

Chapter I. The Power of Meditation

Binding actions and liberating actions

People have to be doing some action (*karma*) or other from the moment of waking to the moment of sleeping—that is to say, from birth to death. They cannot sit quietly without doing action. No one can avoid this predicament! But each one has to understand clearly which kind of action to be engaged in. There are only two types: (1) sensory or binding actions (*vishaya karmas*) and (2) actions that liberate (*sreyo karmas*).

The acts that bind have increased beyond control; as a result, sorrow and confusion have increased. Through these, no happiness and peace of mind can be gained.

On the other hand, the actions that liberate yield progressive joy and auspiciousness with each single act. They give bliss to the Self (*Atma-ananda*) and are not concerned with mere external joy! Though the acts may be external, the attraction is all toward the internal. This is the right path, the true path.

Actions that bind include all activity in relation to exterior objects. Such actions are usually resorted to with a desire for the result. This craving for the results leads one to the morass of “I” and “Mine” and the demon of lust and greed. If one follows this path, there will be sudden flares, as when clarified butter (*ghee*) is poured in the sacrificial fire! Assigning priority to sense objects (*vishaya*) is the same as assigning importance to poison (*visha*)!

But while engaged in those activities and in those sense objects, if one has no interest in the result or consequence, then not only can one be victorious over the feelings of “I” and “mine”, greed and lust, one can also be far away from all such traits. One will never be troubled by such traits.

Liberating action is pure, faultless, unselfish, and unswerving. Its characteristic is the importance given to the idea of action without any desire of the fruits thereof (*nishkama karma*), which was elaborated in the *Gita*. The practice of this discipline involves the development of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*). While on this path, if one also takes up the discipline of remembering the name of the Lord, where else can one acquire more joy and bliss? It will give the fullest satisfaction.

If one treads this holy path, the Lord Himself will bestow all that is needed, all that is deserved, and all that will give peace of mind. Offer everything to the Lord without any desire for the result; that indeed yields full joy; that is indeed the easiest.

While it is very difficult to speak untruth and act against *dharmā*, it is very easy to utter the truth and walk in the path of *dharmā*. It is a very pleasant task to speak out the thing just as it is; one need not spend a moment of thought upon it. To speak of what is not, one has to create the non-existent! That plunges one into fear and fantasy, in an atmosphere of restlessness and worry.

So, instead of following sensory actions (*vishaya karma*), which offer all these troubles and complications, follow actions that liberate (*sreyo karma*), the path of *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda marga*), which is true, eternal, and holy.

The best means for following liberating actions is meditation (*dhyana*). Today, people with newfangled ideas argue how meditation is to be done and even why it should be done. But they know neither its taste nor its pu-

urity. That is why there is so much criticism and cynical laughter. My present intention is to instruct such people. Therefore, I am revealing this.

Taming the mind and the intelligence

See! Everyone in the world has the nature of behaving and acting in two different ways: one outside and another inside. This is known to all, though generally people do not show this publicly. Just as people lose even the little joy that they have worrying over the factions they may have in their family, so they lose their internal peace when faced with physical obstacles and troubles.

For example, consider a cart. It cannot move by itself, can it? It can move only when two bullocks are yoked to it. And the cart can move safely only when the bullocks are trained to pull carts and when they are used to the road on which they have to walk. Instead, if they are ignorant of the process of pulling carts, if they have not walked on the road, if they have never stepped out of their shed, or if they have always moved only round and round the post to which they have been tied, in their own mire, the journey cannot proceed! And the cart will itself face danger!

So also, the inner consciousness (*anthah-karana*) cannot move of itself; it must be attached to the externally related bullocks, the intelligence (*buddhi*) and mind (*manas*). Then only can it move forward, following the bullocks' tracks.

So, earlier than the journey, the bullocks —intelligence and mind— should be conversant with the road to the village that the inner senses are eager to reach. They must be trained to proceed in that direction. If this is done, the journey will be easy and safe.

Instead, if the draught animals have no knowledge of the pathways of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (*sathya*, *dharma*, *santhi*, and *prema*), and if they have never once trodden that path, the cart, the inner senses themselves, might come to grief! Even if they are prodded to proceed, they will only drag the cart to the familiar post and the accustomed mire of confusion, injustice, cruelty, indiscipline, and falsehood! What then of the journey? When is the arrival to be?

Therefore, intelligence and mind have to be taught the art of pulling the cart and moving steadily along the road. This has to be done by repetition of the Lord's name (*japa*) and meditation (*dhyana*).

One-pointedness and concentration

People are suffering despair and defeat on account of the waywardness and unsteadiness of the inner senses. This is the result of inability to control and guide the bullocks of intelligence and mind, unused as they are to meditation and repetition of the divine name to the extent of even stepping along that path! At such a time, the conflicting desires infecting the mind have to be quenched and controlled. The mind has to be focused in one direction. People must walk determinedly, using all their effort for the purpose of the aim and achievement they have set before themselves. If this is done, no force can pull them back; they can attain the position that is their due.

Plunge the wayward mind, which is fleeing in all directions, in contemplation of the name of the Lord; the effect will be like concentrating the rays of the sun through a piece of magnifying glass. The scattered rays develop the power of a flame to burn and consume. So too, when the waves of intellect and the feelings of mind get

one-pointedness through the converging lens of the *Atma*, they manifest as the universal divine splendour that can scorch evil and illumine joy.

Everyone is able to gain success in their profession or occupation only through one-pointed attention. Even the pettiest of tasks needs the quality of concentration for its fulfilment. And even the toughest problem yields before unswerving endeavour.

The value of chanting the divine name and meditation

People are endowed with unlimited powers. Not a single person is without them! But the road is missed when one is unaware of this truth. To gain awareness of this power, one must join the company of the holy, one must strive in spiritual practice (*sadhana*), and one must practise repetition of the divine name and meditation.

Of what avail is it, even though you have each item of provision in plenty, when you do not know how to cook them into palatable food? Similarly, people have in themselves all the provisions needed for their upkeep and progress, but they discard them lightly and leave them unused because they are ignorant of the process of benefiting by them. People must seek to see and understand the Universal Power (*sakthi*), the One without a second, which is the basis of all the multifarious manifestations of name and form in the world.

The mind flies at a tangent all the time. Meditation (*dhyana*) is the process by which it is trained to acquire concentration. As a result of meditation on the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*), the mind will withdraw from sense objects and the sensory world. Just at that time, the intellect (*buddhi*) must assert its authority and command the mind (*manas*) not to entertain any feeling except the thought of the Fundamental Basis.

When its basic truth is known, the mind will not be deluded by the evanescent, the untrue, and the unblissful. Instead, it will welcome the blossoming of joy, happiness, and truth, and it will not be affected by sorrow and grief. Nature (*prakriti*) and the life-force (*prana*) are indestructible, right? So, everything that is the product of the mingling of these two has a new value inherent in it.

One's life also assumes a new splendour when one visualises and realises bliss in the awareness of the Supreme Reality (*satchidananda*) through a mind and intellect (*manas* and *buddhi*) that is purified and transformed by means of meditation (*dhyana*). The taste of the fruit is evident when one sees the whole of it is eaten with no portion left behind. So too, when the taste of meditation is once discovered, one will discard all doubt and discussion thereon and engage oneself fully in it. Therefore, begin meditation, each one of you, from today—even from this moment!

Meditation should be performed enthusiastically, with full faith and care, and strictly according to the disciplines laid down. If this is done, it will bestow not only all happiness and all victory but even the vision of the Lord. This is bound to the science of Supreme Spirituality (*Vedanta*) and also to the science of nature (*prakriti*). These two are different in only one respect. The students of nature (*prakriti*) are immersed in the objects of life; the students of *Vedanta* are immersed in the basic truth of life. And people are bound to both of them! Nature is related to sense objects (*vishaya*); *Vedanta* is related to one's Self-reality (*swa-rupa*). If people desire to transform their lives, internal as well as external, into one of splendour, meditation is the best spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) they can adopt.

The method of meditation

The place for meditation should be a little elevated — an inch or two— from the ground. Place a mat of *dharbha* grass (a matty, long grass grown in India) on it, spread a deer skin on the mat, and lay a thin white cloth on the skin. Sit on it in the lotus posture (*padmasana*). The right foot must be above the left and the left foot above the right. The fingers of the hand must be in close touch with one another and the hands should be placed in front. The eyes must be either half open or fully closed.

Then, by means of mental massage, relax the neck, shoulders, hands, chest, teeth, stomach, fingers, back, thighs, knees, calves, and feet. After this, one has to meditate on one's own favourite name and form, with *Om* added. When this is being done, there should be no mental wanderings; one must be stable and quiet. No thought of past events, no trace of anger or hatred, and no memory of sorrow should be allowed to interfere. Even if they intrude, they should not be considered at all; to counteract them, entertain thoughts that will feed one's enthusiasm for meditation. Of course, this may appear difficult at first.

The best time for meditation is the quiet hours before dawn, between 3 and 5 a.m. One can awake, say, at 4 a.m. First of all, sleep has to be subdued. This is very necessary. In order to keep the hours unchanged, one may set the alarm clock for 4 a.m. and rise. Even then, if sleep continues to bother, its effect can be overcome by means of a bath in cold water. Not that it is essential to bathe; it is needed only when sleep gives much trouble.

If in this manner the path of meditation (*dhyana*) is rigorously followed, it is possible for one to win the grace of the Lord very quickly.