

NEWSLETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY, NAIROBI CENTRE

Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/savitrinairobi/home>

February 2010

Dates to remember

1st February 2010 – Monday – Prosperity Day – Meditation at the Bhavan at 6.30 pm.

21st February – Sunday – The Mother's 132nd Birth Anniversary – Meditation at 11 am.

Every Saturday 5.15pm-6.30pm: Meditation, study of "Savitri" and reading from "ALL INDIA MAGAZINE" in the Words of THE MOTHER and SRI AUROBINDO.

Every Sunday 11 am- 12.30 pm: reading from "The Synthesis of Yoga".

Shrine

Sri Aurobindo's shrine at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan is open from 8a.m. to 7p.m. All are welcome. It is a place for silent meditation.

Sri Aurobindo's Blessings

Let the new birth become manifest in your heart and radiate in calm and joy and take up all the parts of your being, mind and vision and will and feeling and life and body. Let each date in your life be a date of its growth and greater completeness till all in you is the child of the Mother. Let the Light and Power and Presence envelop you and protect and cherish and foster, till all in your inner and outer existence is one movement and an expression of its peace and strength and Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

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A Polite Request

Dear Friends, though there is no subscription as such for this Newsletter, Shs. 1000/= per year helps to cover postage, printing and other expenses. Contribution by way of cheque may be sent to

Sri Aurobindo Society, Nairobi Centre,

P. O. Box 42099, 00100 GPO NAIROBI

Following excerpts are taken from monthly e-magazine of Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry -

NEXT FUTURE. (<http://nextfuture.sriaurobindosociety.org.in>)

What is Meditation? How to meditate?

We often receive questions from aspirants, who are not satisfied with their present lives, who are trying to find a meaning in their lives, a deeper reason for why things happen as they do, and who are searching for a light to guide them in their actions.

Each month we take a question of this nature and present an answer based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with the belief that this could be of help to a larger number of persons. We welcome further comments on making our endeavour beneficial to all.

In the speed and stress of modern life, more and more persons all over the world, are turning to Meditation, with the hope that it will help them to deal better with the inner and outer turmoil.

But there are many types of meditations and there is not enough clarity about the meaning of Meditation, its purpose and how one should meditate.

Here are a few questions and the answers in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother:

What does Meditation Mean?

There are two words used in English to express the Indian idea of *dhyana*, “meditation” and “contemplation”. Meditation means properly the concentration of the mind on a single train of ideas which work out a single subject. Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration. Both these things are forms of *dhyana*, for the principle of *dhyana* is mental concentration whether in thought, vision or knowledge.

There are other forms of *dhyana*. There is a passage in which Vivekananda advises you to stand back from your thoughts, let them occur in your mind as they will and simply observe them and see what they are. This may be called concentration in self-observation.

This form leads to another, the emptying of all thought out of the mind so as to leave it a sort of pure vigilant blank on which the divine knowledge may come and imprint itself, undisturbed by the inferior thoughts of the ordinary human mind and with the clearness of a writing in white chalk on a blackboard. You will find that the Gita speaks of this rejection of all mental thought as one of the

methods of yoga and even the method it seems to prefer. This may be called the *dhyana* of liberation, as it frees the mind from slavery to the mechanical process of thinking and allows it to think or not to think, as it pleases and when it pleases, or to choose its own thoughts or else to go beyond thought to the pure perception of Truth called in our philosophy *Vijnana*.

Meditation is the easiest process for the human mind, but the narrowest in its results; contemplation more difficult, but greater; self-observation and liberation from the chains of Thought the most difficult of all, but the widest and greatest in its fruits. One can choose any of them according to one's bent and capacity. The perfect method is to use them all, each in its own place and for its own object; but this would need a fixed faith and firm patience and a great energy of Will in the self-application to the yoga.

Sri Aurobindo

What is the Purpose of Meditation?

I think the most important thing is to know why one meditates; this is what gives the quality of the meditation and makes it of one order or another.

You may meditate to open yourself to the divine Force, you may meditate to reject the ordinary consciousness, you may meditate to enter the depths of your being, you may meditate to learn how to give yourself integrally; you may meditate for all kinds of things. You may meditate to enter into peace and calm and silence – this is what people generally do, but without much success. But you may also meditate to receive the Force of transformation, to discover the points to be transformed, to trace out the line of progress. And then you may also meditate for very practical reasons: when you have a difficulty to clear up, a solution to find, when you want help in some action or other. You may meditate for that too.

The Mother

How to Meditate?

There are all kinds of meditations... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result – this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea – simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one's power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquility. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns.

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and into the bargain you will not be sure of the results; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else – simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and specially of what may not, and above all without desiring that something may come – simply, the joy of an aspiration which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more and more in a constant concentration.

And there I may assure you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is, it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realized when you do this. These possibilities may be very different according to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be silent, going behind appearances, calling a force which answers, waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living consciously in this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time something will happen.

The Mother

What are the Best Conditions for Meditation?

There are no essential external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of the body are helpful, sometimes almost necessary to the beginner. But one should not be bound by external conditions. Once the habit of meditation is formed, it should be made possible to do it in all circumstances, lying, sitting, walking, alone, in company, in silence or in the midst of noise etc.

The first internal condition necessary is concentration of the will against the obstacles to meditation, i.e. wandering of the mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience and restlessness etc.

The second is an increasing purity and calm of the inner consciousness (*citta*) out of which thought and emotion arise, i.e. a freedom from all disturbing reactions, such as anger, grief, depression, anxiety about worldly happenings etc. Mental perfection and moral are always closely allied to each other.

Sri Aurobindo

What is Dynamic Meditation?

It [a dynamic meditation] is a meditation that has the power of transforming your being. It is a meditation which makes you progress, as opposed to static meditation which is immobile and relatively inert, and which changes nothing in your consciousness or in your way of being. A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation.

I think everyone has his own mode of meditation. But if one wants the meditation to be dynamic, one must have an aspiration for progress and the meditation must be done to help and fulfil this aspiration for progress

The Mother

Meaning and Importance of Concentration in Yoga

We all know that true Concentration plays a very important role in yoga. But we do not know exactly what role it plays.

The question arises:

“What is the meaning of Concentration? How is it used in ordinary life? How is it different when applied to Yoga? What is its importance in Yoga?”

Here is an excerpt from a letter of Sri Aurobindo which looks at these questions:

Concentration in Ordinary Life

Ordinarily the consciousness is spread out everywhere, dispersed, running in this or that direction, after this subject and that object in multitude. When anything has to be done of a sustained nature the first thing one does is to draw back all this dispersed consciousness and concentrate. It is then, if one looks closely, bound to be concentrated in one place and on one occupation, subject or object – as when you are composing a poem or a botanist is studying a flower. The place is usually somewhere in the brain, if it is the thought, in the heart if it is the feeling in which one is concentrated.

Yogic Concentration

The yogic concentration is simply an extension and intensification of the same thing. It may be on an object as when one does *Tratak* on a shining point – then one has to concentrate so that one sees only that point and has no other thought than that. It may be on an idea or word or a name, the idea of the Divine, the word OM, the name Krishna, or a combination of idea and word or idea and name.

But, further, in yoga one also concentrates in a particular place. There is the famous rule of concentrating between the eyebrows – the centre of the inner mind, of occult vision, of the will is there. What you do is to think firmly from there on whatever you make the object of your concentration or else try to see the image of it from there. If you succeed in this then after a time you feel that your whole consciousness is centered there in that place – of course for the time being. After doing it for some time and often it becomes easy and normal.

Concentration in Integral Yoga

In this yoga, you do the same, not necessarily at that particular spot between the eyebrows, but anywhere in the head or at the centre of the chest where the physiologists have fixed the cardiac centre. Instead of concentrating on an object, you concentrate in the head in a will, a call for the descent of the peace above or, as some do, an opening of the unseen lid and an ascent of the consciousness above. In the heart centre one concentrates in an aspiration, for an opening, for the presence of the living image of the Divine there or whatever else is the object. There may be Japa of a name but, if so, there must also be a concentration on it and the name must repeat itself there in the heart centre.

It may be asked what becomes of the rest of the consciousness when there is this local concentration? Well, it either falls silent as in any concentration or, if it does not, then thoughts or other things may move about, as if outside, but the concentrated part does not attend to them or notice. That is when the concentration is reasonably successful.

One has not to fatigue oneself at first by long concentration if one is not accustomed, for then it loses its power and value. One can relax and meditate instead of concentrating. It is only as the concentration becomes normal that one can go on for a longer and longer time.

Sri Aurobindo

Dealing with Unpleasant Thoughts

We have very little control over our mind and thoughts. And very often we find that we are assailed by unpleasant and unwelcome thoughts—thoughts of anxiety and fear, thoughts of anger, irritation and depression, thoughts of bad will wishing some harm should come to others.

We generally do not like to think in this manner and it would make most of us very uncomfortable. But the more we try to get rid of these wrong and bad thoughts, the more they come back with an even greater vehemence and we find ourselves quite helpless.

The Mother was once asked.

Question: At times unpleasant thoughts come and disturb us. How can we get rid of them?

Here are three simple and practical ways shown by the Mother, which if we put into practice can help us greatly.

To Think of Something Else

There are several methods. Generally—but it depends on people—generally, the easiest way is to think of something else. That is, to concentrate one's attention upon something that has nothing to do with that thought, has no connection with that thought, like reading or some work—generally something creative, some creative work. For instance, those who write, while they are writing (let us take simply a novelist), while he is writing, all other thoughts are gone, for he is concentrated on what he is doing. When he finishes writing, if he has no control, the other thoughts will return. But precisely when a thought assails you, one can try to do some creative work; for example, the scientist could do some research work, a special study to discover something, something that is very absorbing; that is the easiest way.

A Movement of Rejection

Naturally, those who have begun to control their thought can make a movement of rejection, push aside the thought as one would a physical object. But that is more difficult and asks for a much greater mastery. If one can manage it, it is more active, in the sense that if you reject that movement, that thought, if you chase it off effectively and constantly or almost repeatedly, finally it does not come any more. But in the other case, it can always return. That makes two methods.

The Supreme Method

The third means is to be able to bring down a sufficiently great light from above which will be the “denial” in the deeper sense; that is, if the thought which comes is something dark (and especially if it comes from the subconscious or inconscient and is sustained by instinct), if one can bring down from above the light of a true knowledge, a higher power, and put that light upon the thought, one can manage to dissolve it or enlighten or transform it—this is the supreme method.

This is still a little more difficult. But it can be done, and if one does it, one is cured—not only does the thought not come back but the very cause is removed.

The first step is to think of something else (but in this way, you know, it will be indefinitely repeated); the second is to fight; and the third is to transform. When one has reached the third step, not only is one cured but one has made a permanent progress.

The Mother