

Why Do We Need Spiritual Knowledge?

Bhartruhari was an ardent devotee, poet, scholar, and a role model on the path of spirituality. Once upon a time he was contemplating on his fallacies and misdeeds. He said to himself, "Out of ignorance I behaved like an elephant in rut thinking that there is no one superior to me. Because of the divine vision of sages and their teachings, I learnt the truth. As a disease can be cured by taking appropriate medicine, the fickle mind can be subdued by the *darshan* [sight of a holy person] and teachings of the sages and scholars."

In this expansive universe, of what magnitude is the body of a human being? What is your form? What sort of a man are you? In the infinite space, of what magnitude is the sun? In that solar system, the earth is like a miniscule entity. Asia is still smaller in comparison to the earth. In Asia, India is still smaller. Andhra Pradesh is a small state in India and Anantapur district is a still smaller piece of land. Prashanti Nilayam is a smaller place in the district and the room in which you stay is still smaller. And in your room, you occupy a very small area.

Hence what could be the place for your ego compared to the universe in its totality? This is delusion out of ignorance! As one dwells upon humanness, one can understand the true and eternal aspects of philosophy. A train runs at a speed of 50 miles per hour, a flight at 500 miles per hour. Light travels at a speed of 5 crore miles per hour. We are at a distance of 23 lakh crore miles from the stars. The sun appears brightest to us because it is the nearest to us. The sun is also a star. What could be the reason for the faith that humanness is itself Divinity and the reason for transforming humanity into Divinity in this universe?

Three types of knowledge

Knowledge is essential to know the truth. In the circumstances prevailing today, knowledge is being understood as of three types. In the normal level, truth is understood as truth and untruth as untruth. This is considered natural knowledge. In the intermediate level, truth is believed as untruth and untruth as truth. The illusory world is believed to be true. What is beyond the comprehension of the senses is believed to be untrue. Hence the belief in natural forces and the non-existence of Divinity is considered knowledge at the intermediate level.

The true spiritual knowledge is believed as that where there are no differences, and all is one. '*Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat, Sarvam Brahma Mayam Jagat*'—the entire universe is Lord Vishnu, the entire world is Brahman. This is the quintessence of the

spiritual knowledge. For one to assimilate the spiritual knowledge, the natural knowledge is necessary. Only after experiencing this can one gain the eligibility for receiving the spiritual knowledge.

Knowledge is like mother. Everything has manifested from knowledge. 'Naasti Matru Samo Guru'—there can be no other teacher greater than one's mother. No one is trying to experience the personification of knowledge in the mother. Neither the youngsters nor the elders of today are trying to understand this divine principle. The root cause of this problem is the modern education system. Because of the modern education, people are adopting the ways that suit the mind and not that which is good for them. They are transforming their sweet and tender hearts into rocks. They are further losing the power of discrimination.



Once upon a time Jawaharlal Nehru asked Mahatma Gandhi as to why he was sad. Gandhiji answered, "How stone-hearted the students are becoming today? What good can these students do to the society? This is my only worry."

Education is for life, not merely for a living

A young woman today aspires to be a good wife but not an exemplary mother. A student today does not aspire to be an exemplary father but an attractive husband. They forget that they should become exemplary fathers. Adding to this, parents encourage such education that promotes all these. A typical father in today's society does not want his son to be a man of virtue. He wants his son to be a man of great education. Those parents who aspire for transforming their children to be men and women of virtue alone are worthy. Worldly education is not the lone goal of life. Virtues are the backbone of life. Education is for life, not merely for a living. For all this, spiritual thought and spiritual path is highly essential.

Devotion is that which does not allow parting of a devotee from God. That which does not separate a devotee and God, that binding force is devotion. Indians compared devotion to the sacred river Ganga. Ganga means that which is pure, blemishless and of prime significance. Ganga received recognition and fame in the entire universe. Thus, devotion has to be pure, blemishless, and selfless. Human activity has to be in accordance with devotion. This is compared to river Yamuna. All those activities undertaken to please God are comparable to Yamuna. Hence all the activities performed to please God are the replications of the river Yamuna itself. Selfish and self-fulfilling activities are related to Lord Yama (the God of death). The former is Yamuna and the latter is Yama. In the world today, both devotion and activity are seen, but the undercurrent (*antarvahini*), Saraswati is not seen. The

river Saraswati is hidden and undisclosed. The latent knowledge is not visible to us. This knowledge is the true knowledge. Such knowledge aids in subduing the senses.

Ravana [the demon king] had learnt 64 disciplines of education whereas Rama learnt only 32. Even though Ravana was an expert in more disciplines of education than Rama, he has been labeled as stupid and ignorant. What could be the reason for this? Despite his education, he was enslaved to his senses and therefore was pronounced stupid. Lord Rama subdued His senses. All educated people are not knowledgeable. They may be literate. But the educated person who has gained control over his senses is truly a knowledgeable person. Hence those people who realized this inner significance were portrayed through the element of devotion in them.

The need for repeated spiritual instruction

A devotee should not get disgusted at any point of time. He should not get vexed despite his repeated listening to the same teachings or repeated eating of the same type of food. Swami may be repeatedly speaking of the same thing time and again. He may be telling the same things that He has told earlier. How do you reason it out?

You are taking food repeatedly for the same stomach. You have been washing the same face many times a day. Why? Food once taken gets digested and we have to have food again. Similarly, you may forget things you have heard earlier. So, to recollect the forgotten things you have to listen to them frequently. You should not feel disinterested. For example: You started taking tea or coffee 15 or 20 years back. You are never bored of taking it even though you have been taking it daily for 15 or 20 years. Every time you take coffee or tea it gives you new enthusiasm and excitement. If it is delayed by 2 minutes you may have a headache. You don't feel uneasy to drink coffee or tea 4 or 8 times a day because you like it.

Unfortunately, some people are disinclined to listening to spiritual talks, experiences, or examples that convey profound meaning. During a spiritual talk they either sleep or have a headache. If not these two, they recollect undesirable thoughts and ideas. Even if such unfortunate people listen to innumerable spiritual talks, it would be of no use.

So, even though you may have listened to such spiritual instructions a lot of times, it is necessary that you listen to them once again to remember them well. One should experience the joy of devotion unceasingly without having the slightest feeling of disinterestedness. You should not feel disinclined to it even for a second. The Chakora [mythological] birds may feel bored of flying in the moonlit night sky. A cuckoo may get bored of singing. As one drinks more and more nectar, he may get vexed of it. But when it comes to God and devotion, one should not be indifferent. This is the true symbol of devotion. Such pure thoughts should develop in the hearts of the students.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 22*

108 Names of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

We've been provided with the 108 Names describing the wondrous glories of our Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. But of what use should we put these descriptive attributes of the Divine to? Perhaps mere repetition of these names is not what the Lord had in mind. For if you study each one of these aspects you discover the Lord being ever willing to help you no matter what your intention is. [This is] whether it be the glorification of the Lord, the sincere inquiry to comprehend the munificence of the Lord or the need to request His ever-present all-encompassing help. His grace is contained in each name ready to be called forth in answer to your hearts yearning. Can this kind of love and grace be found anywhere else?

In becoming more familiar with the 108 Names of the Lord it is suggested that as a practice you study one name until you experience the essence of Baba's presence contained in each name. One aspect of this process is writing the name and the English translation and focusing on it during the day.

When we remember to turn to the Lord with our fullest devotion, He is there ever present to bless us with His divine grace and love!

~Carey Lubow, Utica, NY



Being in Sai Presence

Rajdeep Singh was a student at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from 1989-1992. Formerly he was with the Indian Navy and is currently a pilot with Indigo Airlines.

Was it a pleasant coincidence, a miracle, or a fruit of my past *karmas* [actions] or was it just His infinite grace? It is all beyond my comprehension; but whatever it was, my gratitude toward that unknown phenomenon would remain perpetual. My beloved Lord Sai took me under His protective umbrella to make a man out of me, a man who will be worthy of His Name. Before the memorable event, when He took me in His Institute, I was just a lump of clay of no use to anyone. He came and made

a lamp out of me, filled me with the oil of *bhakti* [devotion], and the wick of self-sacrifice. He lit the fire of service to the wick, so that it may burn and burn to give light to all around by serving others.

It is my prayer to Bhagavan, from the core of my heart, that the oil and wick of this lamp remain for ever and ever, and the fire of service continues for all time to come. Earlier I was in the darkness, but now, by His Divine love and grace, I am coming out of this darkness slowly but steadily. And it gives me a great joy that being in the presence of our Sai Mother, a change for the better is coming with each passing day.

Bhagavan came into my parents' life way back in 1976, and since then His infinite grace has been flowing ceaselessly to our family. It all started in June 1975. My father, who is in the Army, was then posted in the North-Eastern area. He developed pain and swelling on his left hip/thigh. The army doctors diagnosed it as a recurrence of old athletic injuries and treated him till October but without any relief. There had been no relief to his ailment even though he had been treated at Army hospitals. Homeopathy treatment also was of no avail. During childhood, my father was religious and used to say his prayers regularly. But as he grew, he had stopped praying altogether.

Bhagavan's will was unknowingly and silently at work

Seeing no relief from his ailment, my father turned to God and began reading selected Sikh prayers, and it became a daily routine to do so. His faith in God reignited. Due to his illness and lot of hospitalization, his promotion though overdue was not given. And it is now that the will of Bhagavan began working. A colonel's wife, who had not met my parents but had only heard of father's illness, came to see him. She talked at length about Bhagavan and His miracles of healing, but these had had no effect on my father. The lady gave the book—*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram (Part 3)*—to my father, who reluctantly took it with no intention to read it. However, his curiosity made him turn some of the pages and he began to read it. He felt in tune with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and Guru Nanak. The more he read, the greater was the intensity of having Lord's *darshan*. My mother, too, began reading the book.

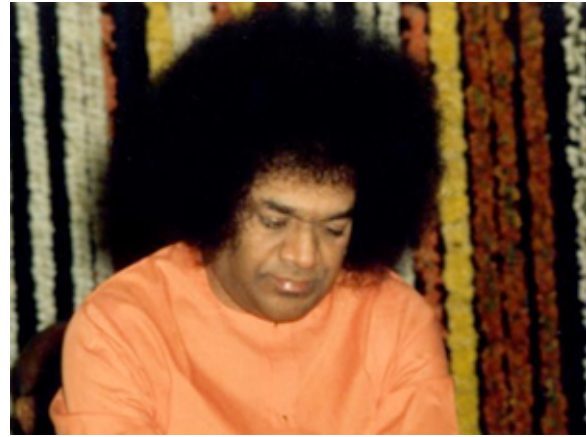
A few days later, father noticed fragrance coming from the book—*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*. On a Sunday, when the colonel and his wife visited father, he narrated the incident of fragrance. They, too, smelled the book and were overjoyed. It was the fragrance of *Vibhuti* [sacred ash], and actually it was the omnipresence of Bhagavan to make the ailing person feel that everything will be all right soon. The first miracle was that since the day father started reading this book, his health started improving. He could now sit for longer periods of time and had less difficulty in walking and standing. His faith in Bhagavan's infinite love and grace deepened.

In the latter half of July 1976, by His will my parents and two elder sisters came to Puttaparthi. As I was young, they left me with my grandparents at home. On arrival at

Prasanthi Nilayam, my father had expected that Bhagavan would call them soon for interview. It was, however, several days later that the interview was granted by Bhagavan.

During the interview, Bhagavan materialized *Vibhuti* and gave it to mother. He then jokingly reminded her of her cribs against Him. Touching father's left hip, He asked, "How is your leg and back?" This surprised father for whereas most people knew about the leg, he had not mentioned the accompanying pain in the back to anyone, not even to mother. Continuing, Bhagavan said, "Don't worry, it will be okay by October." Bhagavan directed that the *Vibhuti* should be taken for three days and it would be all right. Three days of *Vibhuti* cleared a two-year-old illness. Father stopped all medicines and was healed as assured and was promoted also.

Since that day the left leg, that had always been the weakling, has never had any problems, not even minor ones. It is as though an unseen protective sheath has been guarding it. Soon father began to realize that Bhagavan was not just a saint. For had not Bhagavan been answering whenever he prayed in the Sikh traditions to God? Slowly but surely he became a devotee of Bhagavan and has come to realize that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is none other than *Waheguru*, one of the names frequently used by the Sikhs for the one and only God; the Lord of the entire Cosmos.



What we have to realize is that the illness was a boon in disguise. Without it father would have remained immersed in his little world and missed the joy of spiritual life and faith in God. Bhagavan, who is the Principal Director in the drama of life, knows when and what to do. When my father's faith in the world and also its doctors had begun to crumble, He grabbed the opportunity to show father the light and the way.

Initially it was turning to the Holy Scriptures which, in turn, led to faith in God. From faith and prayer came grace in the Divine revelation and intervention of our Bhagavan. Father was able to realize that Bhagavan is the *Waheguru* who has come to this world in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to lead us out of the darkness. It is not that Bhagavan needs devotees of fame. It is we human beings who need Him. Without Him what is there in this world?

Guru Nanak has beautifully said, "If I please Him, it is pilgrimage enough; if not, nothing—no rite or toil—avails". So, it was by *His grace* that *He* gave us a place under His shadow and a mind that recognizes Him as "*Waheguru*".

Source: Sai Vandana 1990 (65th Birthday Offering)

Dhyanadarshana - 1

(Theory and Practice of Meditation)

*The following article was compiled and translated by B. Srinivas Murthy from
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Divine Discourses.*

Dhyana

Dhyana [meditation] is a self-motivated, self-suggested, and self-induced state of super-consciousness. It is an aid to the attainment of higher altered state of consciousness.

The nature of mind

If you think about an object incessantly, imagine its form vividly, remember it constantly, chant its name repeatedly, and brood over it passionately, it will make an indelible and everlasting impression on your mind. A mind capable of becoming insanely preoccupied with mundane ambitions will be equally capable of becoming magnificently obsessed with spiritual aspirations. Just as a lovely form lures a voluptuary, a divine form enraptures a devotee. If any form of the immanent Cosmic Self, omnipresent Divinity, and eternal reality is constantly reflected upon, It manifests Itself as a thought form, reveals Itself as a vision, and ultimately materializes Itself as a Divine Existent.

Man's mind is an immaculate mirror. It provides an undistorted image of an object reflected by it. A mind polluted by profane thoughts mirrors the same profane thoughts. The human mind is a *tabula rasa* [a mind that is a blank slate]. It is naturally pure, amoral, and neutral. If it is exposed to evil influences, it becomes evil. An immaculate mind will be dehumanized by diabolical desires. A mind irradiated by the lambent light of divine love becomes divinized and sanctified. Such a sanctified mind becomes a radiant mirror of the life divine.

What meditation means

An ordinary human mind is perpetually preoccupied with mundane matters. It is eternally engaged in the contemplation of its environment. To attain a higher altered state of consciousness, this mundane mind must turn inward and concentrate its attention on the inner personal self. In other words, meditation is mental regression from extreme extroversion to profound introversion.

The vast universe around us is in an eternal state of dynamic equilibrium. Our external world is in a state of perpetual flux. All material objects, the ents and entities of this restless universe are mutable and transient. They have illusory forms and are evanescent existents confined to our spatiotemporal continuum. All worldly values are purely relative and have no absolute worth. Meditation is the search for that noumenal reality that lies behind the phenomenal appearances created by our conscious sensations, perceptions, and conceptions.

Five-dimensional personality of man

Man is a microcosmic replica of the macrocosmic creation. His body is composed of *panchabhutas* or the five primordial principles of earth, water, air, fire, and ether. He is animated by five *jnanendriyas* or the five doors of perception represented by his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin corresponding to the five sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Our knowledge of the external world is inferred from these visual, aural, olfactory, palatal, and tactile sense data. The human body is constituted by *panchakoshas* or the five subtle sheaths. It is energized by *panchapranas* or the five vital energies.

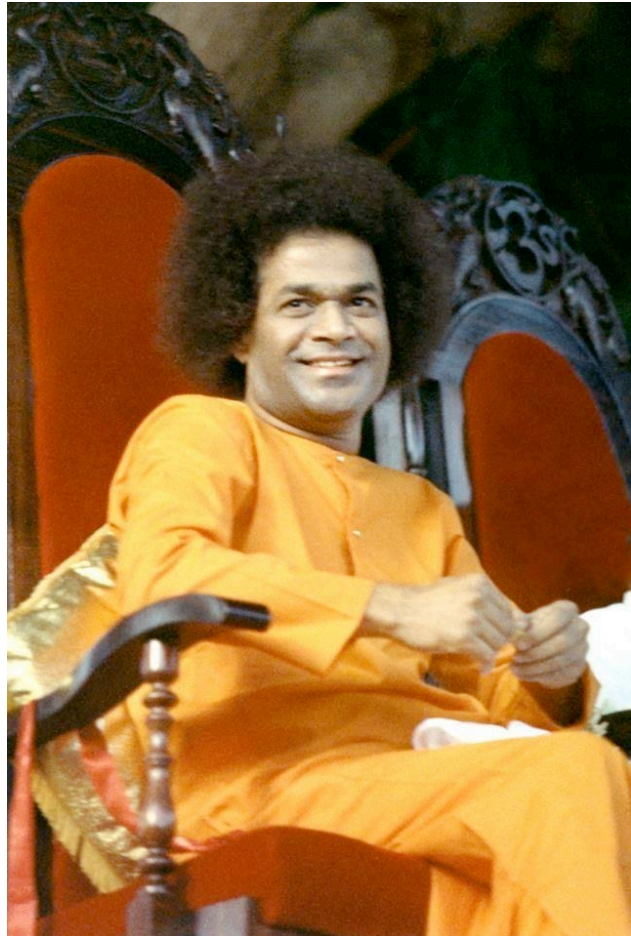
The ever-changing, evanescent, and irreversible human organism composed of *panchabhutas*, animated by *panchendriyas* (five *jnanendriyas* assisted by five *karmendriyas*), constituted by *panchakoshas*, and energized by *panchapranas* is subject to decay, disintegration, dissolution, and death.

Jyoti represents the immortal atman

But there is an asomatic, immutable, imperishable, indestructible, and supra-spatiotemporal subsistent that survives the dissolution of the *panchabhutas*, *panchendriyas*, *panchakoshas*, and *panchapranas*. It is the immortal *atman* or the discarnate personal self. It is essentially a divine *jyoti*, a lambent light radiating the golden glory of God, the Cosmic Self. It shines with an everlasting and inextinguishable effulgence.

Let us take the example of a tank full of water. Let each person remove a tumblerful of water from the tank. The level of water goes down and the tank becomes empty. Let us also imagine a heap of sand. If each person removes a handful of sand from the heap, the sand disappears.

Let us next consider the phenomenon of the eternal *jyoti* shedding its lambent light of love and divinity. It represents the immortal *atman*. An infinite number of *jyotis* can be lit with the aid of a single *jyoti*. But the brilliance of this primordial archetypal *jyoti* does not diminish. This original prototype continues to glow with the same pure



primal effulgence. It goes on gleaming eternally. Hence, a steadily shining *jyoti* is the most appropriate form to be meditated upon.

Ekagrata

Ekagrata is one-pointedness of mind. It is undivided attention concentrated on a definite form. It is the reduction of the span of attention to a single point. It is the convergence of all thought waves at the focus of attention. A large number of *upadhis* or practical aids are available for the attainment of *ekagrata* . Contraction of the normal span of attention leads to deep concentration. Likewise, expansion of the normal span of attention leads to diffusion of thought and the divergence of thought waves away from the focus of attention. In other words, *ekagrata* or one-pointedness becomes *anekagrata* or many-pointedness.

Consider the example of a vessel filled with water. If the vessel is steady, the water in it will also be steady. If the vessel is shaken, the surface of the water will be disturbed by little ripples. Then imagine a maelstrom in an ocean. The terrible waves thrown up by its deep whirlpools can wreck the largest steamers.

The lake of the human mind

The human mind is often likened to a lake. If the placid lake of man's mind is agitated by turbulent waves of passions and ambitions, he becomes unhappy and restless. In a similar manner, frequent and undesirable bodily movements like changing postures or making gesticulations cause irreparable psychic damage to human personality. They affect mind and body like the waves thrown up by a whirlpool. Young men endowed with robust bodies and energetic minds are likely to be excited by vicious thought waves generated by wrong postures and violent gestures. Body and mind interpenetrate each other. You cannot control your mind without disciplining your body.

Mind is disturbed by body movements

Man's body is interpenetrated with mind. Mind can be regarded as the embodied self. During meditation the body should be quiet, steady, and motionless. Then the mind interpenetrating with the body can attain tranquility. If bodily postures change continually, the mind gets agitated. A disturbed and worried mind makes the clear stream of consciousness murky and muddy. The uncontrollable meanderings of mind disperse its thought waves from the main focus of attention.

Mind is a power pack of energy

Man's mind is endowed with stupendous potential energy. It possesses innumerable unutilized and unmanifested potentialities. It is subtler than the subtlest form of matter. It is a power pack of preternatural energy.

Personal self is cosmic self

Let us fill a little cup with salt water from the sea. The water in the cup and the water in the sea are the same though the cup contains only an infinitesimal fraction

of the seawater. Likewise, the microcosmic personal self is the same as the macrocosmic universal Self.

Padmasana

The practice of *padmasana* or the cross-legged lotus posture is of paramount importance in meditation. A *sadhaka* [spiritual aspirant] should keep his backbone straight. No part of the backbone should be bent. Many youngsters walk like hunchbacks. Sitting straight is essential for all forms of meditation. Many men and women do not know how to sit straight. In course of time their backbones acquire the curvature of an easy chair. The head, shoulders, and back of a *sadhaka* should be erect. He should not recline backward, stoop forward, or bend sideward. The entire body should be quiet and relaxed. An imaginary straight line passing down through the center of the top of the skull of the *sadhaka* should be almost perpendicular to the seat on which he squats during meditation. The total mass of his body should be equally distributed and balanced around this imaginary axis. Those who cannot learn the *padmasana* may adopt the *sukhasana* or any convenient and practicable posture.

The importance of the cross-legged lotus posture technically known as *padmasana* cannot be overemphasized. Its regular practice is conducive to physical fitness and mental alertness. The practice of *padmasana* is an integral part of *dhyana* [meditation]. Its esoteric significance is closely connected with the *chakras* or plexuses.

Chakras

Man's body consists of a number of *chakras* or plexuses. A *chakra* is the center of a subtle network of nerves. A complicated and crisscrossed web of veins and arteries radiate from each *chakra*. In the opinion of occultists and clairvoyants, a *chakra* is a small circular segment where the subtle astral body coincides with the gross physical body. *Muladharachakra* is the perineal plexus situated in the perineum between the genital organs and the rectum. It is also known as the basal coccygeal plexus.

Kundalini shakti

Muladharachakra or the perineal plexus is the storage cell of *kundalini shakti*, the primal parapsychical energy latent in man. It is a subtle esoteric form of energy congealed around the *muladharachakra*. It is symbolically depicted in treatises on *yoga* as a small sleeping serpent with three coils and a half. It inhales and exhales rhythmically. It transmits super physical impulses along the subtle axis connecting the six occult plexuses. One-pointed attention, complete concentration, steady contemplation, and deep absorption sustained by strong self-motivation leads to the ultimate altered state of consciousness.

In the most profound state of meditation, the coiled serpent symbolizing the primordial energy of *kundalini* is slowly awakened from its spiritual slumber. The potential energy of *kundalini* gets converted into kinetic energy. It levitates slowly

along the subtle axis connecting the six *chakras* or plexuses viz., the aforementioned *muladhachakra* or the umbilical plexus, *anahatachakra* or the cardiac plexus, *vishudhachakra* or the pharyngeal plexus, *ajnachakra* or the brow plexus, and *sahasrarachakra* or the crown plexus. *Sahasrara* means a thousand-petalled lotus. It is regarded as the king of plexuses. It is situated at the top of the skull. When the awakened *kundalini shakti* reaches the *sahasrara chakra* an adept acquires preternatural powers. The communion of the personal self with the Cosmic Self is the ultimate goal of *dhyana-yoga*.

Voice of silence

The voice of silence is the voice of God, the immanent Cosmic Self. Hence, perfect solitude is a prerequisite for the practice of meditation. You may choose for meditation any convenient place you like, but it should be as clean as possible. A solitary spot, a serene atmosphere, and a spiritual environment promote pure thoughts, sublime sentiments, and unselfish emotions. A polluted place promotes polluted thoughts. Pollution is spiritually contagious. Pollution of the atmosphere pollutes mind and body. A *sadhaka's* attention is likely to be distracted by the diabolical thought forms created by a polluted environment. Serenity and solitude are essential for the purification and tranquillization of body and mind

`Solitude in multitude' and `Multitude in solitude'

When a large number of people have to practice meditation at one place they should not sit in an overcrowded manner. They must not touch each other. There should be no physical contacts during meditation. Mental tranquility and physical euphoria are essential for acquiring higher altered states of consciousness. Even in an overcrowded room `solitude in multitude' can be experienced if all sensory stimuli and responses are scrupulously avoided. *Sadhakas* should cooperate with one another in maintaining absolute silence.

In general, collective meditation is self-contradictory and self-defeating. Group meditation is a misnomer since no meditation can be practiced in an uncontrollable crowd. As meditation is a solitary spiritual exercise, the question of mutual collaboration does not normally arise except in telepathic communications. It is exceedingly difficult though not absolutely impossible to gain one-pointed attention in a large congregation. During congregational meditation a *sadhaka* may shut his eyes but his mind may wander from one thought to another. He is likely to become listless and restless. He may be tempted to see what others are doing. He is apt to indulge in comparisons. He is likely to forget that *sadhana* is a personal spiritual practice in which comparisons are invariably odious.

Each *sadhaka* should formulate his own unique spiritual program. He should not worry about others. He should try and listen to the still small voice of his own inner silence. It is only then that he can experience the most sublime divine afflatus, the highest altered state of consciousness. If two or three bangles are worn on each wrist the slightest movement causes a series of tintinnabulations. But if each wrist is adorned with a single bangle no sound is produced. The striking contrast between

the 'one' and 'two' is picturesquely expressed by the epigram: '*Ek niranjan do gadbad*' (one creates calm and two create a storm).

Meditation is reduced to an exercise in futility whenever two or more persons try to work together as a team. It is necessary to repeat that there can be no collaboration in meditation. However, it may not be always possible for a *sadhaka* to have a separate cell or cubicle for meditation. Nevertheless, it should be possible for every *sadhaka* to isolate himself physically from others, insulate his body and mind from all external and internal disturbances, and become a lonely island in a turbulent sea of distractions. He should try and withdraw himself into a spiritual shell of his own. He should cut off all sensory contacts with his physical environment. He must endeavor to confine himself to his own personal aura though he may be compelled by circumstances beyond his control to stay in the company of other *sadhakas*. It should be clearly recognized that a soul that has discovered its own inner tranquility can enjoy 'solitude in multitude' just as a sick soul suffers from 'multitude in solitude'!

Purity of mind and body

A *sadhaka* should cultivate ceremonial purity by keeping his body and mind clean. The human body is a tabernacle consecrated to its personal self that is identical with the Cosmic Self. A *sadhaka* should regard his body as a temple of the living God. He should purge his mind of all morbid emotions and fill his heart with divine love.

Preparation for meditation

A *sadhaka* should not practice meditation squatting on bare ground. The subtle occult force or esoteric energy generated during deep meditation is akin to a current of electricity. It is common knowledge that an electric circuit is connected with the earth to avoid accidents like electrocution and short-circuiting. The earth conducts an electric current and dissipates its high potential. Thus, many electrical hazards are either completely eliminated or partially minimized. The subtle current of esoteric energy generated during deep meditation flows along the backbone of a *sadhaka*. This esoteric energy should be utilized for acquiring higher altered states of consciousness. Hence, a *sadhaka* should always squat on a mat or a carpet during meditation. He may use an ordinary mat. It also serves as an efficient shock-absorber. A simple mat woven with *durbha* grass (a tropical grass considered sacred material in Vedic scriptures) or



tunga reeds (an aquatic weed growing in shallow streams) will be useful. It is necessary to reiterate that a *sadhaka* should never squat on uncovered floor during meditation. This preliminary precaution will protect him from the psychic and physical hazards involved in spiritual *sadhana*.

Every serious student of the spiritual science of noetics should remember that such rituals are only external paraphernalia. They do not form an integral part of meditation. They are only aids to the attainment of higher altered states of consciousness. Any cunning charlatan can squat on a mat made of weeds, practice *padmasana* or the cross-legged lotus posture, join his thumb and index finger in the form of *chinmudra*, and keep his eyes half closed. It may be a mere pose for hoodwinking gullible people. Unwary persons are fooled by such theatrical gimmicks. But an adept can easily distinguish genuine spirituality from spurious ritualism.

Man's mind is a mad monkey

A novice must try and transcend all trivial worries, wavering moods, fickle thoughts, inexplicable phobias, and unpredictable manias that torture and torment his monkey mind. Many students switch off the lights and settle down for meditation. But they cannot switch off their thoughts. One thought leads to another, sparking off a sort of mental chain reaction. It is the nature of mind to go on recalling, recollecting, remembering, reflecting, reasoning, thinking, and worrying. Man's mind is a mad monkey. It cannot spontaneously acquire *ekagrata* or one-pointed attention. It is like a monkey, who can never keep quiet. You may give him all sorts of sweetmeats. But he will go on scratching himself and jumping from one branch to another branch.

An idle man's brain is said to be a devil's workshop. It is dangerous to keep the mind idle. It must always have some work to do. It should never be given a holiday. An unpreoccupied mind destroys the individual himself. The human mind works without respite. It cannot rest even for a single split second. Its spiritual appetite should be whetted in order to prepare it for meditation. A slothful mind remains slothful forever. It is only an energetic mind that can develop strong self-motivation, for the cultivation of *ekagrata* or one-pointed attention, complete concentration, steady contemplation, deep absorption, and non-dualistic meditation.

Meditation is not concentration

Many lay persons believe that meditation and concentration are identical. They are not. Concentration is not a lower form of meditation. They are related but not similar. The first step in meditation is self-motivation. Self-motivation should enable a *sadhaka* to attain *ekagrata* or one-pointed attention. Contraction of the normal span of attention leads to concentration. A man might say that he has been meditating for many years and that he has not been able to achieve concentration of mind. But it is obvious that one need not practice meditation for cultivating concentration. Concentration is a natural mental faculty. It is a spontaneous intellectual activity. It is an integral part of all worldly activities. It is inseparable

from the *karma* [action] of human life. It can never be dispensed with as long as *karma* is being worked out. It is an essential element of all voluntary action.

In fact, you cannot do anything without concentration. If you have no concentration you cannot walk along a street, eat your food, write a letter, or read a book. When you read a book, you concentrate on the juxtaposition of letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. Thus, you try and grasp the meaning of words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and an entire book. Without concentration you cannot understand even a single word. In a similar manner, you cannot compose an ordinary letter decently without concentration of mind. Consider the example of eating your meal. When you sit down for your meal you have to distinguish *chutney* from *sambar* [lentil curry] without mixing them up. If you have no concentration, you cannot eat your food in a socially acceptable fashion. When you are walking along a road to go to your college you concentrate on the traffic to avoid accidents.

Concentration is such a common faculty that you need not make any special effort to acquire it. It is so universal and phenomenal that you need not even think about it. You need not practice meditation for acquiring mental concentration. If you try to do so you will be putting the cart before the horse. Thus, it becomes clear that concentration and meditation are two separate faculties though they are always interdependent and interconnected. Concentration is sensory, empirical, rational, logical, and intellectual; whereas meditation is suprasensory, supraempirical, suprarational, supralogical, and supraintellectual. Meditation is an intuitive and mystical experience. In short, concentration is a conscious activity and meditation is a super-conscious experience.

From consciousness to super-consciousness

Eyes see. Ears hear. The nose smells. The tongue tastes. The skin feels cold and warmth. Hands and feet do work. *Manas* [mind] discriminates. *Buddhi* [intellect] reasons. Eyes, ears nose, tongue, skin, hands, feet, *manas*, and *buddhi* are *indriyas*. Their functions depend on sensory impressions. Concentration is achieved when the activities of the various sensory and motor organs are organized, correlated, coordinated, synthesized, and synchronized. Concentration is an activity of the conscious mind. It is entirely dependent on the sense data supplied by sensory organs. It is always subservient to sensations. It can never be an independent mental faculty.

But meditation is a supramental experience akin to intuitive insight and mystical revelation. It can be described as a state of suprasensory experience or extrasensory perception. Since concentration is an indispensable natural activity, it must obviously form the foundation of meditation. The steady transition from concentration to meditation is the summum-bonum of spirituality. Concentration depends on *indriyas*, and the *indriyas* are regulated by mind. Thus, it is only by transcending the mind that the transformation of concentration into meditation becomes possible. Consciousness should evolve into super-consciousness.

[To be continued]

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1980

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Vidya and Bhakti

Q. Swami, I have heard people use the word '*amanaska*' [mind that is free of desires and thoughts] often. What does it mean?

A. This entire creation, when it is realized as but Seen by the eternal See-er, the Witness, simply disappears, as fog before the sun. That stage is known as *amanaska*.

Q. What happens to the knowledge?

A. Even that disappears!

Q. This Witness that you spoke of, where does it reside in the dream-stage?

A. It is in the *jivi* [individual]; it not only witnesses but it also weaves and creates everything it sees.

Q. And during deep sleep?

A. It is in the Full (modification-less) Reality.

Q. And in the fourth stage, the stage beyond deep sleep, the *turiya*?

A. It is merged in the *Iswara-sthana*, this changeless entity.

Q. What is meant by the term '*paramaartha*'?

A. *Parama artha*, that is to say, beyond and above this world limited by the body and the senses.

Q. They talk also of *parama-pada*. How will that be?

A. It will be devoid of *nama-rupa* or name-form and *kriya-rupa* or deed-form.

Q. Swami! Is God transcending the universe or immanent in the universe?

A. He fills the universe and is also beyond it; so there is no place outside Him; all places are inside Him; all names are His; no name is alien to Him.

Q. How is the Godhead who fills the universe to be referred to?

A. He can be called by various names: *Paramapada*—the Limitless Open, the *Paramaartha*, the *A-sarira* (the Not-Bodied), the *Paripoorna* (the fullest Full),

the *A-vaangmanogocharam* (the Un-graspable by word or thought). He has many names.

- Q. Is this *sat* [true], this entity, ancient or new, *Sanathana* or *Nuthana*?
- A. Of course, it is *Sanathana*, not *Nuthana*.
- Q. Which is the ultimate *Purushartha* [goal]?
- A. Why, Moksha, of course.
- Q. When talking of *vidya* [education], Swami, I have heard people mention four *vidyas*. What are they?
- A. Yes; they are *Aanveekshaki*, *Thrayee*, *Vaartha*, and *Dandaneethi*.
- Q. These names are all new to me. What exactly is *Aanveekshaki*?
- A. The *vidya* by which one is able to discriminate between *atma* and *anaatma*.
- Q. And *Thrayee*...?
- A. The *vidya* by which one can attain *swarga* or heaven through the appropriate rituals and *karma* [action].
- Q. What does *Vaartha* teach?
- A. Agriculture and other productive efforts.
- Q. What does *Dandaneethi* mean?
- A. The rulers and guardians of society rule and guard, according to this *vidya*; it is essential for earning and enjoying riches and crops.
- Q. Which of these plunge man into the cycle of births?
- A. All except the first, the *Aanveekshaki*.
- Q. The mastery of the mind is held essential for spiritual victory. But to purge the mind of all evil what are the virtues that we have to cultivate?
- A. There are four chief virtues: *Maithri*, *Karuna*, *Muditha*, and *Upeksha*.
- Q. I must trouble you, Swami, to explain these, too.

- A. Comradeship and the company of the humble and the good; affection for the Name and Form of the Lord—these are included in *Maithri*; *Karuna* is the kindness one feels toward the afflicted.
- Q. What is the virtue-called *Muditha*?
- A: *Muditha* is the joy one feels when meeting people who are charitable, who serve others, who help those in distress, etc.
- Q. *Upeksha*?
- A. Non-involvement, the feeling of unconcern at the wicked; neither loving them nor hating them.
- Q. Just like these four virtues, they also talk of four types of *bhaktas* [devotees]; what are they, Swami?
- A. My dear man, all the multifarious types can be included under four categories: the *aartha*, the *artharthi*, the *jijnaasu*, and the *jnani*. The *aartha* is the person who is tormented by agony or distress.
- Q. What does *artharthi* mean?
- A. Those who desire *artha* or wealth or spiritual power and for that sake worship God and pray to Him for that boon.
- Q. *Jijnaasu*, you said. Who are they?
- A. Those who seek liberation steadily and strongly and go in search of the Absolute.
- Q. And the *jnani*?
- A. He who has escaped from the dual consciousness, the *dwandwa bhava*; who has known his identity with the basic truth of the universe.
- Q. Tell us the names of some who have achieved fame through these types of *bhakti*, Swami. Then it will become clearer to us.
- A. Oh, there are plenty of names. Among *aartha-bhaktas*, I can tell you of Droupadi, Prahlada, Sakkubai; among the *artharththis*, Dhruva, Arjuna, and others; among the *Jijnaasus* are Uddhava, Radha; among the *Jnanis*, Suka, Sanaka, and others.

Source: *Prashnottara Vahini*

Thought of the MONTH

Courage

We should not allow trivial matters to dampen the spirit of enthusiasm. We should march forward with courage and conviction, unmindful of any hurdles and inconveniences in the way.... Ailment and suffering are but natural to the physical body. Sometimes even the sun is covered by clouds. But can the clouds ever diminish the effulgence of the sun? No. Just as the sun is not affected by the clouds, you too should remain unaffected by ailment and suffering. When you develop such courage, conviction, and determination, you will not be depressed or dejected by any suffering.

Whenever you encounter suffering either bodily or mentally, do not lose your cool. Do not get dejected. Instead, face the problem squarely and undertake activities that will instill a sense of courage and confidence in you. No doubt, situations do arise in life when we have to undergo sorrows and difficulties. When our loving parents depart from this world, we are in deep sorrow. Instead of losing our poise in such difficult situations, it is advisable to face the ordeal with courage, expressing gratitude to our parents for granting us the gift of this body.

~Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 37-2004

Man should be courageous. Lack of courage leads to doubts, despair, dejection, and depression. A person with a faultless and blemishless character shall never behave like a frightened, trembling sheep. Therefore, developing intellectual integrity and strength of conviction, man should proceed ahead and conquer the evils and temptations of the world.

~Summer Showers 1979 - Indian Culture and Spirituality

What is meant by personality? Does it mean height, weight, and a strong body? No, it is a mistake to think so. Undeterred by the sorrows and difficulties, one has to march forward with courage and adventure to attain God's love. That is the real meaning of personality. In fact, God has already granted such personality to every human being. Unfortunately, we fail to realize this truth. The word "person" implies a great Divine force that is granted by God to man. Our ancestors called this Divine force as "persona." This is a great gift God granted to every individual. We are unable to safeguard this great treasure. These sorrows and difficulties are like passing clouds that come and go. Why should we be afraid of them? We have the eternal divine principle immanent in our personality. Therefore, there is no need at all to be afraid of anything as long as we are constantly aware of our latent divinity. March forward with courage and conviction and achieve your life's goal. It is only to instill this feeling of courage in you and reinforce your faith in God that you are subjected to face certain anxious moments.

~ Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 37 - 2004

Man exhibits great mental and physical courage, on the battlefields and during adventures on land, sea, and air. He has evinced in history, vast reinforcements of courage inside him, to meet all varieties of obstacles. But the courage to give up entanglement with the material world is a great achievement. Valmeeki [who wrote the epic Ramayana] was a highway robber who waylaid and killed hundreds without hesitation; he was the slave of passion and emotion but, when the seven sages whom he waylaid one-night, counselled patience, forbearance, and self-inquiry, he turned heroically into the path of Rama (giving up the path of *kama* (lust)), and achieved immortality, immortal fame as the narrator of Rama's story. From the *rajasik* (passionate) stage, he transformed himself into *satwik* (balanced). The spiritual adventure, the spiritual leap from darkness into light needs extraordinary courage and Divine grace is the reward for courage.

~ Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 10 - 1970

“My mission is to raise the consciousness of man to a level at which he neither rejoices nor mourns over anything. In that supreme state, one is going through rebirth and death each moment, for these acts are one and the same, emerging from the formless into form and merging from the form into the formless. Then, there is no success of adversity, no joy or pain. When the devotee attains this Oneness, his journey toward Me ceases. For he will be with Me endlessly.”

~Sathya Sai Baba

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