

Chapter 2

CONCEPT AND TYPES OF MEDITATION

Why Meditate?

The main objective of meditation is to bring steadiness to the mind, which being very sensitive, usually remains disturbed. A disturbed mind is not capable of finding a solution to any problem. On the contrary, it may even confuse the problem further. A person with a disturbed mind makes little or no sense of his situation and embraces failure everywhere.

Whether one is male or female, young or old, rich or poor, learned or foolish, devotee or atheist, ascetic or undisciplined, righteous or sinful, he is invariably in need of mental peace. That is why one always makes every possible effort to attain it. A person who does not have mental peace knows full well that the main cause for their unrest is his desires. These desires, however, are usually so strong that in spite of such awareness on his part, he is unable to give them up.

The four principal ends of human life are: *dharma* (living according to the ways of truth; practice of religion), *artha* (acquisition of wealth), *kāma* (fulfillment of desires) and *mokṣa* (attainment of liberation). One who strives for the first three ends is an ordinary seeker; one who endeavours for final liberation is the true seeker. The former takes to meditation simply to reduce mental unrest, while the latter undertakes it for eradicating all mental vacillations.

Normally, every human being has to live in society. This usually contributes toward aggravating the disturbance of the mind. One who hopes to find peace of mind has to refrain from public contact, even for a short time, and find seclusion. That alone will enable him to escape from new disturbances and find the solution to existing ones.

Sages have said that the *ātman* (soul) is the source of all wisdom and from that source alone, streams of wisdom flow into the heart. Deep thought will establish the truth of this saying: "A human being will attain wisdom only to the extent that his or her mind remains peaceful and undisturbed." An empty pot floats on water, but submerges when filled with water. Likewise, when the mind is filled with introspective thoughts, it sinks into introversion.

The causes of mental unrest are single-mindedness and multi-mindedness. In the case of single-mindedness, the mind is preoccupied with a variety of strong sentiments and feelings about one subject. In the case of multi-mindedness, the

mind is preoccupied with a variety of strong sentiments and feelings about many diverse subjects. In both instances the mind is disturbed.

Mental peace opens many closed avenues of wisdom and mental unrest closes many open avenues of wisdom. Therefore, only that state of mind which generates mental peace can bring wisdom. This means that the state of mind which goads the senses and makes a person extroverted is undesirable and that which stabilises the senses and brings introversion is desirable. Due to mental unrest, sometimes an intelligent person will act even more foolishly than the foolish person. Mental unrest also creates countless fantasies, which subside when the mind becomes peaceful. Meditation is an unparalleled instrument for making the mind empty of any fantasy. In fact, it is the panacea for all types of mental unrest.

Usually, there are a number of strong causes for mental unrest, but there is hardly a single feeble cause for mental peace. Through meditation, the mind can be made tolerant, calm and refined. In order for this to take place, it is essential that the meditator remain removed from public contact for some hours daily. Unfortunately, mental unrest cannot be removed by meditating for only a day or a month. To overcome such unrest, regular and untiring efforts are required for many years. As the seeker goes on eliminating and removing the causes of mental unrest, a state of mental peace is created. In higher states of meditation, streams of peace start flowing into the seeker's mind, thus generating modesty, enthusiasm, courage and patience. Consequently, the seeker becomes an 'addict' of meditation.

Since meditation offers relaxation, it helps to remove all tensions, stresses and strains of the mind. A ray of hope shines in the despairing mind, and it becomes tolerant and restrained. In short, it can be said that the mind obtains fresh vigour or new life through the practice of meditation.

As valuable pearls are obtained by diving into the deep waters of the ocean, so the *siddhis* (miracle powers) and union with the Almighty are attained through meditation by diving deeply into the region of the *ātman* (soul).

What Is Meditation?

When thoughts are deeply concentrated in the region where the mind is focused (*dhāraṇā*), or when they begin to flow continuously towards one centre of *dhāraṇā*, it is called *dhyāna* (meditation). In *Pātañjali Yogadarśana*, *dhyāna* is described this way: "When all the thoughts get diverted to the point where the mind is fixed, without creating any other flow of thoughts, it is called *dhyāna* (meditation) by wise people."

During meditation, one is conscious only of the meditator, meditation and the object of meditation (or the knower, knowledge and the known), and everything else is forgotten. When one can meditate continuously for twenty-four hours, the meditation can be said to have been mastered.

Meditation from a Psychological Viewpoint

To withdraw the flow of awakened life energy from various regions of the body and to concentrate it in any one region is called *dhyāna* (meditation). Though mind is only one, it is called 'extrovert mind' when its flow is in the external regions and 'introvert mind' when its flow is in the internal regions. Existence of gross as well as subtle thoughts means the existence of mind. The thoughtless state is experienced only in sleep, swoon, death, or *samādhi*. Mind keeps continuously thinking. The subject which is pondered over by the mind is called *dharāṇā*. After concentrating the mind over that subject, meditation is generated. Thus a person is always doing 'meditation' in one way or another. There are two types of such meditation: One is *svatantra dhyāna* (independent meditation) and the other is *paratantra dhyāna* (dependent meditation).

When one has to make efforts to make the mind introvert, it is called *svatantra dhyāna*. But while doing so, the meditation which creates hurdles or disturbances is called *paratantra dhyāna*.

Since both illusion as well as God is attained through meditation, both a *bhogī* (person of worldly and pleasurable pursuits) and a *yogī* (person of spiritual pursuits) have to take recourse to meditation. Extrovert meditation leads to unreality, unrest and sorrow, while introvert meditation leads to truth, peace and bliss.

Causes for Introversion and Extroversion of Mind

In the conscious state, devoid of meditation, the senses are extroverted. In the conscious state during meditation, the senses remain introverted. Even in sleep the senses remain introverted. The mind naturally also tries to become introvert when the senses are becoming introvert. Similarly, when the mind turns naturally to introversion, the senses also try to become introvert. The link between the mind and the senses is *prāṇa* (vital air)¹ If any one of these three becomes unstable, it makes the remaining two unstable. The stability of one brings the stability of the others. The senses become active either when the mind prevails over *prāṇa* or when the mind does not create obstruction in *prāṇa*'s effort for controlling the senses.

¹ *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* 2:2

Meditation is the best way to become introvert. Extroversion cannot be removed without meditation. The senses, *prāṇa*, and the mind remain active during extroversion and passive during introversion. If there was only the awake state, the world would be full of mental patients and the life span of human beings would be decreased. Sleep ensures rest for the body and the mind while also helping it to fight against diseases and death. In the beginning, a person remains busy with external vision and is deprived of the inner visualisation. But when that person becomes extremely tired of external vision, they resort to the unknown path of inner visualisation.

Concentration is a Matter of Interest and Practice

Generally, the mind remains attracted towards myriad sense objects, and as a result, it cannot contemplate deeply on any one thing. Without deep contemplation, it is impossible to reach the *ātman* (soul) or to attain wisdom. To attain wisdom, the concentration of mind known as *savikalpa samādhi* (state of meditation having subject-object or knower-known distinction) is essential.

If the mind is trained to contemplate daily on one thing, its power goes on increasing and it can easily deal with difficult situations. Although at first this type of contemplation may not appear easy, it really is. One just has to cultivate interest for it, and that interest is generated through practice. For example, the concentration of mind which is found among artists, writers, painters, musicians, as well as those persons who work with self-confidence, is attained through practice.

Some persons cannot concentrate as easily as artists or individuals with self-confidence, or as the seekers who have complete faith in God, *guru* and scriptures. However, since every individual has an interest in one subject or another, one has to assume that nearly everyone has the ability to attain concentration of mind. The interest that is needed in *Yoga* however, should be of the type which gives rise to the quality of purity.

Meditation is Universally Feasible

Every human being is contemplative by nature. Contemplation is a natural activity. But like many other things, one does not adopt its practice for lack of interest. In fact, one is unknowingly practising meditation during the waking state, while walking, eating, drinking, sitting, getting up, speaking, etc. In short, in every state he is meditating. There is not a single moment without meditation. It can be said that meditation is every person's profession. Even at night people continue to meditate upon dreams. But not in dreamless sound sleep. After all, one must have some rest.

One stands in need of rest after undergoing physical or mental fatigue. The body of the manual worker and the mind of the intellectual worker become uneasy if adequate rest is not taken after work. Like over-exertion indolence or over-resting also creates uneasiness.

Hence, one should adopt the middle way. A manual worker should take care of his body and an intellectual worker should take care of his mind. But the indolent person should take care of both body and mind.

After the day's toil, the mind and the body become automatically loose and ultimately one falls asleep. This is natural rest and a natural state of meditation. If God had not granted this natural gift, human beings would not be able to enjoy a long and healthy life.

An Outline of the Path of Meditation

Mind is one, sense organs are ten, and sense objects are ten; but the desires are countless. As a result, the mind remains scattered. First, the mind should be relieved from this distraction and slowly led towards concentration. For doing this, one should sit in a solitary place and try to close the doors of all the sense organs. Unless this is achieved, the mental distractions caused by the sense objects will not come to an end.

In order to close the doors of the sense organs, it becomes necessary to lift the mind's control over them and to establish the control of *prāṇa* instead. Through such practice over a number of years, the concentration of mind is gradually accomplished.

Meditation is the inner journey, the spiritual journey, the journey towards the Absolute or the journey of divine Love.

Dhyāna means concentration of mind. This state is known as *sabīja* (with 'seed' or mind), *savikalpa* (with subject-object distinction) or *saṁprajñāta* (with thought or reasoning) *samādhi*. In this primary state of *samādhi*, various thoughts do exist, but they all flow in a single direction. Since there is existence of mind in this state, it is called *acetana* (active) *samādhi*.

Samādhi, the highest embodiment of *yoga*, is the end-product of meditation. In that state there is no existence of mind. When the stage of concentration is crossed over, the mind dissolves into nature, giving rise to *nirbīja* (without 'seed' or mind), *nirvikalpa* (without subject-object distinction) or *asamprajñāta* (without thought or reasoning) *samādhi*. Since the mind becomes non-mind or inactive in this state, it is also called *acetana* (inactive) *samādhi*.

It is not possible to reach *samādhi*, the highest stage of *yoga*, without elevating the mind through its lower states, such as *tandrā* (slumber), *nidrā* (sleep), *mūrchā* (swoon), etc. So one can hope to reach the summit of *samādhi* only after consistent practice of meditation for many years.

Keys for Meditation

The mind remains extroverted because of sense faculties. It becomes introverted only as its connections with the senses reduce. For this reason, one has to make use of any one of the following three keys for meditation:

- (i) To curb the existing thoughts and to prevent new thoughts from rising in the mind in order to become thoughtless.
- (ii) To have only desired thoughts in the mind.
- (iii) To observe the thoughts in the mind just as a witness.

The first key is for thoughtless meditation, the second one pertains to thoughtful meditation, and the third one is meant for spontaneous meditation. A reason-oriented seeker prefers to watch the thoughts as a witness. An action-oriented seeker tries to curb the old and the new thoughts. A faith-oriented devotee likes to have only desired thoughts. All these three keys for meditation are equally good. There are no categories like higher, medium or lower among them. It can be said that these keys establish the three different branches of *yoga*: *jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (action) and *bhakti* (devotion) since they are meant for seekers of three different types of nature.

Various Types of Meditation

Meditation can be classified in different ways. The following are the few major classifications of meditation based on different criteria;

- (i) Wilful meditation and spontaneous meditation
- (ii) Thoughtful meditation and thoughtless meditation
- (iii) Meditation on form and formless meditation
- (iv) Haphazard meditation and methodical meditation

Apart from these four classifications, there are further criteria to classify the types of meditation, such as gross and subtle, dynamic and static, and individual and group.

Wilful Meditation and Spontaneous Meditation

In wilful meditation the *prāṇa* energy of the seeker is not released, while in spontaneous meditation it is released. Any one of the three keys of meditation can be used in wilful meditation. In spontaneous meditation, no such aid is necessary as the seeker simply remains in a neutral state of mind. But whether one takes to wilful meditation or to spontaneous meditation, it is advisable to understand all the three keys for meditation.

In wilful meditation, the reason-oriented seeker should remain a witness to the play of mind and whenever that neutrality of observation is broken, it has to be carefully regained. The action-oriented seeker practising wilful meditation should make efforts to control the mind and should strive to re-establish it whenever lost. A devotee taking to wilful meditation should maintain the continuity of the devotional feelings and whenever the faith is shaken, it has to be retrieved carefully.

Regardless of whether the seeker is reason-oriented, action-oriented or faith-oriented, in spontaneous meditation one has to play the role of a neutral observer or a witness. However, one should not forget that in such meditation with the release of *prāṇa* energy, only the stillness over the physical senses is to be attained in the initial stages.

During such initial period, many thoughts continue to appear as before since mind is not yet controlled. But these thoughts do not affect the task of the physical senses being quieted. The only condition that the seeker has to bear in mind during such meditation is that the mind has not to exercise control over the *prāṇa* energy. In such a state, as long as the mind refrains from controlling the body through *prāṇa*, it can be taken for granted that the mind is put under the initial restraint. During such period, the mind remains free from any control. At that time, if the mind feels interested in the activities of the body of *prāṇa*, it becomes introvert, and if it is not interested them, it begins to roam here and there.

In wilful meditation, the body, the neck and the head are made captive and kept steady. Then the reason-oriented seeker tries to observe the menace of the mind as a witness, the action-oriented seeker tries to observe the movements of breath in order to escape the mental menaces, and the faith-oriented devotee either chants *mantra* (sacred incantation) or contemplates the divine acts performed by various incarnations of God. Even through such efforts to meditate, the *prāṇa* energy can get released and the seeker may secure the right path. Lord Kṛṣṇa has rightly said: “No one who strives for spiritual upliftment has ever to tread the path of woe.”²

² *Bhagavad Gītā* 6:40

The reason-oriented seeker, whether practising wilful or spontaneous meditation, comes to know more and more about their mind through witnessing. In the normal wakeful state, a worldly person living in society is not able to know all that is stored in his busy mind. But when he meditates, his mind continuously goes on unfolding its storage.

As a river flows from one place to another, so the mind moves from one thought to another. As water runs downhill, so the mind is attracted by attachments and aversions. This constant movement of mind does not make for consistency in meditation. If one watches the thoughts created during meditation as a mere witness, one will be able to find out toward whom, of what nature and to what degree one has such attachments and aversions. It is only attachment or aversion which drags the mind toward unrest. They are the enemies of mental tranquility. One does not need to create mental peace nor roam in search of it; only mental unrest need be removed.

While watching the thoughts as a witness during meditation, one will be disturbed as long as the senses remain extroverted. However, one will lose identity with the physical self to the extent that introversion is attained. It is only because of its identification with the body that the mind is not able to go down into the depths of the *ātman* or soul. Therefore, one should disregard the existence of the physical self to ensure that the mind, which has gone deep into the realm of the *ātman*, does not again surface on the plane of the body and become extroverted.

Thoughtful (*Savicāra*) Meditation and Thoughtless (*Nirvicāra*) Meditation

As soon as a person sits for meditation and closes his eyes, a big congregation of thoughts pertaining to various desires is held in their mind. As a result, his effort to obtain peace is wasted. In order to escape from such a situation, the faith-oriented devotee resorts to spiritual thinking, since it is not stained by attachments or aversions.

Merely observing the thoughts as a witness requires careful discrimination; hence that technique does suit either the faith-oriented or the action-oriented seeker. So they adopt the remedy which suits their nature. When a devotee resorts to spiritual thoughts for curbing the unwanted worldly thoughts, his meditation becomes thoughtful. It is also called *sthūla* (gross) meditation. Even when the reason-oriented seeker observes the thoughts as a mere witness, he or she is also doing such gross meditation because there is prominence of perception.

A devotee's process of thoughtful meditation is slightly different from that of the reason oriented seeker. In a devotee's meditation there is no perception, but creation. Creative imagination and memory contribute greatly to thoughtful meditation.

Perception is that valid knowledge about sound, touch, sight, taste and smell which is obtained through the channel of the sense organs. Both reflection and imagination are supported by this perception. What is reflection? When a person experiences some sort of sensation, there is an effect produced on the nervous system. As a result it leaves a kind of impression on the mind. When such a prior impression gets stimulated again, it is called reflection. In other words, the impressions gathered through the subtle senses which are linked with perceptual knowledge are reflections.

What is Imagination?

When an idea or an image of a known person or a thing is conceived in the mind, in their absence, it is called imagination. Memory is the storage of past experiences. It always depends upon the direct perceptible evidences. Past experiences can be reproduced by imagination too, but some new ideas get mixed with it. Memory is related to the past, present, or no period at all.

It is true that imagination has its base in reflections; but if it is not supported by memory, its very existence becomes impossible. In thoughtful meditation, one may contemplate, with the aid of memory, on the mental image of the *guru* (master) or on the holy idol or picture of a favourite God, or on the life events of various incarnations of God, supported by scriptural memory. This type of meditation becomes quite easy if the seeker's mind is fully influenced by the magnanimity of God or the validity of the scriptures.

The seeker's task becomes easy if the mental image is created as soon as he starts contemplating. However, before adopting this method, it is necessary that one practice gross meditation by gazing with open eyes on the holy idol or picture, so that the after-image becomes firmly fixed in the mind. In thoughtful meditation, one can use any thought which generates purity (*sattva*). By contemplating upon the thoughts which increase the attachments and aversions, passion (*rajas*) and inertia (*tamas*) are increased; hence such thoughts are undesirable. Whatever 'good' or 'bad' acts a person does in daily life are directly the results of the quality of one's thoughts.

During such meditation, one loses awareness of the physical self while contemplating on the life events (*lilā*) of the *guru* or God. Then introversion of the mind is generated.

This thoughtful meditation includes prayers and *bhajan*s (devotional songs). Silent as well as musical prayers and devotional songs are the constituents of the meditative process. One must link the mind with the meaning of each word of the prayer or the devotional song. Both of these can be said to work properly only if they cause one to forget about the surroundings and slip into deep introversion. Both can be recited or sung individually as well as in a group. Singing the

melodies of Indian classical music in slow and lengthy tunes, or chanting *Rāma mantra*, etc. are included among the constituents of meditation. Lecturing on sacred topics and hearing the scriptures read become integral to meditation when done with focused attention. Similarly, worship when performed with faith assumes the form of meditation. In short, whenever one becomes engrossed in any sacred work or art, he is, in a way, doing meditation.

As long as thought exists, mind exists. When thought ceases, mind also ceases to exist. Thoughts do not exist in sound sleep, the unconscious state and *nirvikalpa samādhi*. How can one conceive of mind in a corpse? And how can there be thought without mind?

Here the question arises, “Why should one have so much aversion towards the mind and thoughts?” Mind alone is the cause of happiness and misery or bondage and liberation. In absence of mind there exists neither misery nor happiness, bondage nor liberation.

If this is so, the approach of the reason-oriented seeker to meditation can be considered to be the best. This person neither tries to annihilate the mind, as an enemy, nor wish it long life as a friend. He just watches the mind and its thoughts and remains a witness or a neutral observer. This person thinks, “Let them be there if they are there.”

But not all seekers are reason oriented. So, each seeker behaves in accordance with his nature. A faith-oriented devotee does not want to annihilate the mind and the thoughts; he tries to be friendly with the mind and lead it towards the stream of purity (*sattva*) in order to make it pure. The mind thus purified takes the seeker to the kingdom of God and ultimately gets itself dissolved into *sattva guna* (quality of purity), the source of its origin.

What is the approach, then, of an action-oriented seeker? He also does not wish to annihilate the mind and the thoughts. He knows well that the desires are the root cause of the mind and its thoughts. So he tries to render the mind desireless and to make it thoughtless thereby, through controlling the senses. He takes recourse to the practice of *āsanās*, *mudrās*, *prāṇāyāmas*, *trāṭaka*, *nāda*, etc., in order to relieve the body and the mind from these desires. Moreover, in order to keep away thoughts during meditation, they keep either closed or open eyes fixed on the tip of the nose or between the eyebrows. With the steadiness of the eyes, *prāṇa* also stops moving and as a result the mind, too, stops thinking. The action-oriented seeker does all this with great patience and ability. Of course, in the beginning they find it difficult, but after regular practice it becomes easier.

As soon as the mind begins to become thoughtless, awareness of the physical self on the part of the seeker disappears.

The body of a person whose mind has become thoughtless will automatically roll down onto the floor. The reason for this is that as long as the idea of keeping the body erect remains in the mind, even in the minutest form, the mind remains linked with the body.

A thoughtless state can only be achieved when this concept disappears. As soon as this happens, the seeker will fall down if they are standing and will roll down in any direction if they are sitting. If this does not happen, it should be understood that he or she has not become thoughtless. Even such thought as, “I do not want to have any thoughts during meditation” is also a thought which keeps the activities of the mind alive at the micro-level. It is not possible to become thoughtless with the help of the mind. For that, one has to secure the aid of *prāṇa*.

During *saṁprajñāta samādhi*, one conquers *prāṇa* and makes it subtle and refined, and the body, due to internal cleanliness and purity, gets completely filled up with *prāṇa*. Only then will the body remain straight with the head and chin steady. After that, through increased practice, one naturally starts meditating on the region between the eyebrows (*bhrūmadhya*). Finally, when the subtle and refined *prāṇa* flows toward the brain (*brahma-randhra*), the mind is carried away in this flow and becomes sublime; at this point the mind is incapable of generating any thought. In the *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā*, it is said: “In the middle of the two eyebrows is the seat of Lord Śiva. Here the mind gets dissolved. Know that as being the fourth state, beyond the states of sleeping, dreaming and waking. Time does not exist there.”³

Meditation on Form (Gross) and Formless (Subtle) Meditation

In the *Gorakṣa Paddhati* text it is said, “*Dhyāna* (meditation) is of two types – *saguṇa* (with form) and *nirguṇa* (formless). Meditating on the forms (such as those of the deities or the guru) is *saguṇa dhyāna* and meditating on the *jyoti* (inner light) is *nirguṇa dhyāna*.”⁴ The great *yogī Gorakṣanātha* has pointed out nine spots for meditation: (1) anus, (2) genitals, (3) navel, 4) heart, (5) throat, (6) tongue, (7) uvula, (8) frontal region of the head, and (9) crown of the head. Meditating on the *cakras* means the meditation in those nerve centres with their respective presiding deities. For example, one has to meditate on *Gaṇapati*, (the elephant god) in the anus region, on *Brahmā* (Lord the Creator) in the genital region, on *Viṣṇu* (Lord the Maintainer) in the navel region, and so on. In the beginning, one has to meditate on gross forms, in the middle-stage on subtle forms, and at the end the mind does not use forms while meditating.

In the *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā* text, meditation is said to be of three types: *sthūla* (gross), *jyotirmaya* (luminous) and *sūkṣma* (subtle). When forms are

³ *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* 4-48

⁴ *Gorakṣa Paddhati* 2:62

contemplated upon, it is gross meditation. When inner light is contemplated upon, it is luminous meditation. Sage *Gheraṇḍa* says, “Serpentine *kuṇḍalinī* is seated in the *mūlādhāra cakra* (basal plexus). *Jivātmā* (the personal soul), luminous like the lamp flame, is also located there. One should meditate on this luminous flame as the *brahma* (cosmic self). That is called *jyotirdhyāna* or *tejothyāna* (luminous meditation). Such luminous meditation can also be done in the frontal region between the eyebrows. This luminous meditation, both in the basal plexus as well as in the frontal region, can be rightly practiced only by those seekers whose *prāṇa* energy has been released through the favour of *guru* or God. When the serpentine *kuṇḍalinī* lying dormant in the basal plexus is awakened and uptrended to reach the frontal region along with the soul, one should meditate on the subtle *kuṇḍalinī*. That is called *sūkśma* (subtle) meditation. In order to attain this type of subtle meditation, one should practice *siddhāsana* (adept pose) and *mudrās* like *mūlabandha*, *śakticālana*, *śāmbhavī* etc. under the guidance of an experienced *guru*.

Lord *Śiva*, the conqueror of Cupid (desire), is the *ūrdhvaretā* (perpetual master of the creative force, or one whose sexual fluid is sublimated). He has mastered *śāmbhavī mudrā* and has passed on its knowledge to the favoured *yogīs*. Sage *Gheraṇḍa* describes *śāmbhavī mudrā* as the state of beholding the *ātman* (self) while gazing at the lower lids of the eyes. This *mudrā* is considered to be secret in all the tantras. The four *vedas*, six scriptures, and eighteen *puranas* can be compared with a courtesan, while *śāmbhavī mudrā* can be compared with a respectable lady of outstanding conduct. Hardly anyone can approach her.

The *yogī* who knows *śāmbhavī mudrā* is himself the trinity of the Lord-- *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Maheśa*. *Yogīs* who surrender themselves totally at the feet of the Lord attain Self realization and become one with the Cosmic Self.

In the opinion of Sage *Gheraṇḍa*, luminous meditation is one hundred times better than gross meditation, while subtle meditation is a hundred thousand times better than luminous meditation.

Haphazard Meditation and Methodical Meditation

Meditating without understanding the principles, objectives, secrets and techniques of meditation does little good; so much of the seeker’s time is wasted. If the meditator cannot meditate methodically, they get dejected and their faith decreases day by day. Haphazard meditation does not give much pleasure, and the seeker performs meditation as a routine.

Fifty years ago, in the primary schools, the teachers punished the students by making them bend down and touch their toes. This posture, which is known as *pādāngūṣṭhāsana*, helps digestion, increases hunger, and sharpens the intellect and memory because the head is supplied with more blood. Haphazard

meditation is just like that: it never goes to waste. One receives benefits since one's powers of contemplation and concentration are increased. A seeker, who has been meditating in such a way, if given proper guidance, would make quicker progress than a novice.

Through methodical meditation, one begins to undergo pleasant and mysterious experiences within a short time. As a result, the seeker becomes extremely interested; but again, this is achieved only after adopting the path of complete surrender.

When *prāṇa* becomes powerful, certain activities (*kriyās*) are automatically generated in the body. To permit such activity without trying to stop it is called *Īśwara-praṇidhāna* or *śaraṇāgati* (complete surrender to God). A competent *guru* can generate such activity in the body of a disciple through *śaktipāta* initiation, i.e. through transmission of spiritual energy. On receiving *śaktipāta*, the *prāṇa* energy is released in the body of the disciple.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, such release of *prāṇa* and surrender to God is indicated like this: "The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O *Arjuna*, and by his *māyā* (illusion) causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a machine. Seek refuge in him alone with all your heart, O *Bharata*, by his grace you will gain supreme peace and the eternal abode."⁵

Thus the practice of *yoga* is automatically started; after that the seeker will not need to learn *yoga* from anyone. That is why it is said: "Only through the practice of elementary *yoga* may the advanced *yoga* be known. Only through the practice of elementary *yoga* is the advanced *yoga* generated. Therefore, one who is industrious and devoid of idleness may, through the diligent practice of the elementary stages of *yoga*, continue on into the advanced stages of *yoga* for a long time."⁶

⁵ *Bhagavad Gītā* 18:61 and 62.

⁶ *Yogabhāṣya, Vibhūtipāda*, 6.