



"THIS IS REALITY.... A FRESH LOOK AT MEDITATION"

□ DR. MOTILAL

Vivekananda Yoga Centre, 437 South 44th Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19104

Recent years have seen more and more people, both East and West growing more and more interested in meditation, not only for what it can do for the meditator but also for the whole world in which he or she lives.

Those who practice meditation find it relaxes the entire neuromuscular system. As nervous tension dissolves, psychosomatic diseases do too, since the very process of meditation breaks the continuity of unconscious drives and urges.

Anxiety, whatever its' origin, also decreases during meditation. As anxiety decreases, one's efficiency and confidence increase, giving the meditator a new serenity of mind both towards himself and his associates.

A faithful meditator soon finds that an inner peace lies beneath his layers of petty concerns, jealousies, hatreds and frustrations. He grows in emotional stability, and as he finds peace in himself, his relationship with others grows in harmony.

A man or woman of meditation can influence others through his or her serenity. Such a person may not be aware of the power he or she has to calm the restless, heal the miserable and cheer the sorrowful merely through his or her own serene approach to life.

While students of meditation may grow more and more interested in its origins and the theories of various philosophers concerning it, the beginner seeking the tranquillity to be gained in the act of meditating is interested only in how to do it successfully.

It is all well and good that the *Sāṃkhya* school of philosophy defines meditation as "the liberation of the mind from all disturbing and distracting emotions, thoughts and desires", but how does one accomplish this? Patanjali, the father of Yoga, defines it as a "current of unified thought", but how does one achieve it?

Many forms and techniques of meditation have been developed from the Transcendental Meditation of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi to Zen Buddhism.

At the Swami Vivekananda Yoga Centre in Philadelphia, members and I have developed a practical one that works for us.

The technique is called out of ancient Vedantic literature and is unique in that it integrates body, mind and sound vibrations with ultimate reality or truth.

We begin by resolving to practice twice a day. When this is impossible, then once, either in the morning or in the evening.

Your place of meditation should be comfortable to you, always accessible when you want it and free of distractions, especially those of sound and light.

(1) Sit on a thin soft flat cushion or soft wool blanket folded into quarters. You may sit in a straight-back chair, if for some reason you cannot meditate on the floor.

(2) Sit in a comfortable pose. If you can do the lotus, good. In any pose you take, the spinal column should be erect, hands resting in your lap, right over left. Keep your eyes

half open, or closed, and gaze or concentrate on some object, a statue, a photograph or an "OM" symbol (ॐ) placed before you.

A fixed posture is very important because the body and mind are inter-related. When the body moves, the mind loses its stillness. This posture helps to harmonize breath, nerves and mind and frees the latter from the bombardment of outer influences.

(3) Relax the body by massaging various parts mentally—the feet, the legs, the knees, the thighs, the back, the abdomen, chest, hands, lower arms, upper arms, shoulders, neck, chin, nose, eyes and forehead.

At this point, the entire body should be completely relaxed. As you grow more skilful at directing *Prāṇa* (life force) to all parts of the body, you get a greater sense of integration or unification of body and mind.

(4) After the thought massage, start chanting "OM" aloud. Let the sound of the chanting rise like a fountain. Let the "OM" vibration slowly grow and expand, forming an ever-enveloping atmosphere around you, unfolding themselves into ever-winding ripples. Chant on vigorously, powerfully and sincerely.

Why the "OM" chanting? The Symbol AUM is composed of three syllables, namely the letters A, U, M, and when written has a crescent and dot on its top. The letter A symbolizes the conscious or waking state; the letter U the dream state; and M, the dreamless sleep state of mind and spirit.

The entire symbol of "OM" taken as a whole, together with the crescent and dot, stands for the fourth state of consciousness, *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality). This is the state of *Samādhi* which combines the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and dreamless sleep—and transcends them. This is the state of Perfect Bliss when the individual self recognizes its identity with the *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality).

Chanting has an entrancing effect on the mind. Since "OM" symbolizes Truth or Pure consciousness, "OM" chanting has been used as a part of meditation by spiritual aspirants from Vedic times to the present.

(5) After mastering the technique of chanting aloud, begin chanting "OM" silently. After chanting silently for some time, stop suddenly as if someone has shouted the order 'stop'. This will lead you to the thoughtless state of mind. The order to stop must come within you, however. If this is found difficult, as some meditators do, you can mentally chant louder and louder, and when you have reached the peak, slowly and steadily reduce the tone of this mental roar into a normal mental chanting. Then reduce it still further into a mere mental whisper. This soft inner whisper of "OM" chanting may be allowed to drown and dissolve itself into the Great Silence within.

(6) When you stop mental chanting and, for a split moment, dissolve into the thoughtless state of mind, hold on to that state as long as you can. As soon as the first thought breaks in and disturbs the peace and silence of this thoughtless state of mind, chant "SOHAM" to enable you to retire once again into this perfect silence. This process may be repeated as many as three times during one sitting.

During the process of meditation, many unwanted thoughts may appear on the horizon of your mind. Witness them. Don't try to be hostile to those disturbing and distracting thoughts, but try to be sympathetic and friendly to them and keep mentally chanting "SOHAM" which means I and the Ultimate Reality are one.

Any technique of meditation that works for you is fine. The important thing is to begin and then do it faithfully.

Your reward will be peace of mind, a healthy body and a more congenial world to live in.

