

# SOME ASPECTS OF THE ESSENTIALS OF CORRECT MEDITATION

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We have been discussing some aspects of the essentials of correct meditation. When we actually gather ourselves for the purpose of a session in meditation, some special kind of streamlining of our minds is naturally called for because in the ordinary thinking process of our day-to-day existence, we are excluded from the objects of perception. Nothing in the world can be regarded as a part of our personal life. Everything stands outside us, and we use or put to a kind of utility things in the world, objects of sense, for our own purposes, which are the ends, and the objects themselves are the means to these ends. All things in the world are only instrumental in their value, and nothing is an end in itself. This is how we wrongly think.

But it is not true that anything in the world is an instrument of action. Everything is an end in itself. You should be able to distinguish between a means and an end. What do you mean when you say that something is an end in itself or when you say something is a means to an end and has only a utilitarian value? The distinction is not very difficult to appreciate because anything that you are harnessing, putting to use or considering as an instrument is not of ultimate value for you. Its value is only insofar as it is helpful to you in achieving a purpose. What purpose it is, it is left to you to decide. This is to condemn the objects of the world to the status of a slave. All slaves are instruments used by a master who wields them. If everything in the world, including friends and relations, colleagues, property and wealth, are of instrumental value only, you cannot love them from the bottom of your heart. Therefore, all affections in this world, relations of any kind, are artificial. They can break at any moment, and anything can be separated from you at any time. Bereavement infects every kind of human relation, and no one can have a permanent contact with anything in this world for a long time. This is how we think in terms of the objects of the world.

But in meditation, your attitude changes. Nothing in the world can be considered as an instrument because if the object of your meditation is also an instrument like any other thing in the world, then that is not the aim or the ultimate intention in your meditation. An object of meditation is the ultimate thing which you want to acquire or with which you want to unite yourself. But with an instrument there is no such attitude. You would not like to unite yourself with an instrument because you know that instrument is of tentative value only. It is not of any permanent utility.

The object of meditation is different from an object of sense. This is something you have to underline. An object of meditation is not a sense object. It is not something that the eyes see or the ears hear. It is the concept that transcends the sensoriness of the otherwise-objective character of your chosen deity. The chosen deity, the Ishta-devata, the great ideal of your meditation may also look like some object to the mind, inasmuch as when you close your eyes the mind will see it as being presented before you. The presented character of things is the objectivity thereof, and in this sense, because of the presentation of the object of meditation in a manner similar to any other object in the world, you are likely to make a mistake that it is also an object like any other object.

The difference between the object of meditation and an ordinary object of sense is again and again to be probed into, namely, that you do not want anything other than the object of meditation; therefore, it is not a means to an end. What you want is that itself on which you are meditating, but in the other cases, something else is in your mind. For example, you cannot love a motor car as an end in itself. It has a utilitarian value and it is of use to you only so far as it is capable of conveying you to some place. The reaching of the place is more important than the vehicle itself. Therefore, make not the mistake of thinking that your Ishta-devata, your object of meditation, is a sense object.

The other aspect of the matter is that your heart has to be in that object. It is not enough if you merely conceptualise. The feelings also are clubbed together with the understanding. In the ordinary perceptions of sense objects, the perceptual process through the senses need not necessarily be associated with a feeling – though in certain cases the feeling may also be there, but not always. You can see an object without feeling anything about it. Only very rarely do you feel something about a thing when you perceive it.

When you walk along the road to Rishikesh, you see some people and things along the way. You see them but do not feel anything about them, inasmuch as you are not vitally connected with their movement. The trees and the bushes on the roadside or the parapet wall on the side of the road are also objects of sense

which you see, but no feeling is attached to them. You do not bother about them. So these are illustrations of perceptions of objects where feelings are not associated.

But valuable things which you consider as highly meaningful to you attract your feeling, as when you see your dear friend or a very valuable object, a treasure, wealth of any kind, something which counts in your personal life. The object of meditation is that which cannot be effectively transmuted into the nature of the end that it is, and not a means, unless the feeling also is attached. The parapet walls on the roads there are not ends. They mean nothing to you. But suppose it is a wall made of bars of gold, with jewels attached; your mind will be pausing a while to look at it with a sense of feeling because of the value that you feel in gold, jewels, etc. In a brick wall, the value is diminished to such an extent that it is practically nothing.

It is difficult to accommodate yourself to the object of meditation in the sense of an object of affection unless you are able to foist upon this object all things that you would like to have in this world and in the hereafter. Your mind will not concentrate on that object unless all that you expect from anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances, can also be seen present in that object of meditation. You may go on sitting for hours together struggling to concentrate the mind and fix it on that object, but you will not be able to do so inasmuch as your heart has not accepted the total value of that object. It has only a segmented, fractional value. Again and again the lower mind, the instinct, will tell you that after all, it is one thing among many things, while the fact is that the Ishta-devata, or the chosen object, is not one among many. It is the thing which includes the values of everything else also in the world, but for which you would not have chosen it as your dear and near.

While you meditate, when you sit for meditation, if you carefully observe your thoughts, you will realise and feel that certain activities go on within yourself. What are the activities? In the earlier stages, there is a little struggle on your side because you sit for meditation with an intention to concentrate on one thing, and do not want the mind to entertain any thought other than the object of meditation. In ordinary sense perception, you do not bother about thoughts entering the mind. Suppose you walk on the road, as I mentioned. Hundreds of thoughts may enter your mind. A dog, a pig, a bird, a man, something here, something there are all visible to your eyes in a chaotic mass of sensations that pour into your mind when you walk in the marketplace, for instance, where you do not bother about excluding or including thoughts. You just leave them as they are, and there the matter ends.

But in meditation, there are certain thoughts that you would not like to entertain. You try to exclude certain thoughts, and shut them off. In the

Bhagavadgita, towards the end of the Fifth Chapter, there is a clue given to the process of meditation, a clue like a seed which develops into a larger exposition of the subject in the Sixth Chapter. This seed-like verse towards the end of the Fifth Chapter of the Gita is: *sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṃś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau; yatendriyamanobuddhirmunir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (Gita 5.27-28). These are two verses explaining what you should do in meditation. *Sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṃś*: All contacts are to be shut out by closing the windows of the senses. You do not want light or a breeze to enter your room, so you close the skylight, the ventilator, the doors and windows. Otherwise, everything will enter through the apertures. Shut off, cut off the connection with sensations of every kind.

One of the things that people generally do is to close their eyes and plug their ears, and imagine that objects are shut out. Actually, the shutting out of contact with the external things is not to be attempted merely by physically closing the eyes because the meditating principle is not the eye or the mind. You may close your eyes and not see a tree in front of you, but you will know that the tree is there. So here the shutting out of contact implies a psychological detachment taking place from any kind of association with things placed in space and in time. This is one of the suggestions in this verse. The restraining of the breath, the fixing of the mind in some part of the body, the intense development of an aspiration for the union of the soul with the ultimate goal of life, etc., are other suggestions given here.

So one of the things that takes place in the process of meditation in the early stages is the attempt to entertain certain thoughts and to shut out others. Therefore, you should first eliminate certain thoughts which are considered as not conducive to meditation by refusing to entertain them by effort of will. How would you succeed in driving out thoughts from the mind? Any amount of pushing them out will not be of much avail. One of the methods that you can adopt is to think the opposite of what you want to avoid. In the Yoga Sutras this is called *pratipakṣa bhavana*. The opposite of what you want to avoid is to be the thought in your mind, on which you hammer the idea again and again. If you want to entertain the thought of strength and not of weakness, then go on mentally chanting the name of Hanuman, the embodiment of tremendous physical strength. Go on saying, "Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman, Hanuman." The power of suggestion is such that after a few minutes you will feel a creeping sensation in your muscles. You will feel as if you have become strong. Similarly, any kind of negative thought can be driven out by the entertaining of a totally opposite thought of that thing: "Charity, goodwill, charity, goodwill, charity, goodwill, compassion, charity,

goodwill, compassion.” Go on chanting these words again and again so that the idea of ill will, hatred and greed may be eliminated gradually, stage by stage.

If you sometimes feel miserable, as a helpless nobody, as it were, in this world, and would like to entertain thoughts of nobility, divinity, then recite in your mind names of great incarnations: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, and so on. Chanting the names of personalities who are endowed with immense power and divine glory will also, by the act of the vibratory process of chanting, infuse such an energy into you. This is the effect of *japa* sadhana. *Japa* of the recitation of a particular formula is nothing but the adopting of a method of infusing into yourself forces which are otherwise external to you. So by the entertaining of thoughts which are the opposite of what you want to avoid, you may avoid negative thinking and entertain positive thoughts in respect of that object, so-called, which you regard as your Ishta-devata, your beloved ideal in meditation.

The first thing that takes place is the elimination of extraneous thoughts, and the second thing is the entertaining of positive thoughts. In the process of entertaining positive thoughts, again, there is a threefold factor. The threefold factor is the consciousness of your being there as a meditator, the consciousness of there being an object of meditation, and the consciousness that there is a process going on called meditation. All told, it is a streamlining of your mind in the direction of correct meditation. Four factors are involved: eliminating negative thoughts and entertaining a positive thought of a threefold character, namely, meditating consciousness, the object of meditation consciousness, and the process of meditation consciousness.

Unless you give sufficient time for meditation, you will find there is no palpable change taking place in you. If you have sat for meditation today for a certain length of time and found nothing visible taking place in your mind, it is an indication that you have not given sufficient time for it. You have to struggle to delimit the time that you generally give to other activities in the world in order that you may be able to devote more time for meditation. You should not be under the impression that by cutting off time from your other extraneous daily activities you are going to lose something. In meditation you gain, and you lose nothing. Meditation is not a private activity that is going on in your mind in a closeted room. You are stimulating cosmic forces, and therefore, the work of these cosmic forces that you stir out of your own mind will also have a beneficial effect upon your daily secular routine.

Intense meditation which is correctly carried on in the sense of a communion of your mind with the cosmic mind will change even the atmospheric conditions outside. The alignment of people will slowly go on changing. Even enemies will

become friends. Opposing forces will gradually slow down, and some miracle will take place without your knowing as to what is actually happening. Opposing forces will die down. Either they will cease their activity or they will perish. One of the two will take place if your meditation is carried on correctly through your communion with the cosmic force.

Remember once again that meditation is not something that you are privately doing for yourself. Meditation is not a private activity. It is an activity that touches the whole world, the reason being that the object of meditation is internally connected to all other objects in the world. Therefore, your bestowing intense thought on the object of meditation is virtually a concentration on a knot in the form of the object of meditation, whose ropes of connection reach up even to the distant heavens. The object of meditation is one symbol of the pressure point of all the forces in the world that constitute other objects, just as if you touch any thread in a cloth you are maintaining a relation by that touch with all the other threads also in that fabric. Every thread in a cloth is connected to every other thread. This is how objects in the world are intertwined. Totally isolated things do not exist. The universe is a fabric of interconnected operations, and therefore, even if you think of an idol, for instance, an image or a portrait, some isolated concept as the object of your meditation, you will be unconsciously stimulating forces which are transcendent to and beyond the normal location of the object.

Thus, the object of meditation is not one single entity unconnected with other things in the world. It is a symbol of all other entities in the world. Because of the fact that you cannot think the cosmos in your mind at one stroke, you are taking resort to some particular form for meditation. The intention is not to go on with this concentration on a single form. The intention is to expand the dimension of your concentration beyond the limits of this location of the object, until it reaches up to the farthest horizons of its relations with all things in the cosmos.

Just as meditation is not a private practice, your achievement in spiritual life is also not a private achievement. It is a cosmic achievement. Nobody attains God individually. The whole world goes with you, as against the normal erroneous thought that when a person attains God only one person goes. It is nothing of the kind. When you attain God, the whole thing goes, the entire fabric of relations, as it happens in dream, for instance, which is absorbed into the waking consciousness. This as an illustration to clarify this point. When you are in a state of dream, many other people are there in that world of dream. Whatever you see in this world, you will see in dream also. Hundreds and thousands and millions of people, and so many things – space, time, objects, and solar systems, galaxies – all things are there. When you wake up, where are they? Have you woken up from dream by leaving those people and all the world that you saw in the dream world to their own fate,

while you have individually, independently, isolately, gone up into waking consciousness? “The people whom I saw in dream are still there, and I have left them and come up to the waking mind.” Do you say that? No. When you wake up into the waking consciousness, the whole world of dream has been absorbed into your waking mind. The entire world is absorbed, including the people. Nothing remains there. This will happen to you when you wake up into the universal consciousness from this dream of objective perception. So tell your mind that you are not going to be a loser in meditation, just as in waking from dream you are not a loser.

Limit your meditation to the concept of the object of meditation as would be permitted by the normal thinking process. Most of the time, the meditating consciousness feels the presence of some beloved thing in front – that beloved thing, the Ishta-devata, being mostly a divinity, a concept of a Godhead that is placed deliberately by oneself in front of oneself: “My god is standing in front of me.” Concentrate on this object.

If you find that the mind is wandering and this concept cannot be entertained for a long time, the suggestion is that you can have a visible portrait of this so-called object. You meditate on an incarnation or a divinity or a god whom you are thinking in your mind in some form. Let that form be painted on a picture, or let there be an idol. It makes no difference. Let the idol, the portrait, the picture or the painting be as attractive as possible. You are thrilled by looking at it. Open your eyes. Do not close your eyes. Open your eyes, gaze at the picture, look at it. Open your eyes. Go on seeing it. Where the eyes are, mostly the mind also is. If the eyes are open and they are gazing at a thing, the mind will also be there at the same time. So taking advantage of the psychology of the mind, open your eyes. Go on gazing, go on gazing, go on gazing, go on gazing at that beautiful portrait, the picture of that great glorious ideal on which you want to meditate. Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes you spend like this by going on looking at the object. After a few minutes, close the eyes and try to see how long you can maintain this concept in your mind independent of gazing or looking with open eyes. Five minutes, ten minutes, go on trying like that. Can you keep in your mind that portrait, picture, without opening the eyes? As long as it is possible, continue this internal contemplation. When you find that it is not possible because the mind is flitting again, open your eyes and look at the picture.

Let this practice continue for a long time, until it becomes possible for you to concentrate only inwardly through the mind and an external prop is no longer necessary. You do not require an idol, a picture, a portrait. Nothing else is necessary. You will have to pass some months like this in order that your mind may become accustomed to conceptualise the object and be free from the necessity to

hang on something that is physically available outside. Now you have reached another stage of meditation where objects need not necessarily be physical. They can be forces, concepts and ideas ennobled beyond the limitations of physicality and locality of any kind. This method should continue. You must carry on until you are used to this process of deep concentration inwardly to your satisfaction.

How will satisfaction come merely by thinking something? I told you already, you should not think anything. It is a process of absorption in the most beautiful of all things, in the most glorious element that you can think of in your mind, in the most powerful divinity and the greatest inclusiveness which can feed you with all the stuff that your personality craves for. These ideas also have to be hammered into the mind again and again.

After some months of practice perhaps, you will be able to see the radiance of this object of meditation spread out in other places also, and not in one place. In the earliest stages you felt that your god is only in one place, that your particular divinity is in front of you. You are looking at it, speaking to it, hugging it, crying before it and asking something from it. Let this go on for some time; it is also good enough, but God is not in one place. Now entertain another thought that locality is not the character of your object of meditation. It is non-local. It is not in space and time at all. It is eternity that is manifesting itself before you for the purpose of your meditation. That which is eternal is not in time; therefore, it is not in space. Therefore, it is not in one place, so it has to be everywhere. If only the screen of time is to be lifted from your consciousness, you will find yourself spreading out everywhere. You are now in Rishikesh, in a room, and not anywhere else. Let the time screen be lifted. Immediately you will find yourself spreading out everywhere. You are not sitting in one room actually. It is a wrong notion. Just as the entire world of dream was present in your waking consciousness, in a similar manner, you will realise when the screen of time is lifted, the whole world is inside you, and you cannot be sitting in one place in a corner of the world.

Thus, you will be able to enhance the intensity of your meditation by feeling later on that the so-called standing posture of your divinity or god would be a pervasive character of the very same god. Everywhere you will see your god. As rays of the sun are seen spread out everywhere in the vast sky, there will be nothing in front of you except that divinity. In hills and dales, in the earth and water and sky and sun and moon and stars and everywhere, you will find this Ishta-devata dancing as sparks of radiance, as it were, of universal conflagration. The one god, who was standing there in front of you and speaking to you like a human person, is now melted down into the universal inclusiveness, the One God of the whole creation, the animating intelligence of the cosmos. The one god that was only in



one place has become the All-God of the cosmos, which state you will enter when the meditation becomes deep and you give sufficient time for it.