



MIND AND MEDITATION

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1. Backdrop:

Thought and feeling are intimately related. The eternal truths are relevant to our life. Philosophy is the wisdom of life reached after careful reflection. This investigative approach helped us make our lives meaningful and taught us right living. We are lead to higher existence whether it is a achieved consciously with the effort of understanding or by faith, habit and tradition. Vedanta teaches us many aspects of understanding “self.” The crux of the matter is, we as individuals should realize “self”, employing techniques given out in our scriptures such as Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita and Brahma Sutras. Arguing does not take us anywhere and this lingual warfare is to no avail. We are not to be caught up in the ignorance. Silent introspection will help us realize Atman and meditation with its many applications give us the road map. When the Self is limited, it is “ego” and when unlimited it is infinite and is the “Reality”.

2. Restlessness of the Mind:

The mind is by nature restless .When the mind is trained to look” inward” it can be liberated from its restlessness. The external world has to be ignored and all the obstacles that are disturbing the peace of mind have to be dealt with. The external world even in its most beautiful appearances and noblest manifestations is still superficial and transient. It is not the basic reality. We must look through it, not at it, in order to see the Atman.

Minds are not calm. They are full of anxiety and restlessness. The mind of the illumined man is calm. He is not selfish. He is not indifferent to the needs of others. He has known the peace of the Atman within all things even with in the appearance of the misery, disease, strife and want.

3. Man’s problems originate in mind:

The nature of the problem needs to be understood and evaluated in order to get to the solution. The man’s mind is disturbed with situations and his urge is to challenge these. Analyzing and reasoning pave the way. The capacity to think has diminished and in a way to some extent the technological advantages could be the reason where everything is happening by the push up a button. It adds comfort no doubt but the drift from the traditions have created havoc. Computers have outstripped man in thought. For centuries man has been programmed to follow certain faiths and rituals. In the words of J.Krishnamurti “The turning point, the perceptive, decision, the challenge, is not in politics, in religion, in the scientific world, it is in our consciousness which is common to all man kind”. Thought and all the things it has put together, is part



our consciousness.

4. Advaita:

Without going much into the detail, suffice it would be to say that the recognition of Pure Being as One's Self and the Self of the universe and of all beings is the supreme and ultimate Truth. Doctrine of Advaita, non duality taught by the ancient Rishis and preeminently by Sankaracharya. Non duality means that only the Absolute is. The entire cosmos exists with in the Absolute.

The topic Mind and Meditation has enormous relevance to the discussions that are in hand. It is essential that the self is realized and its paramount importance can not be over emphasized. To live a happy life with understanding the purpose is important and it is in this area sages have spent time to live and communicate their experiences. Sankaracharya has been criticized for his philosophy of Maya (Illusion) without understanding the meaning. He made three statements: that Brahman is real, that the universe is unreal, and that Brahman is the universe. He did not stop with the second. The third statement explains the first two; it signifies that when the universe is perceived apart from Brahman that perception is false and illusory. What it amounts to is that phenomena are real when experienced as the self and illusory when seen apart from the self.

Baghavan Ramana Maharshi's teaching was not philosophy. "A man is identical with the Self which is pure Being, pure conscious ness, pure Bliss, but the mind creates the illusion of a separate individuality. Ramana Maharshi says the attempt to destroy the ego or mind through Sadhanas other than Self enquiry is like a thief turning policeman to catch the thief that is himself". Maharshi's "Upadesa saram" and the "Who am In" convey enough of understanding for a sadhakha to get to the essence of the teaching which was not dependent on any religion.

The mind and its behavior has been a subject of discussion for centuries. Dissatisfaction leads to Vedanta enquiry. All of man's problems and seeking originate in mind. Animals use instincts. Mind shifts, moves and it does not like confusion. The rhythm of the mind undergoes changes. When you are happy, the fear that happiness will pass, this starts bothering you. This brings in pain. Happiness is within. Immortality can not be earned by riches. True Tyaga is giving up egoism, desires and the miseries that surround our daily life. Vairagya is purely an internal mental state. How soothing our life becomes, if only we remember the poetic verses "Even this will pass away" authored by Theodore Tilton.

5. Nature of the Mind:

Everyone is familiar as to what type of description fits a physical body, but it is not so when we deal with the nature of mind. All the explanations offered by psychology, philosophy and religion define the mind which is contradictory. Mind appears as a structure less entity. We use the mind but we do not know what it really is, yet we use the mind. Thought is the function of the ego. Our awareness is in the mind but we are not aware of its functions. Ignorance of the nature of the mind results problems in areas of desires and fear. Wrong understanding of the mind causes difficulties in our



living. Psychological problems are nothing more than the wrong use of the mind. Right use of the mind and learning techniques will solve our psychological problems. This directs us to self realization leading to spiritual life. As conscious beings we need this occupation.

The role of an observer is to look at the mind in order to witness its functions without judgment of the thought stream and maintaining awareness. If one is caught up mind's activities he cannot see the mind. The witnessing consciousness is apart from the objects it observes. The mind is an instrument just as the other sense organs. The brain mirrors the operations of the mind. Having lost control of the mind we fall prey to the bundle of desires and distractions, an input from the external world. Inner reality cannot be known as long as the individual moves in the mind's sphere. Mind works through the reflection of "pure light" beyond the mind.

The discussion in hand appears as a digression but it is not. "Mind" has been an important topic through ages. Not understanding its nature, and not getting a handle on this are the main reasons which make the present generation "busy individual" to toss in the turmoil of the world, resorting to various other techniques such as meditation and other related mind conditioners. Meditation exercises control the mind. All this will be discussed in the later stages.

Psychological problems develop in the outer mind. Much of the thinking that the human mind does is nothing but "I", the centre of the mind. Using the mind like a tool and observing its nature we can get out of the frustrations. We learn to gain control and the vagaries from the senses can be arrested and thereby the external world's influence can be reduced significantly

6. Making the mind single pointed:

Meditation calms the mind and increases the mental power. Temperaments differ and the agitated minds run after senses. Prayers and related rituals are practiced in the initial stages. Yoga is the science which teaches to control the restless mind. The intent is not to go in the details of Astanga Yoga as outlined in the Patanjali yoga sutras. Suffice it to say that a purified mind is required for concentration.

Meditation:

We explore our own consciousness and discover the joy. This inner journey provides unfolding. There are many techniques available to practice meditation. One can take the help of books, CD's and other methods available for the purpose.

The most prominent is the "Mantra repetitions". Vedanta students listen and reflect upon the discourses on the Upanishads and the Gita. The importance of Japa where in the mind is compelled to behave in a certain rhythm with the repeated mantra chanting. Japa trains the mind to a single line of thinking. Repetition of a chosen mantra establishes a speed which in turn reduces the thinking. Mantras are generally given to the disciple by an illumined teacher. Various forms of worships are available to suit the stages of the aspirant in the spiritual evaluation.

7. The need and the process of meditation:

We live in a world of complexity and our coming into contact with the objects



cannot be avoided. Our subtler perceptions are undeveloped. An individual who has mastered himself is a master of the external world. The need is to maintain an intelligent way of living. In this competitive world we are forced to live in agitation. In the Western countries philosophy is a view of life and in the East it is the way of life. How to regulate thoughts?

Evolved beings acquire the conquering capabilities. Rishis taught us the method of dissociation from false attachments and to discover ourselves. Self analysis and introspection are perfect means. A wish expressed in mental language in a thought. Total annihilation of mind is divine life. Impartial witnessing is introspection. Knowledge removes ignorance. The attempt of the seeker is to develop awareness till he becomes aware of the inner spirit. Meditation blends the physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual personality in to a “whole” filled with harmony. The quality, the quantity and the direction of thought flow have to be observed to tame the mind. Watching the mind and practicing introspection each day is necessary. One has to develop a devotional attitude. Sincerity, regularity under the guidance of a guru and study of scripture brings success.

Techniques are, the need of a proper place, posture, relaxation, thought control, contemplation, mantra chanting in order to reach a thoughtless state. In order to conquer the mind we need not run away physically from all sense objects. Instead the mind needs to be controlled. In the words of Swamy Chinmayananda “In our times we find that failures in meditation are reported more often than successes. This is because the seekers, in the spirit of our hurried times dash into the act of meditation without first procuring required preflight attunement”.

8. Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity:

In Hinduism the meditation practice involves posture, breathing and mantra chanting. This is intended for self realization. The scriptures provide information to lead the individual to peace. In Buddhism the stress is on the eight noble truths and to attain Nirvana. In Christianity prayer and focus on God with a belief that worldly matters can be resolved for peace.

9. Conclusion:

To meditate is to be with you. When there is love the mind is naturally attracted towards its object. There is effortless meditation. Obstacles in meditation are laya (sleep) and vikshepa (distraction). One must accept that it is the nature of the mind to be distracted and this is not a weakness. “Silence am I, this is the true nature of one self and to be discovered.

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