

Start with Meditation

The aim of this meeting is to look at the way in which our practice of meditation can help us in our understanding of some of the concepts of Sanatan Dharma. When we meditate we put ourselves completely in the care of Param Atman. Twice a day we surrender as far as we are able all the concerns of our life in the world and hope to be close to the source of all wisdom, Param Atman.

One of the Upanishads begins with this prayer, which the Shankaracharya tells us may be recited at the beginning of the day. (Audience 1970)

It can be used before meditation:

*Lead me from the unreal to the real!
Lead me from darkness to light!
Lead me from death to Immortality!*

The first concept of Sanatan Dharma is 'Dhrh' which is connected with having confidence and patience. We need to have patience with ourselves and confidence in the meditation. We have been given so many reassurances and so much advice that this should be natural to us now. In 1970 the question was asked: 'During meditation when a glow of joy is felt in the heart – how can this experience be deepened?' The Shankaracharya answered:

There are stages in meditation: The beginning stage when you get the knowledge of it. Then you learn the technique – this is the practice side which is the stepping stone to put it fully into constant practice which takes time according to the individual; so that it becomes natural and habitual. To get on to the third stage, you have simply to go on with faith and patience and then this glow of joy will be boundless.

Doctor Roles then made an observation here that there had been a number of examples where a hard knock or a disaster or severe illness or operation had unexpectedly caused a glow during subsequent meditations. The Shankaracharya agreed with this and said:

HH: Again two kinds of people. One kind who has patiently practised meditation over a long time, without necessarily much reward. When they undergo hard situations they are able to cope well with them, in contrast to others who have not continued to practice and who tend to become prostrated or defeated by them.

So having 'Dhrh', using confidence and patience, we should be faithful to the meditation and build up some reserves to help us to get through difficult times, whether physical or emotional.

Pause for Meditation

The second concept of Sanatan Dharma, 'Kshama', is connected with having consideration, giving pardon and being tolerant of the difficulties and faults of others. Meditation can help us with this. When we practice meditation regularly we develop a level of calmness and acceptance of other people so that it is possible to put aside petty irritation and annoyance and to see the bigger picture. We have been advised many times to 'turn away from negative emotion'. Doctor Roles tells us in 'Voyage of Discovery' p89:

What is needed to-day is sympathy and compassion, and it certainly counts far more with anybody who is suffering than words. Meditation should be making people more sensitive – more and more sensitive and able to feel with somebody – not more and more detached from everybody.....The sympathetic nervous system, when charged with Sattva gives this increased sensibility towards other people and towards oneself.....with Sattva working throughout the body both the emotional centre and the mind and the body are all lit up – wakened to some extent. Sattva penetrates to all three divisions at the same time.

Pause for Meditation

The third concept we discussed was 'Dama'. This is connected with the senses, the mind being 'turbulent' and the various distractions of the physical world. At the most basic level, which of us has not been distracted by 'turning thoughts' during meditation and the question on how to deal with them has been asked many times. Here is what the Shankaracharya said in 1970:

The word for Meditation is Dhyana, derived from the root verb 'Dhi', which means to 'hold and contemplate'. In meditation the moving mind is held and contemplates. What is it that one should hold to and contemplate?

We see, touch, hear, smell, taste through our senses; but we have no control over the objects of these senses and no control over the repercussions they set up in us – our likes and dislikes, desires and thoughts.. Everything in our nature changes all the year round. The mechanical mind, Manas is also very mobile, and our understanding, Buddhi changes with time and place. All this is part of Prakriti – our changing nature, which is the same as that of the changing Universe. What else is left to us then?

There is that unchanging, eternal blissful, conscious, peaceful entity called the Self or Atman and that is what we try to hold and contemplate during Dhyana.

Pause for Meditation

The fourth concept 'Asteya' is connected with taking only what you deserve and considering everyone else equally deserving. This big idea is relatively easy to encompass in general terms but to apply it each to him or her self is very challenging. However, when the Shankaracharya speaks about the *purpose* of meditation it is possible to see how our state of mind and attitude can be permanently changed through the quiet and steady practice of meditation day by day:

The purpose of meditation is to bring the individual to the great stability. Stability or equilibrium is the quality of Sattva. Once the individual has achieved this complete equilibrium, and has done away with all ideas, even of meditation, meditator and mantra, so that he has achieved equality or unity; only then, if one does take to this feeling and meditates on that, could it be useful.....Once you have got some Sattva out of meditation you have to use it either by loving people, or by helping people or by doing some other activity pleasing to God. You will see that whatever you do, you will do it with more efficiency and goodness within it. And so the activity of meditation is not for the sake of meditation itself, otherwise it will become void. It produces Sattva and the Sattva has to be used for the type of activity which one chooses to take on in the worship of God or any other activity for the spiritual advancement of the individual.

End Meeting with Meditation

