

Maha Samadhi Message 2011 (On Meditation)



The word meditation as is generally understood is to focus one's mind for a period of time for spiritual purposes. It also means to think carefully about something in the sense of contemplation. In the spiritual science of India, meditation is prescribed as a method of spiritual contemplation of God (with form or without form) and Guru, the Spiritual Master. Some people, at times, use the word 'concentration' as a synonym for the word 'meditation'. The generic meaning of the word concentration is to focus all one's attention on something. This something can be a book, or piece of music, on anything else of our everyday life. While enjoying or doing something for which we have a passion, we do concentrate. Sometimes when reading a book of interest, we are so intensely focused that we lose the sense of time.

However in the spiritual world one does not say that he concentrates on God, even if concentration is the most essential component of meditation. In short, meditation can be said to be concentration Plus and the Plus factor here-in means a divine or spiritual aspect.

When one says that he meditates on God, or practices meditation, it means that (a) the practitioner has stationed or seated himself in a certain place, (b) he focuses his attention on God, Guru or Ishta (personal deity) with form or without form (Saguna or Nirguna) (c) he continues with the activity for a certain period of time as desired or prescribed (d) during such period of meditation he starts losing awareness about the surroundings and his own self, wholly or partially. It is extremely difficult for a person to meditate, in the true sense of the term, when he is walking, although one can meditate when lying down in a sleeping posture. Only the God-intoxicated persons can meditate even when walking or standing as they are, at times, oblivious of their physical existence.

That is why the Hindu spiritual science (Yoga) prescribes certain physical Asanas (postures) like 'Padmasana', 'Siddhasana' etc. as a sine-qua-non for yogic meditative practices. Generally the practitioner is advised to meditate, sitting at a particular place (on the ground) using a mat made of wool, cloth, grass, etc. Some Yogis at advanced stages can meditate sitting on a chair or bed. Some people also use tiger skin or deer skin for the purpose. It also prescribes doing meditation while facing a certain direction, mostly towards East or North. With some exceptions, meditating while facing South is not prescribed. The practitioner is supposed to wear a clean and loose garment (to avoid tightness and avoid physical discomfort) after a bath etc so that during meditation his mind does not get diverted.

The Sadhaka (Spiritual Practitioner) is supposed to meditate in a quiet place without sound or commotion as the mind is prone to get diverted. At times, some devotees sitting in the hustle-bustle of a temple are found to be struggling for concentration, with loud pitched music (aarti, bhajan or naam smaran) going on in full blast. No doubt there is a science of meditation but there cannot be anything like pretentious art of meditation.

Another factor the Hindu Yogic science adds to the apple cart of meditation is Pranayam. In short, pranayam means control of Prana (the vital force of a living organism) through a method of breath control. Pranayam, if done properly, helps in concentration. It also gives good health and longevity which helps the yogi to carry on his practices for a long period of time. In Hatha Yoga, usually pranayam is practiced extensively.

Shri Shirdi Sai Baba does not seem to have advised His devotees to do Pranayam although He has never spoken against it. Nor did He ever ask His devotees to practice Hatha yoga and other types of Yoga. He only asked His devotees to purify their mind through reading of religious books, listening and participating in spiritual discourses and music (aarti, bhajan, naam smaran etc) and meditation. He has also spoken about the method of meditation on Him (with form and without form) as mentioned in Shri Sai Satcahritra.

Without being aware of the prerequisites of meditation, some people seem to be satisfied with their own system of meditation. Such practices may yield some benefit but such an exercise may not lead in the right path as desired. Let us then meditate on Shri Sainath Maharaj as advised by Him in Shri Sai Satcharita.

Jai Shri Sai
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