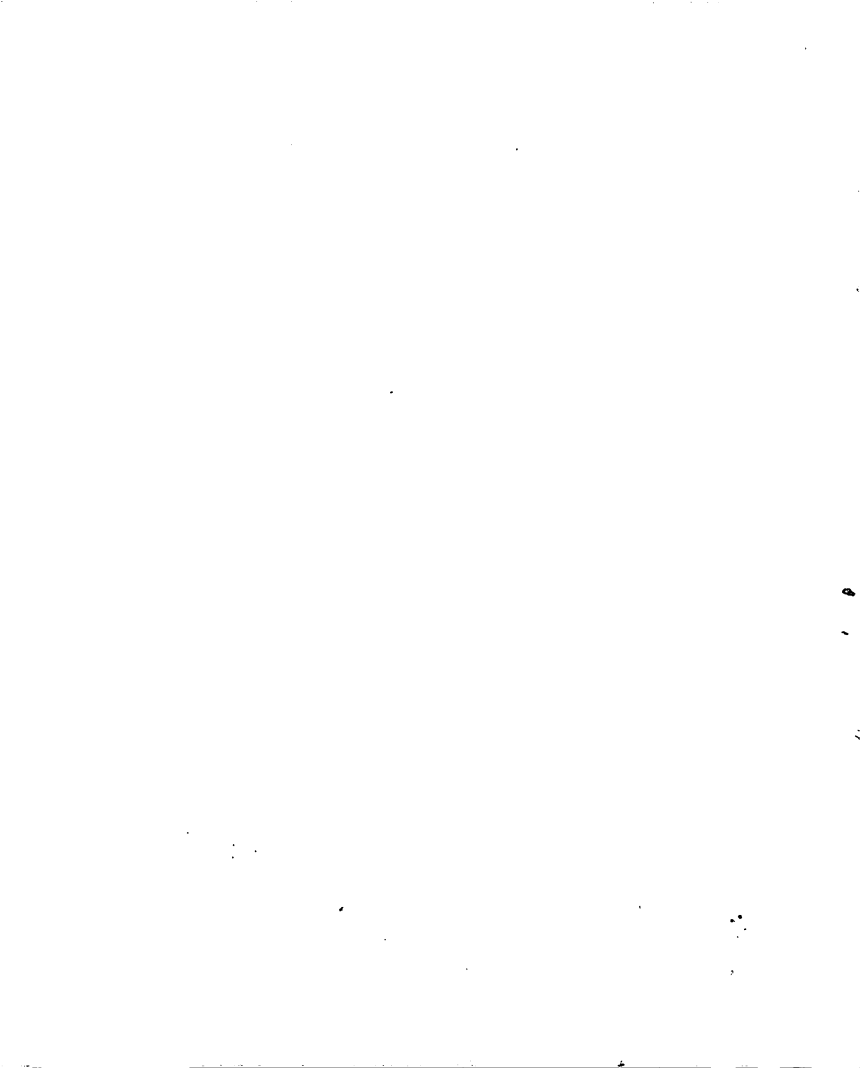
MEDITATION

Dhyanasadhana

V.F. VINEETH







MEDITATION

Seven day meditation course
(Sapta-dina-dhyana-sadhana)



V.F. VINEETH

(662)

FI. S. ALACKAPALLY

Meditation

Seven day meditation course

(Sapta-dina-dhyana-sadhana)

V. F. Vineeth CMI

Vidya Vanam Publications

Bangalore, India

First Published 2003

Printed at

Matha Prints

Bangalore -560068

PREFACE

Meditation is a form of prayer. It takes you to the innermost recess of your own interior centre as well as to the heights of heaven. It is an art of prayer, which needs training. To a well-trained person, it becomes easy and spontaneous, giving peace and serenity in mind and body. It blesses you with concentration in all what you do. Practised well, it will also lead you to your divine transformation.

Meditation is also an art of living. What you meditate you become. What you are will be expressed in action, which is selfless, serving and divinising. Meditation builds a holy and more human world around you.

In this small handbook on meditation, a plan for seven days practice of mediation is presented. It is made very simple, with practical exercises of meditation sessions. It is the result of hundreds of meditations given in Vidyavanam Ashram.

At this juncture, I gratefully remember all my colleagues and seekers in the ashram with whom I have meditated. They all have inspired me by their smiling faces, serene postures, melodious singing and above all by their peace-emanating presence. I thank them all. May the Lord bless them with a habit of meditation bearing fruits in their daily life.

I specially thank Fr. Joy Elamkunnappuzha, CMI, a gifted artist, a colleague and confrere, who has graciously outlined the cover design and other art works in the book; and Mr. and Mrs. Joy Kottackal who have completed the publication work in a short period, with great affection and efficiency. I gratefully remember also Mrs. Molly Jose for carefully preparing the manuscript for publication.

Easter, 2003

Fr. Francis Vineeth CMI

First Day

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. A Seven Days Meditation Course

This tiny handbook is planned to help seekers to practice meditation at home. Two sets of meditations are given for each day. The first set (series A to be practiced preferably early morning, everyday) is a methodic entry into one's own interiority. Each step, which the great masters of meditation all over the world recommends, is given as a meditation along with a short introduction. I have outlined these steps basically following the classical Indian tradition of Yoga; but one can see that the great spiritual masters or mistresses like John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, St. Francis De Sales and many others, in their own ways, deal with similar steps of meditation, such as a serene posture, silencing the senses and the mind (the dark nights), divine union or transformation and the peace and divine serenity reigning in the heart of the meditating person.

Following the masters' path an attempt is made to enter into one's own depth. The entry into one's own depth should not be understood as a call to be a 'recluse', closed in a narrow world of self-centeredness (a complaint generally raised by activists). Yet this criticism should be taken care of. Hence everyday a second meditation (series B to be practiced in the evening) is presented in which the cosmos we live in is brought into our interior center and we are invited to go back to the cosmos; the cosmic elements, planets and the humans are chosen as the theme for these meditations. By this what is meant is that meditation is an integrating process, and this is what the word yoga means. Yoga comes from the Sanskrit root *yug-yog* which means to unite. Etiologically yoga means union or integration. It is the integration of the cosmic, somatic and the psychic layers of our self into our divine centre. We are called to integrate the cosmos into the divine center that is within us and come back to the universe to change it as to reflect the kingdom of God on earth. Hence, the symbolism of the cosmic element, by which the entire mate-

rial universe is made, is meditated upon to see the divine in the cosmos. This will eventually liberate us from our clinging to possessions, unjust power structures which we create for our Ego, and help us place the world at God's disposal, seeing God's reflection in everyone and everywhere. Everything in the world is symbolic and points to the divine within. The world is sacred and should be dealt with reverence and feeling of sacredness. What is of God, what reflects God by nature, should not be kept as my own, inaccessible to others, which is sin. Truly meditating persons become liberated from within. Liberation-war from outside is forced upon us with diabolic weapons, where cosmic elements are desacralized, misused against humanity and God, because we do not liberate ourselves and our world from the grip of our own Ego. A forced war, even if it succeeds, does not necessarily make the world better; it only changes the role-play of the people: the oppressed ones now become the oppressors. The Bolshevik revolution in the Russian history is a brilliant example of this. For real liberation human beings

must become unselfish, not ego centered, but God centered. This is the real purpose of meditation.

Meditation is real prayer. In a way it is a higher form of prayer. Jesus said that God our Father sees our prayer made in secret (Mt. 6:6). Whenever we come in touch with God we are in prayer. The church has never taught that her great saints like Francis of Assisi, John of the Cross, Mother Teresa and others were not praying when they were absorbed in genuine ecstasy. Ecstasy is the western version of Indian *samadhi*, the perfect equanimity, in which one rests in God. If ecstasy or *samadhi* is real and not fake, genuine selflessness will be there and to that extent a more human world is being created around us.

Two series of meditations are outlined in this booklet which should help us to come in touch with the divine within us and the world around us, as the reflection or symbol of the divine world within. Sacredness is everywhere. Therefore, treat everyone and everything as 'sacred', that is, belonging to God and not to us. Meditation should produce a better world

for people to live in. Your immediate world is the neighborhood where you live. Love everyone. Serve everyone wherever you are. Your neighbour represents your God.

2. What is Meditation?

Meditation is not to be seen as an intellectual exercise to be indulged in, nor as a ritual performance to be finished soon. Rather, it is a time to keep one's body in profound rest and consciousness in full awareness. Strictly speaking, the work of reason is not necessary for activating one's consciousness. What meditation seeks to give you is precisely this: to be aware, while your whole being, including your mind, sinks into deep rest (V.F. Vineeth, *Yoga of Spirituality*, Bangalore: Vidyavanam Publications, 1995, p. 22).

Meditation becomes profound prayer when the awareness is directed to God or to any of his/her representative forms. Deeper meditation demands also the silencing of the mind.

i. Meditation and Silence

Meditation needs silence. Silence has several layers. It starts with the most external layer, the atmospheric silence and proceeds to more and more internal layers. From atmospheric silence we move to the silence of the body, a comfortable and steady posture; the next step is the silence of the senses which means the withdrawal of the senses from their sense-objects. Then the senses begin to rest. Now we come to the silence of the mind. The mind, with its argumentative thinking is good in the initial stage of meditation. We call it discursive meditation. But later, the mind should be stilled for peaceful and enlightened apprehension. The mental layer of knowing, depending on the brain structure and sensation from outside, is a lower level of knowledge on the ladder of the human wisdom. The higher level is participation in divine wisdom (God's own self-awareness) communicated to us through revelation. This is the opening of the third eye through the light of faith. Silence of the mind is, in short, absorption of the mind in 'the one-pointedness-of-attention' (*ekagrata*).

Silencing the mind is possible by concentrating on a single topic, for example, a word (*mantra*), a sentence from Sacred Scriptures, a picture, an ideal, a model saint or any preferred object. 'You become what you meditate' is an ancient Indian dictum. (For further details ref. V.F. Vineeth, *Yoga of Spirituality*, chapters VI-XI, especially VII and VIII: silencing the senses and the mind.)

ii. Time for Meditation

Meditation is for a total integration of our entire being with the Divine within. Our total self includes the cosmic, (the earthly or the physical), the psychic (mental and the emotional) and the Divine. The most suited time for meditation is considered to be the hours of dawn and dusk, when the heavens and the earth seemingly meet, at the times of sun rise and sun set, as we in the East are accustomed to. Early dawn and evening, not too late, when the stomach is practically empty, but not hungry, is said to be the best time. The time should be comfortable, neither too cold nor too hot. We in India do this very much

nature-bound, preferably in an open space under the canopy of sky. In a colder climate, as in the West, different arrangements may be needed. However, dawn and dusk are good time for meditation.

iii. Time and Space for God

Secularisation of the human society is running high today. The West is leading the world in secularisation. This means that we do not have time or space for God. But simultaneously we have a very strong God-ward movement in the world, also in the West. People want to pray, to meditate and long for religious or God-experience. They search for an answer to the inner vacuum they experience in the midst of outward affluence. The inner space where God dwells in each one of us is now being sought. We cannot reach this inner space without allotting some time for it.

Now, here in the city of Brahman (the human self) is an abode, a small lotus flower; within it is a small space. What is within that should be sought, for that, assuredly, is what one should

desire to understand (*Chandogya Upanishad*, VIII.1.1).

But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, whose sees what you do in private, will reward you (Mt. 6:6).

The windows mentioned in the text could be understood as the windows of the prayer room as well as the windows of the human body, which are the senses. Hence, however busy our life is, we have to set apart sometime, e.g. minimum 15-30 minutes a day for meditation, for reaching our own interior centre where, for believers, God abides in the form of an innermost awareness. For Christians, this is the awareness of the abiding Spirit of Christ within them.

Even for non-believers, that is people who do not believe in a particular religion, meditation is a good practice, because it helps them reach their own interior centre, refined consciousness and deeper serenity.

iv. Symbolism of the Oil Lamp

Two symbols merge here, flame and oil. Both are symbols of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is best symbolised by basic elements such as water, fire, air, earth and space. Oil is also added to it. Traditionally light is accepted as the symbol of God, because it dispels darkness, a symbol of evil. *Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya* (lead to me from darkness to light) is a famous Upanishadic prayer. Oil lamp, with its flickering flame, represents the human self, awakened and growing in consciousness. Placed before an altar of God or Eucharist, it also represents a praying, meditating soul, giving itself as a holocaust, to be completely burnt, moment-by-moment. Oil makes the wick burn gently and continuously. Oil represents the flow of love in the awakened self (soul). Love makes the awakened consciousness flow outwardly in good and selfless action. The oil of love keeps the flame of the self-giving soul ever burning. Let us have oil of love to burn the wicks of the lamps, which we are.

An oil lamp, with burning flames all around, solemnly placed in front of an altar at the time of the Holy Mass also represents the Risen Lord, the Divine light, which dispelled the darkness from the face of the earth. Participating in the same light, we too are called to shine forth in darkness and become burning flames of this luminous lamp.

3. EIGHT STEPS OF MEDITATION (ASTANGAYOGA)

(Source: Yogasutra of Patanjali)

- i. *Yama*: Setting Right Attitude by Avoiding Evil Tendencies.
- ii. *Niyama*: Setting Right Attitude by Cultivating Positive Virtues.
- iii. *Asana*: Right Posture
 - "Disposing the body to the rhythm of the Spirit"

- Principle regarding the right posture: steady and pleasant
 - Recommended postures
 - Meditation needs calm and serene postures. Thus Lotus (*padmasana*), semi-lotus (*ardha-padmasana*) or comfortable (*sukhasana*) postures are recommended.
- iv. *Pranayama*: Regulating the Life force within us
- This is done by meditatively observing one's own breathing rhythm
 - Advantages:
 - ♦ Rhythmic breathing fosters easy concentration
 - ♦ Better relaxation
 - ♦ Purification of the entire system
 - ♦ Faster blood circulation
 - Slowly makes the body more attuned to deeper concentration and relaxation

v. *Pratyahara*: Silencing the Senses

- Closing the windows of contact with the world for a few moments
- Done by withdrawing the senses from their sense objects.
- Suggested means: awareness meditation

vi. *Dharana*: Concentration

- Suggested aids:
 - ♦ A favourite deity of your preference as an object for concentration (*Istadevata*)
 - ♦ An appropriate *mantra* – *Istamantra*
 - ♦ *Man-tra* from *mananam* = meditation and *trananam* = salvation
 - ♦ A preferred attitude to God
 - ♦ E.g., friends' attitude, filial or spousal attitude

vii. *Dhyana*: Meditation/Awakening

- Unbroken concentration for a long period of time
- The symbol of the continuous flow of oil
- Transformation of the mind into the object of concentration
- "You become what you meditate"

viii. *Samadhi*: Final State of Perfect Equanimity
(Sama+dhi)

- The result of reaching the depth
- Depth is serene
- Silence of passions brings peace
- The symbol of calming the sea. "He ordered the winds and the waves to stop; and there was a great calm" (Mt. 8:23-27).
- Life becomes tranquil, peaceful, devoid of stress and unnecessary worries. Peace is the parting gift of Jesus. "Peace be with you" (Jn. 20:21).

7. Divine
Serenity

6. Meditation
Awakening

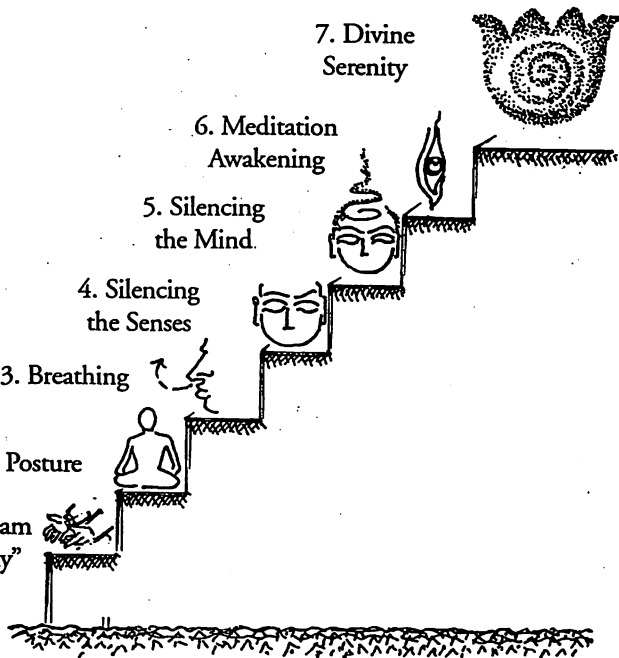
5. Silencing
the Mind.

4. Silencing
the Senses

3. Breathing

2. Posture

1. "I am
ready"



Steps of Meditation

Meditation (A 1)

Brief practice of meditation e.g., 10 minutes each on the following:

1. Find out your breathing rhythm
2. Put your body to rest by becoming aware of your limbs one by one.
3. Try to remain concentrated on one point for some time.

4. Meditation on Elements

Introduction

Every cosmic element has a real and a symbolic value for our life. As cosmic elements enter into our life, our body deals with them physically, accepting, assimilating and finally integrating them into our body. Different limbs of our body are destined to do this duty with regard to different elements. Thus our eyes receive light, ears sound, etc. A meditation on each element will show us how each of them is so

intimately related to our body, and specifically to a particular part of our body.

But the revelation of the meaning of the elements does not stop here. They have, each one of them, much more deeper meaning by which they take us to the depth of our own selves. In this level the elements turn out to be symbolic. A symbol is always a real and concretely 'seen' and experienced sign, but pointing to something 'unseen' or 'not yet experienced'. Symbol brings together the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown. Scriptural language in all religions is very symbolic. Thus our Lord said: "I am the Vine and you are the branches" (Jn. 15:5) or "I am the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:11). Two concrete realities of the peoples' daily experience are presented here that they may get some idea about their relation to Jesus, as branches united to Vine and the sheep related to the shepherd. How the shepherd gives his life for the sheep, so does Jesus give his life for them and they should listen to his words. Symbolism is the inner core of spiritual language. Symbolism leads us from the visible to the

invisible, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite. Seen from this perspective all creatures are symbolic, crying aloud the name of the Lord from whom they have come, in whom they survive and to whom they return. The saints, sages and mystics all over the world listen to this silent song of the creatures, give lyrics and music to them, and give us some of the best hymns and melodies of the world. It is meditative thinking that delves deep into the meaning of the symbol, unveils it, opens our heart to a profound understanding of the 'thing' before us, transcending its own veiled structural form and taking us to the very depth of the being and of our own selves, where the Lord, as the source of all beings, abides. Hence, we give here a set of meditation on four of the elements and two planets very close to our lives, the sun and the moon, and finally on human beings. Thus seven meditations for seven days. All creatures have symbolic meaning. But the elements are the primordial symbols of the Spirit.

Meditation on Mother Earth (B 1)



The earth is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to the earth. The Lord who designed the earth and resides in the earth, dwells in your body and becomes the innermost foundation of your self. Let us meditate the earth.

Feel the touch of the earth, as you sit for meditation. How the earth holds you. How you take the earth for granted that the earth will not slip away from your feet. How she carries you safe as a mother. Yes, earth is honey to you. She is a mother. She protects you, she gives you food, she allows the plants and the trees grow, yield fruits. All for you.

She never keeps anything for herself. The whole earth is placed at your disposal. Love the earth. Keep the earth clean. Cultivate the earth, beautify the earth, dress her with green vegetation, fragrant flowers, fruit-bearing trees and beautiful meadows. Love the earth.

He who dwells in the earth, dwells in your body, because your body is made of earth. Whatever the earth does to your body, the Spirit does to your soul. Just like the earth holds you, the Lord holds you on the palm of His hands, if you want to look at God as a loving father or mother.

He protects you, resides in you as your ultimate foundation. We lay foundation for our houses on the earth and the earth holds the house. The Lord is your everlasting and unquavering foundation.

The Lord provides you food for your spiritual growth which we call by names such as grace, light, solace, strength etc. Just the body depends on the earth, so our soul depends on the divine Spirit for its survival and salvation.

Love the earth; see mother earth as a symbol of God, who looks at you with motherly care. He who dwells in the earth, dwells in your body and becomes the innermost foundation of your life.

Silence

The hymn of St. Francis on earth.

Second Day

CHOOSING THE
RIGHT POSTURE AND
ATTITUDE1. Choosing the Right
Posture

Meditation needs the intimate co-operation of your body, mind and consciousness. Posture (*asana*) of our body is important for a good meditation. India has developed an elaborate system of postures known as *yoga-asanas*. A mastery of all these postures is not necessary for progress in meditation. However, body should be well disposed. A posture is a way of tuning the body to the rhythm of the spirit. Your body must be at ease and in peace. The main rule or principle of posture is summarized in two simple words: steady and pleasant (*Stitha* and *sukha*). Some of the recommended postures for meditation are lotus posture, semi-lotus posture, comfort posture and

adamant posture, all of which provide rather a broad base to sit serenely.

Choose your posture carefully. Do not try for the impossible. Feel at ease, take care of your health and choose the posture in which you can pleasantly sit on the floor or on a chair, as far as possible unmoving, during the time of your meditation.

2. Meditation on the Right Attitude

Introduction

Patanjali gives five principles of self-restraints (to control evil tendencies) and five principles of self-growth (chosen virtues to be practiced). They are called *yama* and *niyama*. They are the following:

Yama: (i) non-violence (ii) truthfulness (iii) non-possessiveness (iv) life focussed on God and (v) non-attachment to things.

Niyama: (i) purity of heart and body (ii) inner joy (iii) inner ardour (iv) self-study and (v)

devotion to the Lord.. These will set the right attitude and disposition in the student of meditation. Each of them could be taken and practiced as a meditation. As an example I am giving here below a meditation on the attitude of being over against the attitude of having, which in principle is the third item in *yama*, namely non-possessiveness (*asteya*). Attitude of having is a distortion of the attitude of being. When you take delight in the well being of the other (person or thing) you are a person of being-attitude. When you take delight in the possession of that being and not in the being as such, you are a person of having attitude. Hence, a meditation on non-possessive, yet positive attitude.

1. Morning Meditation: (A 2)

Look at the Lilies of the field

1. Choose your comfortable posture for meditation.
Feel relaxed

2. Focus your attention on a white Lily in the field.
3. See the details of this tiny, yet enchanting, immaculate flower

* * *

4. Her entire being is at your disposal; she does not keep anything for herself.
5. She opens up her petals one by one, becomes brighter and brighter, in order to please you.
6. When your gaze falls on her she is delighted. When you think of her, she becomes 'idea' within you. She does not possess you; but loves you and gives herself to you.

* * *

7. As the Lord said: She does not weave nor make clothes but the Lord God adorns her (Mt. 6:28).
8. Jesus presents the Lily as a symbol of non-possessiveness, as well as of divine providence for each one of us.

* * *

9. Our love for possessiveness, power, control has made so many inhuman structures in our world, has multiplied suffering for millions of innocents.
10. Try to strip off the instinct of possessiveness from your heart.
11. Relish relinquishing, leaving her free and yourself remaining free.

* * *

12. Meditate the Lily of the field and learn from her the lessons of non-possessiveness (*asteya*), non-aggressiveness (*ahimsa*).
13. Her being is her truth and unveils to you as word.
14. Truth is what you are, not always what you say.

* * *

15. Remain in silence; let the Lily speak to you.
16. What you meditate, that you become.

Silence

Hymn of St. Francis on Nature

2. Evening Meditation (B 2)

Sister Water

The water is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to water. The Lord who designed water, and resides in water, dwells within your blood and becomes a fountain of eternal water from within you. Meditate water.



* * *

See how gently water flows in a river, wetting the river banks on either sides, watering numerous trees and plants, yet flowing further and further until it reaches its destination, the ocean of infinite waters.

* * *

So also the waters of grace flow through you as a living spring, watering you from all sides, until you reach your eternal destination, the vast unbounded sea of divine love.

Water cleanses us, quenches our thirst. So also the divine fountain of everlasting water washes us clean, purifies us from within and quenches our thirst for divine union.

* * *

Water is a powerful symbol of the Spirit. Water can sometimes be violent as in a hurricane or a tempest. So also the Spirit can touch you deeply, sometimes violently, disturbing you, shaking you up for a new life and value formation. This happened to St. Paul on his way to Damascus. Do not get afraid in these moments. You are on your right path. Only right discernment is necessary.

* * *

How much dependent are we on water! We cannot survive long without this earthly water. We are so dependent on the cosmos and the cosmic elements. So also we are dependent on the divine water for the life and survival of our soul. Water is the symbol of the divine Spirit within us and what the earthly water does to the body the Spirit does to the soul. Do

not separate the body and the soul, because one reflects the other.

* * *

Think of the lovely conversation Jesus had on water with the Samaritan woman. He says: "The water I give will become a fountain of eternal life within him" (Jn. 4:14). She failed to understand the symbolic meaning Jesus was alluding to because she was at that time in the food-layer of awareness whereas Jesus was in the Atman level. Therefore she asked for earthly water from Jesus, when Jesus wanted to give her divine water of eternal life.

* * *

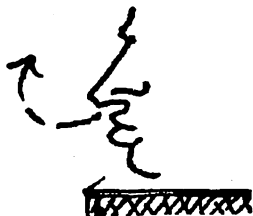
Love water. Keep water clean. This is keeping our own life clean and safe. Do not pollute water. Water is sacred and points to the everlasting flow of divine water within you.

Silence

Sing hymn of St. Francis on sister water.

Third Day

YOUR BREATH OF LIFE



Introduction

Breathing is the original rhythm which God has placed in you. "Then the Lord God formed man out of the dust and breathed into him the breath of life". (Gen. 2:7). Before we begin meditation we spend some time in re-discovering the rhythm of breathing which God has placed in us. Breathing meditation is done in order to regulate the flow of life within us. All religions of the East, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Eastern Christianity have a good tradition of integrating the rhythmic breathing with meditation. To facilitate this work of integration, quite often a *mantra* (a short formula or prayer) is remembered or internally recited along with the breathing rhythm. *Maran atha*, the Lord comes, is an ancient Christian formula used for greeting each other, and can very

well fit as a *mantra* for breathing meditation. The first word *Maran* will be internally recited as we breath in, and the second word *atha* as we breath out. This is only an example. The so called Jesus prayer, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" is also used as a *mantra* in breathing meditation. Before we come to the use of *mantra*, we should be established in the rhythmic flow of breathing. This is the first exercise given below.

1. Morning Meditation (A 3)

Your Breathing Rhythm

Sit relaxed for meditation. During meditation you can have perfect rest in your body; but your consciousness is at work. This means that you can put your body to rest, senses to rest, and in advanced meditation, even the mind to rest. But keep your awareness awake.

Step I: Awareness of Breathing

- Start breathing
- Feel the air touching the tip of your nostrils
- Feel the air as it enters into your lungs
- Feel the rhythm, the harmony of breathing rhythm within you.

So also:

- Feel the air as it passes out of your nostrils
- Feel the difference;
 - ♦ Cooler air your breath in
 - ♦ Warmer air you breath out.

Step 2: Regulate your Breathing Rhythm

- Breathing is an uninterrupted flow of life.
- The time taken for in-breathing and out-breathing must be more-or-less the same.
- To help this, in the beginning we count 1,2,3,4, i.e., Time for in breathing. Hold

for a moment and then count again
1,2,3,4, for out-breathing.

- Get the rhythm of breathing
- Allow the limbs of the body to be relaxed and be peaceful and at ease.
- Keep breathing in silence.

Step 3: Enjoy the Silence and Stillness within you

- Keep breathing and enjoy the silence and stillness in your body
- Slowly move to feel the deep within
- There is an inner breathing going on within you.
- There is a deeper awareness within you to be reached out through silence
 - ♦ Silence of the atmosphere
 - ♦ Silence of the senses
 - ♦ Silence of the mind.

- Rhythmic breathing will slowly guide us to that inner centre.
- This deeper awareness, compared to an inner breathing, is the abiding Spirit; *spiritus* (Latin) means breath.
- God breathes his consciousness into you.
- It is God's own awareness, Spirit within, from whom we all received abundantly.
- It is the breath life, the breath of the Lord, the breath of Divine serenity.
- Keep breathing and be filled with this Divine Spirit
- Jesus breathed this spirit into his disciples, saying, "receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22).
- Breathe away all your anxieties.
- Silence

Step 4: Breathe in the Spirit of Christ into you

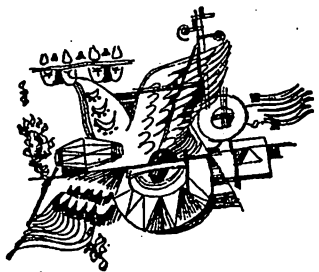
- Be filled with this Spirit:

- The spirit of love
- The spirit of service
- The Spirit of sacrifice

2. Evening Meditation (B 4)

Meditation on Air

Air is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to air. The Lord who designed air and resides in the air dwells in your breath and becomes the ultimate breath (Spirit) of your inner life. Meditate the air.



* * *

Feel air. How air touches you or caresses you in a gentle breeze. Air is honey to all beings. All beings need air, love air and depend on air.

All beings must be honey to air, keep air unpolluted. Air is sacred, the preserver of our life, the promoter of our good health.

* * *

The life of the body depends on bodily breath and the bodily breath depends on the availability of pure air. In the same way our spiritual life, the life of the soul depends on the divine breathing within us, which we call the Holy Spirit. The Latin word *spiritus* means breath.

God's breath is consciousness, or light and love, the inner essence of the life divine. The soul lives on the breath of God and participates in the Spirit's light and love.

* * *

Start breathing and feel the air touching your nostrils. The cool touch of breath as you breath in and the warm touch as you breath out. Feel the rhythm of breath within you, the flow of life God has placed in your body.

Remember also that this outer rhythm in the body is a symbol of a profounder, inner rhythm of a divine breathing of the Holy Spirit within you, the breath of Christ, crying 'Abba Father' (Rom. 8:15).

* * *

Jesus breathes His Spirit into us. See how for Him the bodily breathing is a symbol of the ongoing inner breathing of His Spirit within us. He is the immortal, the imperishable, and the eternal source of your inner life. Abide in him and let Him abide in you.

Silence

The Canticle of St. Francis on Air

Fourth Day

SILENCING THE SENSES



Introduction

1. We have already seen the preceding steps of meditation. They are:

1. Right posture
2. Regulation of the breathing rhythm

Today we will see the next step: that is silencing the senses.

2. Silencing the senses is the withdrawal of the senses from their sense-objects. Our senses are always active, when they are in touch with the sense-objects.

- All our senses have their own sense-objects. E.g., colour is the object of eyes, smell is the

object of nose, sound, the object of ears, touch, the object of skin etc.

- Now, before we begin concentration, we want to put our senses into silence. Otherwise the senses will take us away from concentration, and consequently from meditation.
- Senses always bring the outer world to the mind. Mind receives only what the senses give. All that is in the mind is previously in the senses as sensation. The mind acts upon the sense data and produce what we call "thoughts" or "ideas".
- When we want to concentrate on something we have to put a stop to mind's process of continuous becoming. Mind should focus on one point alone. This is what we call concentration.
- Concentration is the beginning of meditation. The silencing of the senses is a pre-condition for successful concentration.

Otherwise the senses, with their ongoing activity with the sense-objects, will carry us away from our concentration. This is called distraction, i.e., Latin: *dis-trahere* = to carry away.

- In the next session we will deal with concentration. Today, as a preparation for that, we will practice the silencing of the senses.

Withdrawing our attention from the sense-objects does silencing of the senses. As we said before, senses are busy with sense-objects. If we hear a sound, our attention goes to that sound and perhaps to the reasons for that sound. The mind will work on it further. If the mind goes after one or other sensation, we will never get concentration. That is why we want to silence our senses first, before we silence our mind. When we do breathing-meditation for a considerably long period of time, e.g., for 15 minutes, the senses may begin to rest.

A simple way of doing this effectively is by practising “Awareness Meditation”

Awareness meditation is done by focusing our attention on our own senses, or on the limbs of our body. This is not to be understood as thinking about our limbs, e.g., about head, ear or nose, but simply becoming aware of them. It is just ‘feeling’ or ‘remembering’ our own body part by part. Just be aware of. We do not dwell upon any awareness for a long time. After feeling ‘a limb’ e.g., ‘my hand’, I leave my hand in serenity and remember the next. Awareness meditation is a journey through our body, through feeling or awareness. This is an easy way to put the body and all the senses to rest.

Silencing the senses is a step suggested by many great masters of meditation. Patanjali, the master and author of yoga-sutra, suggests it. St. John of the cross speaks about it in his Dark Night of the Soul, Book 1, under the topic “Night of the senses”. St. Teresa of Avila speaks about it in her book: *The Inte-*

rior Castle, comparing the senses to 'domestic animals and suggests to keep our senses resting'.

When our mind calls the sense to be aware of itself, the sense has to leave the sense object to respond to the call of the mind. The senses usually go with the sense-objects without being aware of it. It does so spontaneously. Wandering after many sense objects, the senses find themselves tired and the mind, which follows them unawares, also find itself tired.

When mind calls the senses to awareness, the senses become aware of themselves, leave the sense objects with which they are in contact. The result is the senses rest, and body feel greater serenity and peace.

Buddhism developed this kind of meditation to arrive at the deeper layers of awareness within us, silencing the outer layers of awareness, one by one. Thus we have degrees of silence. Such as, the atmospheric silence, the silence of the senses, the silence of the mind etc. until we reach the pure awareness of

the Spirit or God within us, who is pure consciousness, love and bliss.

As I told you, this was a practice in the East, including Christianity. The early Christians of the East, on Mount Athos, developed the so-called Jesus-prayer, into which they integrated both breathing and awareness meditation.

1. Morning Meditation (A 4) Awareness Meditation for Silencing the Senses

We will do this meditation in 5 steps.

1. Step 1: Posture and regulation of breath.
2. Step 2: The beginning of awareness meditation: introducing each limb of the body with instructions.
3. Step 3: The same, but without instructive part of it. Just mentioning the name of the limbs of the body.
4. Step 4: The same in total silence. Here you alone

do the same without any word of instruction.

5. **Step 5:** The concluding part, feeling the depth and the peace, which the depth gives.

- 1) **Sit relaxed in your comfortable posture**

- Steady and pleasant, you sit
- Start breathing; regulate the breathing rhythm, as we have already done.
- Slowly, rhythmically you breathe.
- Silence

2. **Now we move to awareness meditation.**

- Take a pause after each sentence that you may experience what you read or hear.
1. Be aware of your head: focus your attention on the top-most portion of your head. Just feel
 2. Let this awareness expand slowly. Let it spread the upper portion of your head. Let your head rest.
 3. Let your awareness slowly glide down.

4. Be aware of your eyes. If needed, open and close your eyes and feel your eyes. Let your eyes rest.
5. Feel your ears, your both ears. Let your ears rest.
6. Feel your nostrils. Feel the touch of the air at the tip of your nostrils. Feel the air as it passes in and passes out. Leave your nostrils in peace and serenity.
7. Feel your lips. If needed, let the lips touch each other, just feel and let your lips rest.
8. Feel your face; let the peace of the Lord shine upon your face.
9. Your awareness slides down. Feel your neck, your shoulders. Feel the touch of cloth on your shoulders.
10. Let your awareness slide down to your hands. Feel your right arm... shoulder... elbow... hand... wrist... palm... and fingers. Let your right arm rest.

11. Let both your arms rest. Feel them as resting on your body wherever you have left them.
12. Feel the back of your body, the touch of clothes. Let your body rest.
13. Feel your chest. Take a breath and feel the chest as it expands and contracts. Just feel and relax.
14. Feel your abdomen. A slightly deeper breath will make you feel your abdomen better.
15. Let your awareness slowly descend. Feel how you are seated, feel the touch of your buttocks and thighs on the chair or on the ground. You are seated in rest and peace.
16. Be aware of your legs, your both legs. Your thighs... knees... calves... angles... feet... and toes. Just be aware and leave them in peace.
17. From top to toes you are a flow of relaxation and peace. Your body is in silence, all your senses are in silence and serenity.

Silence

3) Now we will do it again.

This time the name of limbs will be mentioned or remembered. Be aware, and leave them in serenity and pass to the next.

Your head..., your eyes..., your ears... Your nostrils... your lips... your face... Your neck... your shoulders... your arms... Right arm... right shoulders... right elbow... Right wrist... right palm... fingers... Left hand... left shoulder... left elbow... Left wrist... left palm... and fingers... Your back... your chest... your abdomen... Your legs... your buttocks... Your thighs... knees... Calves...angles... feet... toes... Relax in rest and silence.

4) Now you do it yourself

Please be aware of your own body, limb by limb: feeling: my head...my eyes...my ears...my lips etc. Remember and leave each limb in serenity and peace

Silence

This could be repeated several times and the body will find itself in complete rest.

5) We are now moving to the last phase of this meditation

- In the experienced serenity of your body and the senses, try to enter into the inner chamber of deep silence within you.
- You are not a bundle of external sense-impressions or awareness
- There is an inexhaustible depth within you
- In the silence of the body and of the mind this depth opens up.
- Gives us its peace and joy.
- Believers call this depth God, abiding within us.
- Depth is peace; just like in a sea the depth is serene and peaceful, though the upper layers are moving with wind and waves, so also our inner depth can remain serene, in spite of disturbances from outside.

- The true and lasting peace must come from inside and not from outside. The Lord of peace is within.

Silence

- Let us conclude this meditation with chanting

Om Santi, santi, santi.
Om peace, peace, peace

Evening Meditation (B 4)

Meditation on Sister Moon

Moon is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to moon. The Lord who designed moon and resides in the moon dwells in your mind and becomes your inner controller.



With some instinctive vision the ancient people understood that moon and mind are very closely related. So they said "He who dwells in moon, dwells in your minds".

* * *

Moon, waxing and waning as it is, was a globe very much discernible for human eyes. Therefore counting fourteen waxing and fourteen waning days a Lunar month of twenty eight days was set up. The ancient man looked to moon to fix up the days of religious festivals. Thus we have in the East, in Israel as well as in India, Lunar calendar days for most of the religious festivals.

* * *

Moon controlled the waters of the earth, the ebb and flow of tides. The menstrual flow in women also follow a cycle of twenty eight days. Moon, by its soothing light, makes many herbs and plants medicinal. Thus moon was very close to human life.

* * *

What moon does to the earth, the Spirit does to our soul. With its smooth and soothing light it floods the soul with delight. It guides the soul with the tidal waves of the Spirit. It brings heaven to the earth fixing up sacred time for religious celebration. Let us love moon and see moon as a symbol of the inner controller abiding within us

Fifth Day

CONCENTRATION (SILENCING THE MIND)



Introduction

1. We have already seen in the previous sessions the first three steps of Meditation. They were:
 1. The right posture
 2. The right rhythm of breathing
 3. The silencing of the senses

Today we will see the next step: Concentration

2. Concentration is the silencing of the mind. Patanjali defines yoga as *citta-vritti-nirodha*. i.e., a stoppage to the thinking process of the mind. Our mind becomes what it knows, i.e., it puts the form of that which we look at. Look at a flower. Then close your eyes. The flower is already in your mind. It is there, first as an image,

then as an idea. This is what we mean, when we say that the mind becomes what it knows. The mind is in constant process of this becoming. The mind is therefore restless. We want to put our mind to rest, just like we put our senses to rest.

3. The mind is put to rest by what we call: one-pointedness of attention. That is, just focus the mind on one point alone and do not allow the mind to wander as it likes.

The mind will refuse to do so, because the mind is used to wander with passing thoughts.

When we focus our attention on one point, the mind remains unmoved. This is concentration. Concentration is the key to meditation. Mind is compared to a monkey, which never rests, but jumps from one branch to another branch. Though there will be initial resistance from the part of the mind, in course of time, the mind will follow our direction. Therefore for developing meditation we should have a strong determination. The mind needs to be disciplined.

4. The means for concentration:

Two special aids or helps are proposed for the practice of concentration.

1. The first one is called: the selection of the preferred “object” for meditation. In India we call this *Istadevata*, which literally means the favourite deity of my meditation. But this is not restricted to deity as such, though the visible form of the Lord can very well be your favourite “object” of meditation.

This object of concentration can be any person, any thought or idea, or even any thing in your mind or in front of you.

For example: it can be ‘Jesus’ for a Christian, Krishna or Rama for a Hindu; or it can be a text, sentence from the Bible, from the *Gita* or from any good and holy scriptures of the world.

It can also be just a flame of light, a flower, the rising sun, any visual scene or image from nature.

- Once we have chosen this, whether it be a person, or an idea or a thing, the mind is asked to remain focused on that.
 - For this the mind needs discipline
 - In guided meditation, the guide may speak on neighbouring themes, but the guide should take care of remaining on the same theme, always bringing the mind back to the chosen theme.
 - For example today we will have a meditation on the light; the whole text will be the story of the search for light. There will be narration, bhajan, background music etc. But we will remain on the theme of light.
2. The second aid for concentration is *mantra*. *Mantra* is a small formula or sentence, chanted in rhythm and devotion. In the Indian tradition *Om* is considered to be a great *mantra*. It is a summation of *a-u-am*, the beginning, middle and the end of the vowel letters in Indian

alphabet; an equivalent of *alpha* and *omega*.

The pilgrim who practiced hesychast prayer used the name of Jesus as a great Christian *mantra*. “Jesus son of David, have mercy on me” was his chosen *mantra*. *Mantra* becomes shortened, when we advance in meditation. Thus in Jesus prayer, the previous *mantra* can be shortened to the simple formula: “Jesus-mercy” which is synchronized with in-breathing and out-breathing.

5. Everybody is free to choose his or her own theme or object for meditation. Everybody is equally free to form a *mantra* suitable to each one. What is more important is to remain steady to the opted theme and *mantra*. Let the mind sink deep into that and remain in silence.

1. Morning Meditation (A 5)

Jyoti, the Light

1. Sit relaxed in a comfortable posture of your choice. Start breathing slowly and rhythmically.

Let your breathing rhythm be, the rhythm of receiving light from God, and expelling darkness from within you.

2. In the beginning neither light nor darkness existed. Only He who is the source of all light was there. He said, let there be light and light came to be. Then the universe glittered in splendour.
3. Already before all creation, God conceived the human nature as his own self-expression. Hence God created man placed the light of his very consciousness within him. Man appeared on this earth as the bearer of this light. He saw its beauty, brightness and splendour. In every ray of light he saw the light of that great light, the source of all lights.
4. Naturally he praised God, whose form is light.

Jyoti-swarupa namo namo

Jnana-swarupa namo namo

I bow down before you, O Lord, whose form is
light (Jyoti).

I bow down before you, O Lord, whose form is
wisdom.

Silence

5. Return to your breathing rhythm as you praise the Lord of Light. Let every breath be a renewed reception of this new light. As you breathe out remember that you expel from within you all clouds of darkness, which have obscured this inner flame. Keep breathing in and breathing out with this prayerful attitude. Along with the cosmic light, man enjoyed also the gift of the inner light, the light of consciousness. Yes, consciousness, a deeper and deeper awareness of the self. He saw himself endowed with the power to think, to reflect and discover himself. He admired and was happy with the thought of it.

Silence

6. This happy state did not last long. To be aware about oneself includes also the risk of becoming aware of one's own Ego. This happened. One-day man dared to assert himself as the light, forgetting that he was only the reflection of the light. And that was the end of the light in him. Humanity lost its light.

Once the humans lost the light, they understood how miserable it is to live without light, how horrible, how painful. All around them was darkness. Fierce darkness devoured them. Then onwards they prayed for light.

Asato ma sat gamaya

"Lead me from darkness to light"

Identifying yourselves with the universal desire for light, keep chanting.

Asato ma sat gamaya...

Already 2000 years before Christ, India prayed:

Asato ma satgamaya....

Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya

Mrtyorma amrtam gamaya
Lead me from unreality to reality
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from mortality to immortality.

Silence

7. The desire for light grew more and more intense and reached its zenith at a particular moment of history. In the period commencing from 600 BC, the search reached its climax. It is in this period of history that we encountered the Buddha in India preaching the doctrine of enlightenment. *Jina*, his contemporary, was also a follower of light and preached strict asceticism. In the same period of history Zoroaster appeared in Persia, Confucius and Lao-tze in China, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in Greece, all laying the foundation for the religions of future humanity. Many great religions of the world had their genesis in this period of time.

It was at this time of intense search and interior quest that in Palestine, Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke about the coming of the Saviour, the dispeller of darkness.

Identifying yourselves with this insatiable search for light, please keep singing in your heart, *asato-ma-sad-gamaya*. Lead me from darkness to light.

Return to the breathing rhythm. Let your breath become your prayer. Breathe in the light divine, breathe out the darkness from within you.

8. The human quest for light had its divine response. In the fullness of time, when the search for light reached its ultimate climax, the gates of heaven were open and the real light that enlightens all minds came on earth in the form of human flesh. "In him was life and the life was light of mankind' (Jn. 1:4). As the abode and source of all light Jesus stood before us and said:

I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (Jn. 8:12).

(The oil (electric) lamp is lit)

Focus your attention on this divine light, which is a symbol of light of the universe as well as your own internal light of consciousness. Surrender yourself totally to the transforming power of this divine light.

Silence

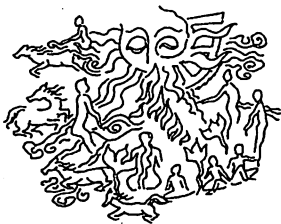
We Conclude chanting:

Jyotiswarupa namo, namo

Evening Meditation (B 5)

Meditation on the Sun

1. The sun is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to the sun. The Lord who designed the sun and resides in the sun is dwelling in your eyes and becomes your inner eye of enlightenment.



* * *

2. The sun enters into us through our eyes. One who dwells in the sun dwells in the eye. If our eyes are in light we are in light (Mt. 6:22). Apart from our two external eyes we have also an internal eye, the eye of faith by which we see the invisible God dwelling in all visible things and ultimately within us as our own inner light.

* * *

3. Sun dispels darkness, gives us warmth and light. In the morning sunlight opens up the lilies of the field and the lotus in the pond. Whatever the cosmic sun does to the flower, the divine sun does to our soul. Meditate sun, and see the invisible in the visible.

* * *

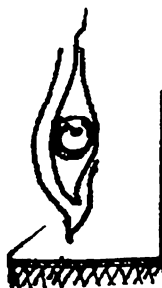
4. Let us focus our attention on the sun, the sun in the cosmos. But the cosmic sun is the symbol of the inner sun, the Light Divine from within. From the cosmos and the cosmic sun we move to the inner sun. Focus your attention on the inner sun. 'You are the Light of the world' (Mt. 5:14) says Jesus. Let Divine Light shine forth from us, and reach out the whole universe. Let us remain in silence.

Silence

Sing the Hymn of St. Francis on brother sun

Sixth Day

MEDITATION AND THE AWAKENING FROM WITHIN



Introduction

In the last session, we saw what is concentration. And we said that concentration is one-pointedness of attention. Today we will see what is meditation.

1. Meditation and Concentration

Meditation is nothing but a prolonged concentration. Continued concentration for a considerable period of time is said to be meditation. In other words, concentration becomes meditation, when the awareness of concentration is kept up in our mind unbroken. Eventually it will lead us to inner awakening.

Meditation is sometimes compared to the flow of oil. As the oil steadily flows, without making any

breaks, so does the thought steadily flow in the mind of the meditating person. Slowly the person remains absorbed in the thought or awareness of what he or she meditates.

2. Meditation and Stillness

Having regulated the life force within us by rhythmic breathing, silenced the senses by the flow of gentle awareness and practiced concentration by one-pointedness of attention, the mind is now ready for advanced meditation. For a successful meditation, we have to practice the preceding steps for several days.

Without certain degree of stillness in our body, senses and mind, we cannot make advance in meditation. Stillness of body is achieved by taking a comfortable and steady posture, stillness in the senses by awareness meditation and stillness of the mind by concentration or one-pointedness of attention. This stillness is not idleness, but will lead us to a profound awareness of our own depth, where we will be in touch with our own true consciousness. Since God dwells

in this innermost layer of consciousness, when we enter deep into this layer we are really coming closer to God who abides within us. Meditation is a way of dis-covering, i.e., removing the cover, of this God within us, and seeing him in us and around us. God is everywhere, but much more profoundly he is within ourselves.

3. *Jnana* and *Bhakti* Meditation

There are two kinds of meditation: that of the yogi and of the devotee. Yogi is one who follows the way of wisdom and devotee or *bhakta* is one who follows the way of devotion. Accordingly we have mainly two types of meditations: the *jnana* or wisdom type and the *bhakti* or devotional type. In *Jnana* type meditation more emphasis will be given for knowing by becoming. Hence the method is summarized as *sravanam*, listening the word of God, *mananam*, pondering over it and *Nididhyasanam*, continued remembrance until one realizes it in oneself.

This method is drawn from the upanishadic text which says: "The inner self within us is to be heard, to be meditated upon and to be realized" (*Brahadaranyaka. Up. II. 4.5*). Beyond and beneath the experiences of our body and mind, which both together form our outer self; there is an inner Self within us. In India we call this the Atman, the Self. The German *atmen* (to breathe) is etymologically related to the Indian atman. Atman is our inner breath of life, but not of the body. The bodily breath is a symbol of this breath of the Divine Spirit abiding within us. Christians all over the world generally call this 'the Holy Spirit'. Whatever name we give it, its nature is consciousness and love. It is this Self that is to be listened to, meditated upon and realized. Prolonged meditation slowly works out this realization. This does not mean that the realization is the automatic result of listening and meditation. It is the abiding Atman or Spirit who reveals himself to the searching soul and illumines it with his ineffable light.

In *Bhakti* meditation, the devotee is more attached to the visible form of God, whose image the devotee

concentrates on or sees enthroned in his or her own heart. The approach is very personal and God is also looked at as a person who loves and saves us. Here also concentration on the Lord is what matters. But the *Bhakta* will spontaneously burst out and sing a bhajan or *namajapa*, i.e., singing the holy names of the Lord. *Bhakta* looks at the Lord with great love, devotion and a sense of surrender, listens to him, surrenders to him totally and becomes one with him.

4. The Transforming Power of Meditation

Whether *Jnana* or *bhakti* method you adopt, meditation has great transforming power. The Indian text says: "One who knows Supreme Brahman, becomes Brahman" (*Mundaka Up.* III.2.9). This does not mean that we become another God, but we become God-like, more and more divine. Meditation is a profound concentration, i.e., fixation of attention on one point, be it a thought or an image of a person. We draw this image or thought into ourselves and allow ourselves to be characterized by it. For example, if I meditate Jesus, I allow myself to be

characterized by the virtues and qualities of Jesus. I put on his consciousness and spirit. If I am sincere in this process, my action will follow suit. I will be more gentle, more loving, more serving, just like Jesus was to other persons. If I meditate on a 'saying' of Jesus, my attention may be focused on his word. Such meditation may be more of *jnana* type. But here also transformation of my consciousness by the word of God, which is meditated, is more important. The main purpose of meditation is self-transformation.

“You become what you meditate”

St. Francis De Sales says: “First you look at, then you participate in, then you imitate, at last lose yourself in the thing you meditate.”

Morning Meditation (A 6)

The Word of God: *Sabdam*

Please be seated comfortably. Relax and be concentrated. Control your thoughts and senses; start breathing rhythmically and relaxingly and get into the breathing rhythm. Breathe in fresh air, and breathe out foul air, get purified in body and in mind.

Motionless, holding your body, head and neck erect, fix your attention on the Word of God which was in the beginning, and which pervades all beings in creation. Tranquil and fearless, steadfast in one-pointedness of attention with mind controlled, fix your thought on the word, the Divine Consciousness, which is the source of all creation and which is abiding within you as inner light and consciousness.

* * *

1. This word is called *sabdam*, the utterance of which is the symbol *om*. *Om* is the shortened form of *aum*, and they are the beginning, middle

and end of the vowel sounds in Sanskrit literature. *Aum* is therefore, the beginning, middle and end of everything, something similar to Alpha and Omega in the Greek Alphabet. Now we start singing the *mantra* about the word *sabdam*. The *sabda* mantra is:

Om sabdam = *om* the word

Adi sabdam = the primal word

Anamta sabdam = the infinite word

Anahata sabdam = the unuttered word

Brahma sabdam = the Divine word, or the word which is God.

Sit relaxed. First listen the whole, and second time repeat (*mantra* is chanted or played on tape)

* * *

2. Both Hinduism and Christianity consider God as the Word. God is consciousness and consciousness is an inner Word, utterance, light, arising from the inner self-illumination of Being.

Hence India sings:

Om sabdam: om, the word.

Adisabdam: the primal word.

* * *

Let us now focus our attention on this Word that was in the beginning. Gospel of St. John says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God and the word was God (Jn. 1:1).

Focus your attention on this Word, it is formless and invisible. It is consciousness, yet incomprehensible. It is the inner life of every Word we utter; yet it is not articulated by any word we utter. This Word ever remains a mystery, but gives meaning to every word we speak. In Him, the Word, was meaning. In Him was life.

Silence

3. An Indian text says:

This in the beginning was the Lord of the universe. His Word was with him. He contemplated and said: "I will deliver this word so that he will produce and bring into being all this world" (*Tandya Maha Brahmana* XX, 14,2).

The primordial Word is creative. He is the source of everything we see here.

As Gospel again says:

All things were made through him; not one thing in all creation was made without him (Jn. 1:3).

Focus your attention on this all-pervading Word, the architect of all creation. All beauties, all life has originated from this Word; the ineffable Word, the incomprehensible word. We contemplate him in silence.

Silence

Let us now chant the sabda mantra.

4. When you see a holy person whom you like, please think that this Word, as light and love, is somehow operating in this person. Nobody can do anything good without the help of this Word. Christians in the whole world believe that this Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. He loved everyone. He served everyone. We see the shining light of this Word in the person of Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus, you can focus your attention on Jesus for a moment, and see how the Word, which is in itself Divine Consciousness, shine forth in Him.

If you have ever admired a person, please look at him/her and see how the Word, is reflected in him/her, in his/her words and actions.

The same should happen in us as well. The Divine Word, the source of all light dwells in all of us. As inner consciousness he gives us light which is a higher form of life. "In Him was life and it became light of mankind" (Jn. 1.4).

5. As we conclude this meditation, let us focus our attention on this Word abiding in our own hearts. The Word abides within us, and becomes our inner Self, the spiritual or divine power from within. Just feel his presence within and get absorbed with this presence. The Word is everywhere. But more especially He is in our heart as inner awareness or consciousness. Let us meditate and get melted in Him. (Silence)

And now we will conclude finally chanting the *sabda-mantra* once again.

Om shabdam

Evening Meditation (B 6)

Meditation on Fire

Fire is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to fire. The Lord, who designed fire and resides in fire, yet is other than fire, dwells in your speech and is the eternal source of all meaningful words you ever utter.



As sparks arrives from fire so do words arrives from inner consciousness, the intense form of burning ardour (*tapas*) kept in our heart. He who dwells in fire dwells in speech.

* * *

Fire is considered to be the symbol of priest, who brings offerings to the Lord and utter *mantras* (sacrificial formulas) over them. Words without the fire of

the Spirit with them are dead sounds and useless symbols. Fire makes words powerful as fire-born sparks are infinitely potential.

* * *

We all are priests, bringing offering of our own selves to be sacrificed in the fire of *tapas*, the fire of love, the fire of holocaust.

Fire gives us warmth, so does our words of love and encouragement convey friendly assurance to others. Fire spreads far and wide, so does our love and concern for others. Fire dispels darkness, so does our words arising from fire of sacred wisdom, dispels darkness from within us and from others.

* * *

Let us love brother fire, be grateful to him and preserve him in the temple of our heart as the Holy Spirit, the fire from heaven.

Silence

Sing the hymn of St. Francis on brother fire.

Seventh Day

DIVINE SERENITY:
SAMADHI



Introduction

We have started our course on meditation as a journey. Now, as we reach the last step of this meditation, we are reaching, the depth within us.

Meditation is a journey from outer world, which is our larger self, to the inner world, which is our interior self. As the depth of a sea, which is turbulent outside, is peaceful and serene, so is also our human self. Though it has an outer layer of senses and the world of constant changes, it has also an innermost layer of perfect peace. Through meditation we arrive at this centre. When we reach this centre, which is the depth within us, we rest. We are in perfect equilibrium or equanimity, not being pulled hither and thither by the fancies of our mind nor by the desires

of the senses. This is called the blessed state of *samadhi* or equanimity.

1. *Samadhi*

The word *samadhi* is composed of the Sanskrit word *sama*+*dhi*, which means equal-mindedness. A spiritual person is a person of equanimity. He/she can look at a friend and foe with equal mind. He can remain in peace, whether he is praised or blamed; he/she accepts happy and unhappy incidents of life with a mind of serenity and peace. This does not mean that this person is made of an arid stuff, is devoid of any human feeling, is dry and insensible to his own and other people's feelings. Rather this serene person is really more inclined to laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep. But this is done with awareness, not on the spur of the moment, as a victim of his own emotions, so much so, that he can also control the one who laughs and console the one who weeps. This ability is there, because his/her own depth which is serenely balanced is not led by the fleeting desires arising from his senses or

mind, but from the depth which is serenely balanced. This is the state of *samadhi* or equanimity.

2. The State of *Samadhi* is the Result of Integration

The state of *samadhi* is not a state of negative resting. It is not an inner or spiritual sleeping. It is a state of intense awareness and is the result of integration of the outer layers in the innermost layer of Divine Consciousness within us, which is the word, the Logos, abiding within us. *Samadhi* is a profounder consciousness, a participation of the human consciousness in the consciousness of God.

The word yoga means integration. *Rajayoga*, the kingly yoga, of Patanjali is a way of integration, of interior union of all layers of life in a human being. It is not the denial of some in favour of the other. Neither hedonist gratification of the senses, nor the spiritualist total denial of the senses, is welcome. What is needed is an ascetic approach of integrating the senses and the mind in the Spirit. It is the power of

the abiding Spirit that gives us power to rise above the fleeting desires of the senses and of the mind, so that we can remain steady in *samadhi* or equanimity.

3. How does Meditation Brings about Integration and Serenity?

By a process of silencing the senses and the mind, meditation leads us to the inner recess from where God's light and delight shines forth as a single gift. God's light is the light of the Spirit, the gift of wisdom and understanding flowing from the Spirit abiding within us. The silencing of the senses and the mind in fact reminds us of the spirit of mortification, a word very much used in the traditional Christian spirituality and asceticism. Mortification is a way of self-control. Silencing the senses and the mind is also a way of self-control, mastery over the senses and the swift becoming process of the mind, which Patanjali call *citta-vrtti*. The Spirit who abides within us awakens us, enlightens us and guides us into this inner depth. In this sense this is not a journey done by human endeavour alone, but certainly by divine

assistance from the very beginning, as the Christian tradition has always held. An ancient upanishadic text also confirms the same. "This atman is not attained by instructions or by intelligence or by learning. By him whom who choses is the Atman attained. To him the Atman reveales hisown being" (Katha Up. II, 23)

Once we attain the Spirit, i.e., once we reach the Atman within us, the Spirit's light becomes our light, the Spirit's joy becomes our joy, the Spirit's wisdom becomes our wisdom. I summarize this with my favourite words: "The light and delight of the Lord". Let us be characterized by that. Because God's wisdom and joy is steady and serene, as we participate in God's wisdom and joy, our consciousness also becomes more and more steady and serene. This is the secret of *samadhi* or equanimity of a spiritually realized person (*yoga-yuktatma*). He looks friend and foe alike, accepts praise and blame with equal mind. In other words he participates in the consciousness of God who sends his rain over good and bad per-

sons alike and allows his sun shine upon good and evil people (Mt. 5:45).

4. The Dark Night and the Passive Journey of the Soul

St. John of the cross is talking about the active and passive nights of the soul. In the active night the soul takes pain to control the desires of the senses and the mind that it may not be led astray by the forceful pulls and pushes of the desires of the human flesh. This is one way of silencing the senses. But then he speaks about the passive night in which the soul passes through, the darkest night of “non-knowing and doing” through which God directly purifies and prepares the soul for his own more intimate and personal communication. In this state there is a perfect ‘cessation of activity of the mind’, a *citta-vrtti-nirodha*, as Patanjali puts it, but with simultaneous operation of an intense inner awareness, through which the soul is guided to perfect serenity and equanimity. Unagitated by daily events, whether pleasing or displeasing, the soul is led forth through a life of

complete and unconditional surrender, serenity and peace. This is the state of *samadhi*, *hessychia*, as the Fathers of the East called it or of *nepsis* as the mystics of Greece understood it. Equanimity is the result of Integration. The world, the senses and the mind are finally integrated in the divine centre where light and delight abides, wherefrom serenity and peace flow forth.

5. Conclusion

Spiritual people are peace emanating. "My peace I give to you," (Jn. 14:27) says Jesus. Let us also give the peace we receive from God to all others, to all creatures, to the whole world.

"Let all beings be happy".

Morning Meditation (A.7)

Search for Divine Serenity (*Shanti*)

Introduction

As we have seen, *samadhi* is a result of integration of our outer self in the inner self. To the outer self belong our world, our senses and the mind. The outer and the inner self are not two separate entities, artificially put together, but one single being of enfleshed consciousness or embodied self. It was perfectly integrated, the inner inspiring the outer and the outer reflecting the inner. This was the paradise, the original rhythm in which God placed the human beings. But this was distorted by sin, by the Ego, the *Ahamkara*, the counter centre the individual self made in itself, instead of the Divine centre or God. Ego wanted to make its world bigger and bigger.

When the desires of the ego are silenced, the fleeting awareness of the mind stilled, the meditating person comes to a state of serenity (*shanthi*). The word *sham* means to pacify. *Shanthi* is thus a stilled state of

pacification, that is pacification of all our inordinate tendencies, the rebellious waves of desires and thoughts that disturb us. But peace which we receive from God and is the result of integration is not mere negation of disturbances; rather it is our participation in divine serenity. God is the eternal source of peace. This peace comes from inside and not from outside. It is the result of our anchoring in God, as a ship well anchored in the middle of a roaring ocean.

Meditation on *Shanthi*

1. Sit relax for meditation. Focus your attention on Jesus the risen Lord, who promises peace to you. The parting gift of Jesus is peace, divine serenity.
2. Start breathing, relax, get into the rhythmic flow of your breath.
3. As you breath in and out, let your limbs relax and rest peacefully
4. Once the rhythm is set, body is relaxed, focus

your attention on peace, which Lord our God breathes into you. Breathe-in the peace divine, breathe out all your worries and anxieties which time and again resurge from within.

5. Keep breathing and relax.

Silence

6. In the Bible we read how Jesus breathed his Spirit and peace together to his disciples.
7. Imagine yourself seated in the upper room with the disciples of Jesus.
8. Look at their anxious eyes and wearied faces. There is no peace in them.
9. Suddenly Jesus appears as a flash of lightening. The disciples marvel and become joyful.
10. Jesus greets them saying: "Peace be with you." The result of re-establishing order or harmony is peace. Depth is serene even of a sea with turbulent waves.
11. Jesus breathes on them saying: "Receive my

Spirit". Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of peace. Both are breathed together.

12. Let Jesus breathe his Spirit of peace on you. Let the breath of Jesus fall on you.
13. Now you move to an awareness meditation on peace, leaving all your limbs in rest and relaxation, and above all, in the peace of Christ.
 - Feel your head. Let the breath of the Master fall on your head. Let the peace of the Lord flow from your head like a living fountain.
 - Feel your eyes. Let the peace of the Lord be in your eyes. Let your eyes rest.
 - Feel your ears... Your nostrils... Your lips... Your entire face.
 - Let the peace of the Lord shine upon your face.
 - Feel your neck... Your shoulders... Your arms... Your chest... Your abdomen...

Your waist... Your legs: all resting in the peace of the Lord.

14. Do this exercise again and again until you feel completely resting in the Lord.
15. All your body is now resting and relaxing, all your limbs are now in peace and serenity. Let peace and divine serenity gently flow through all your limbs.
16. In this divine serenity of your body and mind, enter into the inner core of your being, where the Lord of peace abides. He says: "My peace I give to you." (Jn. 14:27)
17. Keep breathing, receiving the peace of the Lord.

Silence

Before concluding let us breathe peace to all creation

1. Remember the great Indian prayer "Let all beings be happy"

2. If we are filled with peace and joy we can breathe out the same to all creation
3. Remember your home, and all who stay there. Breathe the peace of the Lord to them...
- 4) Remember people with whom you work; at least two in person, breathe peace to them.
- 5) Your dearest friends, breathe peace to them.
- 6) Those who offended you, breathe peace to them.
- 7) All creation, breathe peace to all of them.

Silence

Let us now conclude chanting of *shanty mantra*: *Om Shanti....Shanti.... Shanti....*

Evening Meditation (B 7)

Meditation on Humans

The human being is like honey to all beings. All beings are like honey to the humans. The Lord who designed all beings and resides in all beings, dwells

within you and becomes the innermost Self of your being. Meditate the Inner Self.

Silence

The divine Self within your individual self is the Atman, the divine Spirit within you. We call him the Holy Spirit. It is the innermost breath, the ultimate source of your being and activities. He is the inner controller of all your activities. As the Wine operates in an through the branches, the Spirit of the Lord abides in you and operates through you.

Silence

He gives you breath divine. He opens up your third eye, the eye divine. He strengthens you with life divine. Know Him, experience Him and realize Him.

Be honey to all other human beings. One, who dwells in you, dwells in everyone. As you are dear and precious to the One who dwells in your heart,

everyone, in whom the same Lord dwells, should be dear and precious to you.

Love your neighbour; respect him/her, serve him/her. Your divine love is best expressed in your human love. "Whatever you do to this little one is done to me" (Mt. 25:40).

Let us create a more human world to live in and make our world a real symbol of the Kingdom of God in heaven and the divine world within.

Silence

Sing the hymn: "Make me a channel of your peace"

