

Chapter VIII. One-pointed Attention is Essential for Meditation

It is not correct to say that the qualities and attainments needed for temporal progress and spiritual progress are different from each other. The spiritual is only the purification of the temporal. Success or failure in both depends on one-pointedness (*ekagratha*). For every item of work, one-pointedness is very important. This too is but spiritual discipline.

Avoid no-pointedness and many-pointedness

There are two paths along which this spiritual discipline may proceed: no-pointedness and many-pointedness. No-pointedness is the stage of sleep; it is also called the quality of ignorance (*thamoguna*). Many-pointedness is the result of the restless quality (*rajoguna*), turning the vision of the opened eye on creation and its sights. Avoiding both of these, without falling into these two extremes, if the eye is neither closed as in sleep nor opened wide as in the fully awakened stage, but half-opened and directed to the point of the nose, the pure quality (*sathwaguna*) will become one's nature, and concentration of the mind can also be easily acquired.

Of course, this does not mean that mere fixing the sight on the tip of the nose is enough. Fix it there in the beginning and then turn the vision to the name and form you have in mind; that is meditation (*dhyana*).

When you are engaged in repetition of the name and meditation, other thoughts might enter you at first, but you shouldn't worry about this. There is no great danger on account of them. When you begin remembering the name of God (*nama-smarana*), sit down with enthusiasm. If you enter upon any task with firm determination, no impurity can affect you. Your only concern is to see that you are fully pure when you start the repetition of the name, etc. Do not worry about formalities for this. Select the name that you like and the form of that name. That name is itself the mantra. That mantra is ever pure, ever active, everything.

Stick to one name and form

But do not change the name and form to suit the fancy and have one thing one day and another the next. Whatever the name and form that first gave you contentment, hold fast to them without swerving. They will get implanted in the heart, without fail. Afterward, everything will happen through His grace. If workers are ordered to dig the earth, their work is simply to go on digging. The gardener alone knows how much of the earth is to be put under which plant and how the earth is to be so put. So too, the order is to "Constantly dwell on the Lord's name"! Provided you continue to do that work, He Himself will direct where and how that has to be utilised.

Stick to the task of taming the mind

The value of name and form consists in the training that they give to the mind (*manas*). What need is there to train a horse that has already been trained? It is the untrained horse that is "broken" through many devices. Similarly, it is to tame the unruly mind that we have prayer, devotional singing, repetition of the name, and remembrance of the name. In the initial stages, the horse runs in many directions, but the trainer does not worry. He should hold fast to the reins. The mind, too, naturally runs in different directions when you begin remembrance

and repetition of the name, but you must not yield to despair, anxiety, or indecision. Hold fast to the reins, the name (*nama*)! Within a short time, your speech and thoughts will come under your own grip. Only, do not allow anything to come near you that might make you forget the name of the Lord. You will realise the profit of that name in due course.

Do not crave the fruit the moment the sapling is planted! Do not pluck and chew the leaves and the twigs in the hope of inferring therefrom the taste of the fruit! Doing that does not help you enjoy the sweetness of the fruit; besides, the plant itself will not survive.

Similarly, your task is simply to cultivate the sapling called *name of God (nama)*. While doing so, do not doubt and examine whether it has the glory ascribed to it. Without fail, that sapling will grow into a tree and give you the fruit you hope to eat. You can achieve it. The name is capable of yielding that fruit. So the purpose of one-pointed attention (*ekagratha*) is to make you stick to the name, without altering it, and to keep its form always in sight. The net of “remembrance of the Lord’s name (*nama-smarana*)” should have no torn holes; that is to say, it must take place always, with no intermission. If there is any gap, the fruit that falls into the net might escape through it! Perform meditation until your mind comes firmly under your control. That is the primary task.

Let the mind run wherever it likes; just be careful not to follow it, seeking to discover where it is going! It will then wander about for some time as the fancy takes it; soon, getting tired and exhausted, it will come back to you in the end! It is like a little child that knows nothing. Since the mother is following it and calling it back, it gets courage and confidence to run forward in any direction, but if the mother does not run behind the child and instead retraces her steps quietly, the child too, of its own accord, will run back to the mother!

Do not care for the vagaries of the mind. Carry on remembrance and meditation of the name and form that you like best, in the manner you are accustomed to. In this way, you will acquire one-pointedness (*ekagratha*); you will realise your heart’s desire.

Everything is pure, everything is God

Do not entertain in your mind the idea of purity or impurity while doing this spiritual practice or meditation. There is nothing impure in the world. When the Lord is immanent everywhere and in everything, how can anything be impure? Even if something appears to the ulterior eyes as impure, the moment it contacts the name of the Lord, it becomes purified.

Note this point! If someone discovers a treasure while answering the call of nature, will they hesitate to take it because he is impure at the time? Purity and impurity are the result of the mental reactions of the particular moment. When one is giving money to someone, one talks of the auspicious time and the purity of the hour. But when one gets a chance to take money, every moment is auspicious! The mind is the reason for both attitudes.

Similarly, no thought of purity or impurity will bother you if you have full faith in the love of the name of the Lord. On the other hand, if you feel some compulsion and some discontent, all kinds of possible and impossible obstacles will present themselves. Therefore, give up all such feelings and strengthen the faith in the unshakable holiness of the name and its appropriate form. Firmly believe that everything is made holy by His name.

Do not reject Him, cultivate love for Him

Cultivate love (*prema*) for the Lord. It has infinite potentiality. An iron chain can be broken with ease, but not

the chain of love that binds you to the Lord. The cruelest of animals is also overpowered by love. This is the illusion (*maya*) of the Lord! If only the floodwaters of this love were directed not to the lakes and shoals on the sides of the river but to the ocean of the Lord's grace, what a holy task it would be! Then the individual (*jivi*) would realise the purpose of life. This is the highest liberation (*moksha*). To direct that love on to the name and the form of the Lord without interruption—that is real meditation.

Do not mistake this temporary abode as your eternal dwelling place. Do not lose heart at evanescent troubles and short-lived tragedies. Immerse yourselves in the effort to attain the eternal Lord. Everything in this world is subject to decay—if not today, at least tomorrow it is bound to disintegrate, right?

It is not right to reject the Lord, who is eternally related to you, and to be misled by this world with which one is related for just two days! As already written,

The relatives come up to the outer gate, or maybe up to the burial ground, but your real relative is the Lord, beware!

The Lord will never give you up. Considering the number of births you have had, you have had countless mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, friends, and enemies. Do they subsist today? Do they remember the relationship? You are no one to them, and they are nobodies to you. But you and they have the Lord in common as the unchanging relative. He subsists throughout all the births; He is eternal. He watches over you from birth to birth. What greater tragedy can there be than forgetting such a Lord?

With the senses weakened and powerless and refusing to function, with the parents, wife, children, and relations all crowding on one side and the messengers of death compelling you to pack up for the journey without delay on the other—who knows when this call will come and how? Before that moment comes, be ready with the thought of God.