



Meditation & Methods

Sri Aurobindo & The Mother



Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Delhi Branch

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MEDITATION & ALLIED METHODS
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Sri Aurobindo
MEDITATION

What exactly is meant by meditation in Yoga? And what should be its objects?

The difficulty our correspondent finds is an apparent conflict of authorities, as sometimes meditation is recommended in the form of a concentrated succession of thoughts on a single subject, sometimes in the exclusive concentration of the mind on a single image, word or idea, a fixed contemplation rather than meditation. The choice between these two methods and others, for there are others, depends on the object we have in view in Yoga.

The thinking mind is the one instrument we possess at present by which we can arrive at a conscious self-organization of our internal existence. But in most men thought is a confused drift of ideas, sensations and impressions which arrange themselves as best as they can under the stress of a succession of immediate interests and utilities. In accordance with the general method of Nature much is used as waste material and only a small portion selected for definite and abiding formations. And as in physical Nature, so here the whole process is governed by laws which we rather suffer than use or control.

The concentration of thought is used by the *Rajayogins* to gain freedom and control over the working of mind, just as the processes of governed respiration and fixed posture are used by the *Hathayogins* to gain freedom and control over the workings of the body and the vital functions.

By meditation we correct the restless wandering of the mind and train it like an athlete to economise all its energies and fix them on the attainment of some desirable knowledge of self-discipline. This is done normally by men in ordinary life, but Yoga takes this higher working of Nature and carries it to its full possibilities. It takes note of the fact that by fixing the mind luminously on a single object of thought, we awaken a response in general Consciousness which proceeds to satisfy the mind by pouring into it knowledge about that object or even reveals to us its central or its essential truth. We awaken also a response of Power which gives us in various ways an increasing mastery over the workings of that on which we meditate or enables us to create it and make it active in ourselves. Thus by fixing the mind on the idea of Divine Love, we can come to the knowledge of that principle and its workings, put ourselves into communion with it, create it in ourselves and impose its law on the heart and the senses.

In Yoga concentration is used also for another object, to retire from the waking state, which is a limited and superficial condition of our consciousness, into the depths of our being measured by various states of Samadhi. For this process contemplation of the single object, idea or name is more powerful than the succession of concentrated thoughts. The latter, however, is capable, by bringing us into indirect but waking communion with the deeper states of being, of preparing an integral Samadhi. Its characteristic utility, however, is the luminous activity of formative thought brought under the control of the *Purusha* by which the rest of the consciousness is governed, filled with higher and wider ideas, changed rapidly into the mould of those ideas and so perfected. Other and greater utilities lie beyond, but they belong to a later stage of self-development.

In the Yoga of Devotion, both processes are equally used to concentrate the whole being or to saturate the whole nature with thoughts of the object of devotion, its forms, its essence, its

attributes and the joys of adoration and union. Thought is then made the servant of Love, a preparer of Beatitude. In the Yoga of knowledge meditation is similarly used for discrimination of the True from the apparent, the Self from the forms, and concentrated contemplation for communion and entry of the individual consciousness into the Brahman.

An integral Yoga would harmonise all these aims. It would have also at its disposal other processes for the utilization of thought and the mastery of the mind.

PURIFICATION & MEDITATION

I do not know what K said or in which article, I do not have it with me. But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation or realize anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it: it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realization by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result. I have seen many get important, even fundamental realizations by meditation who could not be said to have a great inner development. Are all Yogis who have meditated with effect and had great realizations in their inner consciousness perfect in their nature? It does not look like it to me. I am unable to believe in absolute generalizations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it, no matter how long it takes, what are the difficulties or impediments, because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.

It is quite true that a certain amount of purification is indispensable for going on, that the more complete the purification the better,

because then when the realizations begin they can continue without big difficulties or relapses and without any possibility of fall or failures. It is also true that with many, purification is the first need; certain things *have* to be got out of the way before one can begin any consecutive inner experience. But the main need is a certain preparation of the consciousness so that it may be able to respond more and more freely to the higher Force. In this preparation many things are useful—the poetry and music you are doing can help, for it all acts as a sort of *shravana* and *manana*, even, if the feeling roused is intense, a sort of natural *nididhyasana*. Psychic preparation, cleaning out of the grosser forms of mental and vital ego, opening mind and heart to the Guru and many other things help greatly—it is not perfection or a complete freedom from the dualities or ego that is the indispensable preliminary, but preparedness, a fitness of the inner being which makes spiritual responses and receiving possible.

There is no reason therefore to take as gospel truth these demands which may have been right for K on the way he has trod, but cannot be imposed on all; the law of the spirit is not so exacting and inexorable.

MEDITATION AND DIVIDED CONSCIOUSNESS

That is not called meditation—it is a divided state of consciousness; unless the consciousness is really engrossed and the surface thoughts are only things that come across and touch and pass, it can hardly be called meditation (*dhyana*). I don't see how the inner being can be engrossed while whole thoughts and imagination of another kind are rambling about in the surface consciousness. One can remain separate and see the thoughts and imaginations pass without being affected, but that is not being plunged or engrossed in meditation.

MEDITATION AND DULLNESS

If higher meditation or being above keeps one dull and without any kind of satisfaction or peace in sadhana, these are the only two reasons—ego or inertia—I can think of.

ACTION AND INTROSPECTIVE MEDITATION

You need not have qualms about the time you give to action and creative work. Those who have an expansive creative vital or a vital made for action are usually at their best when the vital is not held back from its movement and they can develop faster by it than by introspective meditation. All that is needed is that the action should be dedicated, so that they may grow by it more and more prepared to feel and follow the Divine Force when it moves them. It is a mistake to think that to live in introspective meditation all the time is invariably the best or the only way of Yoga.

CONCENTRATION IN WORK AND MEDITATION

It is not meditation (thinking with the mind) but a concentration or turning of the consciousness that is important,—and that can happen in work, in writing, in any kind of action as well as in sitting down to contemplate.

COMMUNION AND WORK : MEDITATION AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The resistance you speak of and the insufficient receptivity and the inability in communion while doing work must all be due to some part of the physical consciousness that is still not open in the Light—probably something in the vital-physical and the material subconscious which stands in the way of the physical mind being in its mass is free and responsive.

There is no harm in raising the aspiration from below to meet the power from above. All that you have to be careful about is not to raise up the difficulty from below before the descending power is ready to remove it.

There is no necessity of losing consciousness when you meditate. It is the widening and change of the consciousness that is essential. If you mean going inside, you can do that without losing consciousness.

MEDITATION AND READING

If the power to meditate long is there, a sadhaka will naturally do it and care little for reading—unless he has reached the stage when everything is part of the Yogic consciousness because that is permanent. Sadhana is the aim of a sadhaka, not mental development. But if he has spare time, those who have the mental turn will naturally spend it in reading or study of some kind.

(2)

Then how is it (meditation) necessary for all, if some are asked not to do it? Much meditation is for those who can meditate much. It does not follow that because much meditation is good, therefore nobody should do anything else.

STUDY AND MEDITATION

Your objection was to learning languages and especially French as inimical to peace and silence because it meant activity. The mind when it is not in meditation or in complete silence, is always active with something or another—with its own ideas or desires or with other people or with things or with talking etc. None of these is any less inactivity than learning languages. Now you shift your ground and say it is because owing to their study they leave no time for meditation that you object. That is absurd, for if people want to meditate, they will arrange their time of study for that; if they don't want to meditate, the reason must be something else than study and if they don't study they will simply go on thinking about "small things". Want of time is not the cause of their no meditation and passion for study is not the cause.

MEDITATION & SADHANA

What do you call meditation? Shutting the eyes and concentrating? It is only one method for calling down the true consciousness. To join with the true consciousness or feel its descent is the only thing important and if it comes without the orthodox method, as it always did with me, so much the better. Meditation is only a means or device, the true movement is when even walking, working or speaking, one is still in sadhana.

MEDITATION AND WORK IN YOGA

Dhyana and work are both helpful for this Yoga to those who can do both. Reading also can be made helpful.

TRUE ATTITUDE IN WORK

This happens when the work is always associated with the Mother's thought, done as an offering to her, with the call to do it through you. All ideas of ego, all association of egoistic feelings with the work must disappear. One begins to feel the Mother's force doing the work; the psychic grows through a certain inner attitude behind the work and the *adhar* becomes open both to the psychic intuitions and influences from within and to the descent from above. Then the result of meditation can come through the work itself.

MENTAL SELF-ANALYSIS AND INNER SELF-VISION

What the Mother spoke of was not self-analysis nor dissection; they are mental things which can deal with the inanimate or make the live dead—they are not spiritual methods. What the Mother spoke was not analysis, but a seeing of oneself and of all the living movements of the being and the nature, a vivid observation of the personalities and forces that move on the stage of our being, their motives, their impulses, their potentialities, an observation quite as interesting as the seeing and understanding of a drama or a

novel, a living vision and perception of how things are done in us, which brings also a living mastery over this inner universe. Such things become dry only when one deals with them with the analytic and ratiocinative mind, not when one deals with them thus seemingly and intuitively as a movement of life. If you had that observation (from the inner spiritual, not the outer intellectual and ethical viewpoint), then it would be comparatively easy for you to get out of your difficulties; for instance, you would find at once where this irrational impulse to flee away came from and it would not have any hold upon us. Of course, all that can be done to the best effect when you stand back from the play of your nature and become the Witness-Control or the Spectator-Actor-Manager. But that is what happens when you take this kind of self-seeing posture.

The fear that this will be dry or painful is an idea of the non-understanding intellect.

TWO MAIN CENTRES FOR CONCENTRATION

Most people associate consciousness with the brain or mind because that is the centre for intellectual thought and mental vision, but consciousness is not limited to that kind of thought or vision. It is everywhere in the system and there are several centres of it, e.g., the centre for inner concentration is not in the brain but in the heart,—the originating centre of vital desire is still lower down.

The two main places where one can centre the consciousness for Yoga are in the head and in the heart—the mind-centre and the soul centre.

POSTURES FOR CONCENTRATION

The sitting motionless posture is the natural posture for concentrated meditation—walking and standing are active conditions. It is only when one has gained the enduring rest and

passivity of the consciousness that it is easy to concentrate and receive when walking or doing anything. A fundamental passive condition of the consciousness gathered into itself is the proper poise for concentration and seated gathered immobility in the body is the best position for that. It can be done also lying down, but that position is too passive, tending to be inert rather than gathered. This is the reason why Yogis always sit in any *asana*. One can accustom oneself to meditate walking, standing, lying but sitting is the first natural position.

STRAINING AND CONCENTRATION

Straining and concentration are not the same thing. Straining implies an over-eagerness and violence of effort, while concentration is in its nature quiet and steady. If there is restlessness or over-eagerness, then that is not concentration.

BEST WAY TO STILL THE MIND

The more the psychic spreads in the outer being, the more all these things (mechanical activity of the subconscious mind) fall quiet. That is the best way. Direct efforts to still the mind are a difficult method.

SILENCING THE PHYSICAL MIND—DYNAMIC REALISATION

For the buzz of the physical mind, reject it quietly, without getting disturbed, till it feels discouraged and retires shaking its head and saying, "This fellow is too calm and strong for me." There are always two things that can rise up and assail the silence,—vital suggestion, the physical mind's mechanical recurrences. Calm rejection for both is the cure. There is a *Purusha* within who can dictate to the nature what it shall admit or exclude, but its will is a strong, quiet will, if one gets perturbed or agitated over the difficulties, then the will of the *Purusha* cannot act effectively as it would otherwise.

The dynamic realization will probably take place when the higher consciousness comes fully down into the vital. When it comes into the mental it brings the peace of the *Purusha* and liberation and it may bring also knowledge. It is when it comes into the vital that the dynamic realization becomes present and living.

CONCENTRATION

By concentration upon the Idea the mental existence which at present we are breaks open the barrier of our mentality and arrives at the state of consciousness, the state of being, the state of power of conscious-being and bliss of conscious-being to which the idea corresponds and of which it is the symbol, movement and rhythm. Concentration by the Idea is, then, only a means, a key to open to us the superconscient planes of our existence; a certain self-gathered state of our whole existence lifted into that superconscient truth, unity and infinity of self-aware and self-blissful existence is the aim and culmination; and that is the meaning we shall give to the term Samadhi. Not merely a state withdrawn from all consciousness of the outward, withdrawn even from all consciousness of the inward into that which exists beyond both, whether as seed of both or transcendent even of their seed-state; but a settled existence in the One and Infinite, united and identified with it, and this status to remain whether we abide in the waking condition in which we are conscious of the forms of things or we withdraw into the inward activity which dwells in the play of the principles of things, the play of their names and typical forms or we soar to the condition of static inwardness where we arrive at the principles themselves and at the principle of all the principles, the seed of name and form*. For the soul that has arrived at the essential Samadhi and is settled in it (*samadhistha*) in the sense the Gita attaches to the word, has that which is fundamental to all experience and cannot fall from it by any

*The Waking Dream and Sleep states of the soul

experience however distracting to one who has not yet ascended the summit. It can embrace all the scope of its being without being bound by any or deluded or limited.

When we arrive at this state, all our being and consciousness being concentrated, the necessity of concentration in the Idea ceases. For there in that supramental state the whole position of things is reversed. The mind is a thing that dwells in diffusion, in succession, it can only concentrate on one thing at a time and when not concentrated runs from one thing to another very much at random. Therefore it has to concentrate on a single idea, a single object of will in order to possess or master it, and thus it must do to at least the temporary exclusion of all others. But that which is beyond the mind and into which we seek to rise is superior to the running process of the thought, superior to the division of ideas. The Divine is centered in itself and when it throws out ideas and activities does not divide itself or imprison itself in them, but holds them and their movements in its infinity; undivided, its whole self is behind each Idea and each movement and at the same time behind all of them together. Held by it, each spontaneously works itself out, not through a separate act of will, but by the general force of consciousness behind it; if to us there seems to be a concentration of divine Will and Knowledge in each, it is a multiple and equal and not an exclusive concentration, and the reality of it is rather a free and spontaneous working in a self-gathered unity and infinity. The soul which has risen to the divine Samadhi participates in the measure of its attainment in this reversed condition of things,—the true condition, for that which is the reverse of our mentality is the truth. It is for this reason that, as is said in the ancient books, the man who has arrived at Self-possession attains spontaneously without the need of concentration in thought and effort the knowledge or the result which the Idea or the Will in him moves out to embrace.

To arrive then at this settled divine status must be the object of our concentration. The first step in concentration must be always to accustom the discursive mind to a settled unwavering pursuit of a single course of connected thought on a single subject and this it must do undistracted by all lures and alien calls on its attention. Such concentration is common enough in our ordinary life, but it becomes more difficult when we have to do it inwardly without any outward object or action on which to keep the mind; yet this inward concentration is what the seeker of knowledge must effect¹, nor must it be merely the consecutive thought of the intellectual thinker, whose only object is to conceive and intellectually link together his conceptions. It is not, except perhaps at first, a process of reasoning that is wanted so much as a dwelling so far as possible on the fruitful essence of the idea which by the insistence of the soul's will upon it must yield up all the facets of its truth. There if it be the divine Love that is the subject of concentration, it is on the essence of the ideas of God as Love that the mind should concentrate in such a way that the various manifestations of the divine Love should arise luminously, not only to the thought, but in the heart and being and vision of the sadhaka. The thought may come first and the experience afterwards, but equally the experience may come first and the knowledge arise out of the experience. Afterwards the thing attained has to be dwelt on and more and more held till it becomes a constant experience and finally the dharma or law of the being.

This is the process of concentrated meditation: but a more strenuous method is the fixing of the whole mind on concentration on the essence of the idea only, so as to reach not the thought-knowledge or the psychological experience of the subject but the very essence of the thing behind the idea. In this process thought

1. In the elementary stage of internal debate and judgement, *vitarka* and *vicara* for the correction of false ideas and arrival at the intellectual truth.

ceases and passes into the absorbed or ecstatic contemplation of the object or by a merging into it in an inner Samadhi. If this be the process followed, then subsequently the state into which we rise must still be called down to take possession of the lower being, to shed its light, power and bliss on our ordinary consciousness. For otherwise we may possess it, as many do, in the inward Samadhi, but we shall lose our hold of it when we awake or descend into the contacts of the world; and this truncated possession is not the aim of an integral Yoga.

A third process is neither at first to concentrate in a strenuous meditation on the one subject nor in a strenuous contemplation of the one object of thought-vision, but first to still the mind altogether. This may be done by various ways; one is to stand back from the mental action altogether not participating in but simply watching it until, tired of its unsanctioned leaping and running, it falls into an increasing and finally an absolute quiet. Another is to reject the thought-suggestions, to cast them away from the mind whenever they come and firmly holds to the peace of being which reality and always exists behind the trouble and riot of the mind. When this secret peace is unveiled, a great calm settles on the being and there comes usually with it the perception and experience of the all-pervading silent Brahman, everything else at first seeming to be mere form and eidolon. On the basis of this calm everything may be built up in the knowledge and experience no longer of the external phenomena of things but of the deeper truth of the divine manifestation.

Ordinarily, once this state is obtained, strenuous concentration will be found no longer necessary. A free concentration of will using thought merely for suggestions and the giving of light to the lower members will take its place. This Will will then insist on the physical being, the vital existence, the heart and the mind remoulding themselves in the forms of the Divine which reveal themselves out of the silent Brahman. By swifter or slower degree according to the previous preparation and purification of the members they will be obliged with more or less struggle to obey

the law of the will and its thought-suggestion, so that eventually the knowledge of the Divine takes possession of our consciousness on all its planes and the image of the Divine is formed in our human existence even as it was done by the old Vedic Sadhakas. For the integral Yoga this is the most direct and powerful discipline.

ASPIRATION, REJECTION AND SURRENDER

There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.

* * * *

The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspirations, rejection and surrender,—

an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature;

rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large strong and consecrated vital being,—rejection of the physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, *tamas*, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine.

surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.

MOTIVES OF WORK, IN ORDINARY LIFE AND YOGA— SIGNS OF VITAL'S CONSECRATION IN ACTION

Men usually work and carry on their affairs from the ordinary motives of the vital being, need, desire of wealth or success or position or power or fame or the push to activity and the pleasure of manifesting their capacities, and they succeed or fail according to their capability, power of work and the good or bad fortune which is the result of their nature and their Karma. When one takes up the Yoga and wishes to consecrate one's life to the Divine, these ordinary motives of the vital being have no longer their full and free play, they have to be replaced by another, a mainly psychic and spiritual force as before, no longer for himself, but for the Divine. If the ordinary vital motives or vital force can no longer act freely and yet are not replaced by something else, then the push or force put into the work may decline or the power to command success may no longer be there. For the sincere sadhak the difficulty can only be temporary, but he has to see the defect in his consciousness or his attitude and to remove it. Then the Divine Power itself will act through him and use his capacity and vital forces for its ends. In your case, it is the psychic being and a part of the mind that have drawn you to the Yoga and were predisposed to it, but the vital nature or at least a large part of it has not yet put itself into line with the psychic movement. There is not as yet the full and undivided consecration of the active vital nature.

The signs of the consecration of the vital in action are these among others:

The feeling (not merely the idea or the aspiration) that all the life and the work are the Mother's and a strong joy for the vital nature in this consecration and surrender. A consequent calm content and disappearance of egoistic attachment to the work and its personal

results, but at the same time a great joy in the work and in the use of the capacities for the divine purpose.

The feeling that the Divine Force is working behind one's actions and leading at every moment.

A persistent faith which no circumstance or event can break. If difficulties occur, they raise not mental doubts or an inert acquiescence, but the firm belief that, with sincere consecration, the divine Shakti will remove the difficulties, and with this belief a greater turning to her and dependence on her for that purpose. When there is full faith and consecration, there comes also a receptivity to the Force which makes one do the right thing and take the right means then circumstances adapt themselves and the result is visible.

To arrive at this condition the important thing is a persistent aspiration, call and self-offering and a will to reject all in oneself or around that stands in the way. Difficulties there will always be at the beginning and for as long a time as is necessary for the change; but they are bound to disappear if they are met by a settled faith, will and patience.





THE MOTHER

"What is one to do to prepare oneself for the Yoga?"

To the conscious, first of all, we are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being: for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on. And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant - "sleepless", as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any chance whatever to the undivine against the divine.

* * * *

"What is the way to establish unity and homogeneity in our being?"

Keep the will firm. Treat the recalcitrant parts as disobedient children. Act upon the constantly and patiently. Convince them of their error.

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed. It takes more or less time, but you will surely succeed in the end. Once you have turned to the Divine, saying, "I want to be yours," and the Divine has said, "Yes," the whole world cannot keep you from it. When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, "I am here and I am yours," then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one

"Why am I unable to meditate?"

Because you have not learnt it. A sudden fancy seizes you and you say, "Now I will sit down and meditate." But to sit down cross-legged, cross-armed, eyes closed is not doing meditation. You have to learn how to meditate, even as you learn to do mathematics or play on the piano. There are regular courses of meditation given by all teachers in all ages and countries. There are so many rules and regulations. There are all kinds of instructions, such as to keep the mind quiet, to be silent and not to think, to gather all your thoughts and concentrate them etc., etc. You have been taught how to sit, stand, walk, eat: you do not remember the method and the discipline, because you did that when you were very young. In the same way if you have taught how to meditate in your childhood, you would not find it difficult to do today. Unfortunately you were not taught. You are not taught things of



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