

# Meditation and Psychological improvement: A Practical Vedantin View

Dipanjali Das

## **Abstract:**

*Peace and happiness are consisted in a mind which is constantly positive and pragmatic in attitude towards their goal. A positive human mind can learn, grow, find peace of mind and can improve his psychological attitude if he/she indulges the self with anything which may be creative in nature or normative in category or anything else which is existent in this physical world or beyond that, but for a negative mind it is very difficult to find peace of mind. They always find excuses to find a positive destination. They may learn or grow but either in a negative way or in a way far from finding peace in life. A negative mind is born from ignorance. Therefore, there is a need for enhancing wisdom of life, knowledge of self, nature of the universe and mind power etc. which leads us towards the psychological improvements. A psychologically strong human being can not only achieve his goal but also can lead a path of entrepreneurship. This article tries to put its emphasis on how to get rid of worries by knowing the self and avoid misery created by the material attachment which is the root cause of psychological degradation and social chaos. Knowing the self in a practical Vedantin way of meditation does not fully ignore the value of the existing world but at the same time it is emphasising and focusing on the power of human mind which is somehow imprisoned with undue attachment of unnecessary worldly objects and emotions. It will focus on the concentration power of mind and human psychological effects after the proper practice of meditation.*

**Key words:** *Practical Vedānta, Meditation, yoga, dhyāna, Samādhi, power of positivity, world of concentration etc.*

## **I. Introduction:**

A human mind consists of two different worlds; one is the physical world (the outer world or the material world) and the other is mental world (the inner world) which leads his psychological attitude and vision to see the world as well as to see him own self. Both the worlds are part and parcel of human life without which there is no existence of human life and value. Mostly, a human mind gets connected to those things which can be achieved easily. And because of that attitude a human mind sometimes fall into dusky situations. Not only he falls into that situation but sometimes puts some innocent others to that situation. There are various such examples in the world history of mankind. Therefore, there is a central role of physical world for a man to build a healthy mindset. Since their childhood, people try to observe the physical world and accordingly they grow their mentality and psychological attitude connecting the physical world they can see in front of their eyes and empirical world. Suppose, a child always observes his father helping the poor, he will also follow his father

doing the noble tasks in this physical world and he will somehow indulge himself with those kinds of noble tasks. Therefore, there is a great role of physical world for a child to build his mental world. But it does not mean that in a negative environment a child will always learn negative things (although in most of the cases things go according to the situation, but yet there are few cases where people can win a negative situation). It is not necessarily a fact that a child adopts everything from the environment in front of him, from a negative situation a child can learn a positive thought also, as for example, suppose, a woman is abused and beaten up daily by her husband in front of her child. The poor woman has no other ways to go anywhere but keeps crying as she is dependent on her husband. Her young son is also helpless as he is too young to take his mother far away from these kinds of dusky situations. Now, this child is bound to stay with his horrible father along with his poor mother thinking that one day he will be able to help his mother out from this kind of situation. Here, there may occur two different mentality of that child; either he will follow his father and become like him or he will learn to observe his mother's sufferings and he will be a good human being who respects women, who tries to educate his daughter to become independent so that no daughter would face the same situation like his mother did or he may follow his father and become like him to do the same behaviour to his wife like his father did to his mother. There may many consequences occur. Therefore, though a human mind is dependent on the physical world to build his mental world yet a mental health or human attitude is also equally responsible for creating a great mental world and improving a psychologically sound mindset. It is dependent on whether a man has a positive attitude or a negative attitude towards his observation to look at the world. But mostly (not all) in a negative situation a man grows negative thoughts. He cannot help himself to stay out of that as because a negative situation ceases not only the Physical world to that man but mostly affects and breaks his mental world too. Now there may occur a question as how a man can keep his mind free from negativity even if the situation is negative. There may be various ways to divert a mind by changing the physical environment or keeping the man far from that situation which can cause his sufferings or any other things related to the physical world. By doing so, someone may heal his wounds in a temporary basis but it may not be as permanent as there is a tedious process and practice of mind exercise. Swami Vivekananda a religious thinker, philosopher and man making entrepreneur always focused on mental health of man. In his philosophy and interpretation on social development he discovered mainly two stages of man. One is the apparent man and the other is the real man. An apparent man always being ignorant of his real self remains pissed off, unsound, and worries about his mundane life thinking it as permanent as the sky, with the physical objects and emotions. His attachment to this physical world bounds him to stay away from the proper knowledge of his own existence as well as the outer world. But the real nature of man and the outer world is known to them who fall into the category of the real man. To reach the stage of the real man from the stage of apparent man one has to follow some mental and physical practices. In his Practical Vedanta Swami Vivekananda mentions about the practice of meditation to develop one's mindset in a positive way which is one of the prime steps towards improvement of man's existence and psychological development. Therefore, meditation is very much necessary for a man to learn the art of keeping his mind far from material chaos even if he exists in the world itself and then only he would be able to get peace of mind.

#### **What is Meditation:**

Meditation is accepted as the great healing power in all over the world. Since the ancient Indian religious thought and in the scriptures meditation is always considered as a part and parcel practice for the

Hindu religious people (though every people may not follow it). Swami Vivekananda gives a great explanation about this meditation. He says, “When the mind is studying the external object, it gets identified with it, loses itself. To use the simile of the old Indian philosopher: the soul of man is like a piece of crystal, but it takes the colour of whatever is near it. Whatever the soul touches...it has to take its colour. That is the difficulty. That constitutes the bondage. The colour is so strong, the crystal forgets itself and identifies itself with the colour. Suppose a red flower is near the crystal and the crystal takes the colour and forgets itself, thinks it is red. We have taken the colour of the body and have forgotten what we are. All the difficulties that follow come from that one dead body. All our fears, all worries, anxieties, troubles, mistakes, weakness, evil are from that one great blunder--- that we are bodies. This is the ordinary person. It is the person taking the colour of the flower near to it.

The practice of meditation is pursued. The crystal knows what it is, takes its own colour. It is meditation that brings us nearer to truth than anything else.”<sup>1</sup> Not only that Swami Vivekananda has given many explanations of identifying oneself as the One with Brahman. It is already mentioned above that he gave the explanation of two types of man. One is the Apparent Man and the other is the Real Man. Apparent man is like the crystal taking the colour of the red flower as soon as it gets connected to it. But the Real man is self luminous. He is above all these material controls. The process of becoming the Real man is not an easy process. It takes longer and tedious practice to become a real Man. There are various paths to achieve it. He explains about four Yogas as all the four Yogas show different ways to meet the same destination. All purifies the soul. All can give the wisdom of knowing one’s own existence. All has same aim but reaching the respective goal ways are different. As for example we can take the purified soul in the centre of a circle. Suppose the four Yogas situate in four directions of that circle: east, west, north and south. Now if a man needs to meet the centre of that circle then he has to follow either one direction among the four. He may come from the east direction or the west, it really does not matter, but what matters is that whether he is willing to reach the goal or not. If he wills to reach it then he can enter in the circle or if he is not willing to reach the goal then he will always remain outside the circle. Therefore, if a person needs psychologically sound mindset and tries to keep himself happy then he can follow the path of Practical Vedanta and can follow meditation as one of the steps towards peace and positivity.

Meditation makes a man able to see his real existence. Like the crystal can be seen without the intervention of any other object. A man cannot achieve it without a thorough practice; it is not a small task which can be fulfilled within an hour or a day. It is a tedious process of concentration which can be achieved only then when a man is mentally or physically ready to get success in this process of knowing himself. But the practice of concentration is not that easy. A man has to pass few steps to get this goal. Vivekananda explains three stages of meditation. The primary stage is called ‘*Dhāranā*’, in this stage a man puts his concentration towards a particular object. That particular object may be anything like a pen or a glass or a dot on a paper or anything else. In this stage of *Dhāranā* a man concentrates only on that particular object excluding other things or everything which exists in this physical world or in his mental world. This practice of *Dhāranā* takes a longer time to keep up with. In the beginning of this practice the mind wavers, it cannot stay constant for the required

---

<sup>1</sup> Vivekananda Swami, January 2012 ‘the complete works of Swami Vivekananda’, *Volume 4*, fourteenth reprint of subsidized Edition, pp 227.

time limit. The man fails many times with this practice. The more he tries to concentrate the more his mind wavers. But he should not give up this practice by remembering that failure is the pillar of success. At last with the constant trial he gets success, his mind stops wavering and once this practice is successfully done then the man reaches another stage towards a successful meditative mind. That stage is called '*Dhyāna*' or meditation. This stage is not the last stage. There is further one another deeper stage towards concentration. That stage is called '*Samādhi*' or absorption. In this stage a man reaches to the higher state of concentration where the differentiation between the mind and the object of concentration is lost. In this state of concentration the object and the mind becomes identical. The object entirely comes under the control of that meditative mind. This stage can be reached by the Yogis with the constant and longer practice of concentration.

Now people can raise a question. How meditation helps us in our practical life which we cannot deny as unreal. In Vivekananda's analysis it can be said that in meditation the mind observes itself, turns back upon itself. The mind stops all the thought-waves that come from the outer world dwells outside the mind and the world stops. The more a man focuses on consciousness the more his consciousness expands; the more he meditates the more he will keep growing within....just at first it takes little more effort to successfully complete the process of meditation and with harder efforts meditation comes. In proper meditation a man does not feel the body or anything else existing in the material world. This discontinuation of connectivity with the material world makes a man fully charged. It gives a beautiful rest to the man which he would not have felt before in his whole life. That is the only way which can ever give rest to our system. Not even the deepest sleep can give a man such rest as after meditating a man can ever get because after the deepest sleep also the mind (without realising) can be jumping with the thought waves concerning the physical world. Just in few minutes (in meditation) a man's brain almost stops just with a little vitality of being conscious; he forgets his body. In this state he may be cut to pieces and not feel it at all. It gives such peace in the mind which makes it light, free from all worldly worries and unnecessary greed and makes him able to attract his real destination.

Conclusion: Nowadays life has become hectic. With the enhancement of the population in this world people have turned to be more and more competitive, jealous, greedy and adopted many more negative attitudes toward the life as well as the world. These vibrations of negativity with the hectic schedule of responsibility of doing tasks have kept a man far away from the feeling of safe future which causes non existence of peace of mind. Therefore, whoever feels to give preference to mental peace rather than anxiety caused by unnecessary greed for material things can try for mental exercise. They can put their efforts towards the game of concentration of mind. They should try to follow the suggestions and methods of doing meditation by the great people who have experienced it. No critics can deny the benefits of meditation as it is accepted worldwide. Swami Vivekananda himself experienced it in his life. There are many stories explained by the disciples of Swami Vivekananda regarding his deepest state of meditation. He kept meditating for hours and hours losing his connectivity with the body, which gave him ultimate bliss. Therefore, in present miserable situation of the world one needs to follow the practice of meditation for the sake of living a beautiful life.

## References:

1. Vivekananda, Swami, January, 2012. *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, volume 4*, fourteenth reprint of subsidized Edition.
2. Vivekananda, Swami, January, 2012. *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda', volume 2*, fourteenth reprint of subsidized Edition.
3. Vivekananda, Swami, January, 2012. *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, volume 3*, fourteenth reprint of subsidized Edition.
4. Adiswarananda, Swami (2004), *The Vedanta way to Peace and Happiness*, Skylight Path Publications, New Delhi.
5. Ananyananda, Swami (1981). *Ramakrishna: a biography in pictures*. Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
6. Chetanananda, Swami (1990). *Ramakrishna As We Saw Him*. St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis.
7. Hourihan, Paul (2002). *Ramakrishna & Christ, the Supermystics: New Interpretations*. Vedantic Shores Press, New York.
8. Nikhil Ananda, Swami (2010), *Self-Knowledge: An English translation of Sankarācārya's Atmabodha*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.
9. Olson, Carl (1990). *The Mysterious Play of Kālī: An Interpretive Study of Rāmakrishna*. American Academy of Religion, Scholars Press, New York.
10. Prosser, Lee. (2001) *Isherwood, Bowles, Vedanta, Wicca, and Me*. Writers Club: Lincoln, Nebraska.
11. Satyananda, Saraswati. *Ramakrishna: The Nectar of Eternal Bliss*. Devi Mandir Publications, New Delhi.
12. Vivekananda, Swami (1946), *Practical Vedanta*, Advaita Ashrama Publications Limited, 1946.
13. Vivekananda, Swami (2009) *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, 19<sup>th</sup> impression, Advaita Ashrama, New Delhi.
14. Vivekananda, Swami (1994), *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashram, Kolkata
15. Vivekananda, Swami (2012), *The Yoga of Knowledge: Jnana Yoga*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.
16. Sen, Amartya (2009), *The Idea of Justice*. Allen Lane, New York.
17. Torwesten, Hans (1999), *Ramakrishna and Christ, or, The paradox of the Incarnation*. The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata.