

CHAPTER VI – MEDITATION -

Master, Master, what is meditation ?

I still remember my excitement, I was barely twenty and my master was still within his physical envelope. I had read just about everything in esoteric literature, but this question still bothered my mind. All the authors seemed to be in agreement that meditation was the essential instrument if one wanted to advance on a spiritual path.. But then it got more complicated. Did one need to observe total silence? Did one need to visualize an object or a concept to understand it from « within » ? Did one need to chant mantras? Chase all thoughts from the mind? Confusion reigned supreme.

- Would you like some tea? I nodded agreement and immediately rose to fetch the kettle and the cups from the dresser at the other end of the room. Our host knew his own tastes and had prepared tea-bags of several brands on a saucer.
- There is darjeeling, Earl Grey, or...
- Earl Grey will be fine, he replied.

As the gentle aroma of bergamot pervaded the air, my master hunched down in his chair ; for a few moments his gaze was turned inward, then slowly he stretched out his right hand toward me. An internal communion was established, the presence that emanated from his being transcended time and space and I knew that what he would tell me would go far beyond the verbal to penetrate my very being with what he had to say to me.

- You would do well to take notes, for the topic is fundamental and my words will be useful to you later in the context of other endeavours and maybe also for others ...

.... A very very long time ago, man was confronted with a need for evolution, just as we are today. After many ages devoted to densifying the body, what has been called the fall of the spirit into the matter, a time arose when men, in full possession of their instrument of expression, that is, the physical body, needed to learn to control it.

Today, many functions of our organism operate in automatic mode ; breathing, the sense of balance, the coordination of movement.

They have become unconscious, that is, they take place below the threshold of our consciousness. But it was not always thus.

For tens of thousands of years the task of humanity was to improve his mastery of the marvelous instrument that is our body to perfect its usefulness.

You will understand better what this process entailed if you compare it to the learning cycle of a child from zero to seven years old.

It is from these ancient times that hatha yoga, the yoga of postures, developed to help man master the control of his vehicle. This goes to show, incidentally, that hatha yoga is no longer the way to satisfy the needs of our age, which reside on a different plane.

But let us move on through the path of evolution to arrive at the period that is traditionally called Atlantean. The problem of man lay at that time on the emotional level and the challenge was to control desire.

All kinds of desire, sexual, materialistic, the lust for power, were the object of conflict and experimentation for the human race, until the emotional body, torn between hypersensitivity and apathy, between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group, could find its rightful place in the human configuration. Bhakti yoga, or devotional yoga, was the spiritual science adapted to the development of harmony within the emotional body. It could be said that this corresponds to the progress of an individual between 7 and 14 years old.

We now arrive at the historical stage of the development of humanity that was devoted to, you guessed it, mental or intellectual development. It is sufficient to note the impact on our civilization of the works of the first great thinkers, such as Plato.

We must also not forget the development of the sciences. And the efforts expended to make instruction available to all on the face of the earth.. And the clash of ideologies of the 20th Century.

All this illustrates the use and the development of the brain of man, of his power of reasoning and it therefore concerns the mental or intellectual body or plane.

This corresponds, in terms of the analogy with individual progress, to the period between 14 and 21 years. The type of yoga adapted to this stage is raja yoga.

You are probably wondering if this digression isn't leading us far from our topic of meditation?

Have you ever seen paintings by the Impressionist masters ? When you study them closely you see a succession of separate dots of different colors. When observed from a distance, the dots combine to form a landscape or a face, giving the whole a characteristic vibration of light.

You see, far too often, spirituality has been approached from an emotional point of view : mythical ecstasy, the plenitude of certain states of consciousness, the link to the masters or other entities. All that, of course, exists, but it is not enough to explain the process in its entirety.

What is missing is understanding, reason, the goal, in short, the intellectual approach. The universe is governed by laws and evolution, whether collective or individual, also obeys laws.

There is order : we have mentioned the descent of the spirit into matter, involution, we also speak of the return of the spirit to its creator through matter, evolution.

Three phases have been briefly described : physical, emotional and mental.

You will also note that these three phases, corresponding to three levels of consciousness, are organized in a similar way within our organism : « below », below the belt, the capacity to create on a physical level, to transmit life. In the middle, either at the level of the solar plexus or the heart plexus depending on the stage of development, are the centres of desire and of emotions. « Above », in the head, are the mental functions.

Reflecting on all this, you will find the basis for many fruitful deductions concerning psychology and the profound nature of certain sicknesses depending on where they are situated.

And so, throughout his development, man must arrive at the synthesis of these three elements in order to become a tri-unity, a fully evolved personality.

He is given the wherewithal to lead a relatively controlled life and to express himself competently in the various realms of existence.

Many human beings have reached this stage and have embarked on the next. The stage that consists of bringing the personality into contact with the soul. A fleeting contact at first, until the personality, after several lifetimes of effort, succeeds in building a bridge between the two and establishing a continuity of consciousness.

This work corresponds to the situation of the disciple, characterized by this phase in which the personality becomes receptive to the energies of the soul. It then becomes an instrument that is sensitive to the needs of the group – no longer focussed solely on the gratification of the self ,– and it offers its services to the group, without restriction, in one or other realm of human activity : economic, artistic, political, pedagogical, scientific, etc....

My master paused and drank a few sips of tea ; I did the same, my brain reeling before all the different pieces of puzzle he had set out before me. They seemed to compose a majestic image, all the more impressive because of its obvious simplicity. He seemed to read my thoughts for he continued :

... that is why the topic of meditation is both simple and complex. You must understand that any spiritual exercise, no matter how effective, could allow anyone to « skip » the steps along the way. Only knowledge, arising from the crucible of experience and of experimentation is capable of producing the desired effects. Here we are talking about the purification of the vehicle, of discriminating between the vibrations of each different plane, of the development of perception and the practical application of the results obtained.

And so, yes, meditation is a useful tool, but in practical terms, to be useful it must be guided by a master. He alone can know the stage of development of his pupil, propose the appropriate exercises and control the results obtained.

For meditation is a process of focussing the consciousness and it is dual in nature. The first, active, phase, allows the student, through concentration and visualization to attain the required level of vibration.

The second, passive, phase allows the student to receive impressions through the contact that has been made. Let us take an example: imagine that you need to develop a certain quality, courage, let us say. In its active phase your meditation could consist of visualising situations where you could make use of that quality.

Then, once you have achieved that goal, during the passive phase you could observe the various reactions that invade your consciousness : satisfaction, danger, consequences, etc. And so meditation is an irreplaceable tool for bringing new elements into the consciousness or for retrieving elements that are situated below the threshold of consciousness and that can be rediscovered, as is the case for certain experiences arising from the very distant past.

I felt compelled to ask the following question :

- are your reservations about the effective use of meditation intended as a warning?

- the dangers are certainly real and should not be underestimated. «**Energy follows thought**». That aphorism is the key to my explanation.

- If the consciousness is focussed arbitrarily, there is a real risk of producing a psychological, psychic or even physical imbalance. Meditation practiced without guidance could result in the person being trapped in his own subjectivity, cut off from the world. Many people are attracted by the idea of seeking powers and throw themselves into meditation because they have read that one must awaken the kundalini. Consequently, they concentrate their consciousness on the psychic centres. This can be dangerous for mental health and balance.

- But then, what should be done ?

- Spiritual progress doesn't happen by accident. It is the fruit of efforts made in the past and in the present in a quest for the highest possible light.

And as we are not alone, we may rightly consider that we are links in a chain.

Those who are ahead draw those who are behind and it is our responsibility to recognize that we may be alternately ahead or behind...

That is why there is no exception to the saying: « **when the pupil is ready the master appears** ».

In answer to your question, let me say that certain forms of meditation can be practiced safely and still be truly effective.

Most are taught in initiatic or traditional schools. But as a general rule, two types of meditation are valid:

Those that consist in establishing a contact with a higher source : holy places, masters of wisdom, aspects of the divine. Their goal is to create a harmony with our soul ; they allow us to seek inspiration or help with solving a problem, or to give thanks.

Those that are practiced in the context of a group seeking world peace, a cure for the sick or other goals of collective purification.

In both cases, the two phase technique is the same. And the role of visualisation is still fundamental in order to set the scene with a maximum of detail drawn from memory, to create places, fill them with sensations, bring them to life ...

The day was drawing to a close and the room was filling with shadows. I had not seen the time go by.

My entire being was concentrated in the here and now and my thirst was unquenchable ...a song of joy raced through me as I heard my master say :

...it is getting late and I suggest that to conclude our meeting we add practice to the theory. We will undertake a meditation whose goal will be to attempt to combine a lesser light with a greater one, a communion of the I with the Self, in other words, of the personality with the soul, or, in symbolic terms, of the disciple with the master.

Seat yourself comfortably and close your eyes; we are going to practice deep breathing in order to reach the required state of relaxation. Now you are going to concentrate briefly on each part of your body in turn, starting with your feet and ascending right through to the head.

The aim of this exercise is to arouse the psychic consciousness and align the different bodies or levels of vibration in an ascending movement.

Let us begin : the feet, the ankles, the calves, the knees, the thighs, the pelvis, the belly, the torso, the hands, the elbows, the arms, the shoulders, the throat, the mouth, the ears, the nose, the eyes, the brain. Let us breathe deeply again.

From now on it will be easy for you to remain concentrated on your head and we can begin the « secret » part of your experience : you will focus on a point between your eyes until you feel it vibrate.

If it is easier for you, you can visualize a ray of light emanating from this point and extending about 20 cm in front of you.

This point, that the ancients called the third eye, is an important psychic centre of which the physical counterpart is in the pineal gland. This point represents for you the synthesis of all your past efforts, the highest point of your personality.

Once this perception is established, you will focus your consciousness on a point situated at the top of your head until you feel it vibrate or until you feel as if there is a weight pressing on this point. If you like, you can visualize a point of golden light, which corresponds to the crown chakra, that the religious painters of the Middle Ages depicted as a halo over certain « awakened » personages. This point, the highest in our diagram of the body, represents the point of entry of energies into the soul. For you it represents by definition the future.

Now, make an effort to join these two centres, so that their light intermingles and they can influence one another.

The point of juncture created represents your present in the context of a consciousness that is illuminated and expanded, because it contains both the past and the future.

We now come to the passive or receptive phase of meditation, and while I chant the sacred OM you will cease all effort to remain in the plenitude of communion with the most sacred dimensions of the Being. Do not seek to analyze your state, maintain your consciousness in the sublime Holy of Holies.

.....OOOOOOMM
MM.....
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« That's it! »

Return gradually to a state of normal consciousness. Shake your arms and legs. We are going to part now. You can repeat this meditation from time to time when you feel the need within you.

My heart full of gratitude, I took leave of my master. I knew deep within me that the experience I had just lived would remain with me for ever.

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