

WORK SHOP IN MEDITATION& SELF DEVELOPMENT

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These notes should be read in conjunction with the recommended material

AIM

To encourage individuals to seriously look at meditation and self development by presenting the **tools** so that one can proceed on a spiritual pathway in a safe and effective manner. Through group interaction we can all move forward but it is still necessary to provide some direction to accomplish this especially within the West where the lifestyles have dramatically changed from the cloistered environments of the east and of the early churches.

However, one thought that sums up a pathway of self-development and meditation is that that **there are no shortcuts** for a safe passage and a lot of self initiated effort is required.

WHY MEDITATE?

Maybe a better way to ask this question is - why undertake a pathway of self-development, which includes meditation as a necessary part of the process. Meditation by itself can actually be harmful if some of its effects are not balanced out by other harmonising exercises.

Some of the various reasons that have been given for undertaking meditation are as follows: -

It's the done thing in certain spiritual circles as given instructions.

- To know oneself
- To **know** of a spiritual world
- To confirm what spiritual seers have said
- To develop so as to see objectively into the spiritual world
- To bring down knowledge from the spiritual world which can be used on the physical plane.
- To assist in progressing man's evolution and one's own evolution

To achieve liberation from the dreariness of physical earth life.

So as not to reincarnate after this life.

- To develop one's charkras.

To unite oneself and to dissolve into GOD.

To achieve calmness and stress control (may be not the use of true 'Meditation' but the preliminaries to meditation) .

- To raise oneself to a higher stage of human capacity for knowledge.
- To unite oneself with the higher self

To Levitate

- To become a better person

To heal oneself

- To achieve enlightenment

To achieve peace in the world

- To master the burdens of life
- As a necessity for this stage of evolution for our survival
- To become human
- So as to develop a strong self, which can exist within the spiritual world in full consciousness
- A combination of the above.

Those marked with a dot would probably sum up what the main purpose of self development and meditation would be for an individual following Rudolf Steiner's approach and this is to be achieved in **full freedom** by the individual. It seems that world evolution requires that a number individuals, in freedom, take up self-development and meditation if world evolution is to proceed in a healthy manner or if at all.

Hence, as a summary, my reason for meditating would be to develop, in freedom, a strong and balanced individuality, which can bring down spiritual knowledge and actions so as to contribute to humanity's progress.

If the reason for why one meditates doesn't have its basis beyond oneself then it will be difficult to maintain a regular practice of it over a long period of time which is necessary if it is to have a fruitful effect.

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

The word Meditation has been associated with numerous activities involving an individual in certain practices, which can bring that individual into another state of awareness. Included in meditative practices has been concentration, contemplation and even prayer.

Some views on what meditation is as follows:-

- Repeating and focusing on a mantra, which has been given by a GURU/teacher, that has no/has meaning to the individual.
- Focusing one's attention on the breath or another area of the body eg pineal gland.

Immersing oneself in

- Symbol
- Religious/spiritual verse
- Colour
- Picture
- Aspects of nature
- Higher feeling eg love
- Mystical saying
- One's thinking on higher principals
- On an illness (for healing purposes)
(The above may be accompanied by intense feelings about the subject at hand)
- Chanting Hare Krishna or other given sayings etc.
- Immersing oneself in silence to the exclusion of the senses.
- Surrendering oneself to thoughts that have eternal worth.
- A combination of the above

There are many explanations and meditative practices and techniques-, all of which work in some fashion or other. In these sessions we will work with a western approach that uses thinking in the build up of the meditative subject. Today, each individual is now required to take full responsibility for his/her actions and hence its imperative that the meditative techniques and their effects should be understood by the individual undertaking them. In one sense, each type of meditation can be said to have some validity if used in the appropriate manner. Every epoch must follow its own appropriate path of meditation, which is suited to the evolutionary state of individuals of that day. Taking self-responsibility is appropriate for a western individual (there is no ashram environment to which one can withdraw months at a time and there are countless individual life situations that need solutions resolved by the individual). In the past the mantras and sound were effective meditative techniques. Today words filled with meaning and content are more appropriate for western individuals (western in character, not birth).

Meditation is usually a part of a total self-developmental package in a religious/spiritual context. It is can actually be harmful if meditation is undertaken without other supporting balance exercises.

One method of meditation is that it is concentrated, conscious attention and awareness, as an act of freedom, over a period of time on a theme, object, symbol, together with the associated feelings where the individual becomes one with the theme being meditated upon after the object has been thoroughly thought upon. All external sense impressions and internal non-self initiated thoughts are excluded (in as much as this is possible). - Not many achieve this state.

When?

It is important to meditate daily, even if for five minutes, at the same time every day. The morning is always the best time as soon as one awakens. Get up, wash one's face, rinse one's mouth etc, stretch, and if possible go outside and observe and 'greet' the morning so as to settle one's thoughts and to absorb some of the healing effects of the dawn and quietly place oneself into a state of reverence for the divine and the world. If in the morning is not possible then in the evening. If a daily rhythm is not possible then whenever possible, although this does not take advantage of the beneficent effects of rhythm. For those who are more committed then twice a day - morning and evening with the morning session being the main one. Meditation should always go hand in hand with balancing and observation exercises

Where?

Find the same quite spot where there will be no or minimum interruptions. As a westerner sitting on a comfortable chair with a good back support is recommended. (Crossing one's legs usually proves difficult). Some place where there isn't passing people traffic where one wont be disturbed.

BALANCE OF LIFE

As a necessity for the pathway of meditation

Main Problems Encountered

By taking up a spiritual path an individual will inevitably increase his abilities to act in the world. If one does not pay special conscious heed, in deed and thought, to the moral aspects of one's development then, and although one can perform much good, one invariably can also leave a trail of destruction and then can blame others for problems that occur. Unfortunately *many individuals within spiritual organisations do not follow a balanced pathway of spiritual development* and the destructiveness of this can be easily seen. Undertaking only the meditative side can be problematical. In our normal everyday life we are supported by countless spiritual beings of which we are not aware. Once we choose a pathway of self-development some of the support we had received from the spiritual world is now withdrawn so that we can develop in freedom. We are now required to take over these functions otherwise we can be exposed to negative influences which can manifest as moral defects, **over sensitivity, egotism, desire for power, intolerant righteous towards one's fellow human beings, increased sensuality** etc. **EGOTISM** seems to be the predominate trait that is first encountered and then it is easy to fall into self-denial about the other qualities that follow.

On the other hand, for especially sensitive and/or insufficiently prepared individuals **meditation may throw them into a realm where they are unable to cope**, hence its important that right judgement about one self and one's experiences is able to be applied and appropriate actions are undertaken. Hence, meditative practise may be best avoided until one has built up sufficient strength through appropriate reading, subsidiary exercises, observation exercises and contemplation exercises. Test - If one can't read Esoteric Science -An Outline (-too hard, too intellectual, too boring, not enough time, too long etc) then one may be a candidate for these type of problems. The ability to read, with understanding such material is a good test of one's readiness in coping with the extra responsibilities that will be encountered on a pathway of meditation.

SUPPLEMENTARY EXERCISES

Control of Thinking is achieved by concentrating on an uninteresting and inanimate object and focusing one's thoughts on any relevant aspect concerned with that object for approximately five minutes a day and for a period of one month. A pencil can be a suitable subject to focus one's attention on. The idea is to remain focused and connected with the object with one's thoughts and at the same time to enliven these thoughts. When was the pencil invented? What is it made of and where did the materials come from? What is its function? Etc. Countless objects can be chosen and worked with in this manner. This requires a strong presence of mind and persistence.

Control of Willing – After one month a second exercise is added to the first This is where an action is undertaken for which there is no external stimulus or motive such as taking a watch off and putting it back on again. Here one becomes highly attentive to the willing processes taking place. It is desirable that this exercise is undertaken at a time planned beforehand.

Equanimity – an endeavour is made to be even-tempered in all situations and especially in situations where the greatest joys or the greatest sorrows are encountered. Initially this cannot be achieved at the time the incident actually occurs but by reviewing the whole day one can note these situations and resolve to do better next time. This doesn't mean that one loses the intensity of one's inner experiences but the outward manifestations of these experiences are held in equilibrium. Whilst this is the primary exercise for the third month an endeavour should be made to continue the other two exercises as well.

Positivity is where one endeavours to look for the good in even the worst situations. There is no question of denying the negative but how often do we focus only on the negative without acknowledging the positive side of things. It has been said that, on average, 80% of our thoughts are either negative or critical. It appears as though the negative of a situation awakens us (shock) whereas the positive side has to be sought in freedom. Again, in the fourth month the previous exercises are to be continued in the background.

Right Judgement or Impartially is perhaps the least practiced of all these exercises and perhaps is the hardest of all to make much headway as our ego is put to severe tests. Here the object is to remain impartial and calm in the midst as to what would appear to be the most contradictory or unbelievable opinions or statements being expressed by others in one's company. In other words to keep an open mind in all new situations to which one is exposed to and not to dismiss something new just because it doesn't agree with our previous conceptions as to how the world is.

Forgiveness. In the sixth month an attempt is made to practice all five exercises in various combinations so that a harmonious balance is developed between them. No longer does an individual assume an outwardly harsh righteous stand against obviously wrong actions or events but one enters lovingly and openly into those actions with forgiveness trying to see the reasons behind those actions. Yes there is a high degree of conscious selflessness called for here but how else is one to work constructively in today's largely critical and self-serving society. An archetypal example which is helpful is the picture of Jesus Christ hanging on the cross where he says "Father forgive them they know not what they do"

REVIEW OF THE DAY - at the end of the day review the day's events as though one were observing another person, especially the painful moments, but in a backward manner - initially for 5 minutes a day.

RIGHT READING - this is important, as each individual is required to take full responsibility for his actions. There is sufficient information available for one to become conversant in all aspects of the meditative pathway that he/she undertakes. It is suggested that twenty minutes a day be set aside for this. The content of the above-recommended books can be used as meditative subjects. Previously there was a necessity of finding a spiritual teacher or guru to guide one along the pathway of self-development. Today this is no longer seems possible, however as humankind has evolved, appropriate written works, together with human discernment can substitute for a teacher/guru.

The gaining of true spiritual concepts about ourselves, the world, spiritual experiences etc will provide great assistance in gaining the strength in being able to rightly bear our new experiences.

PREPARATORY EXERCISES

- Observations of blossoming and flowering in contrast to decaying and fading.
- Conscious discrimination between sounds produced by lifeless objects and living creatures.
- Listening, in silence without criticism or opinion especially to opposite and incorrect views.
- Observation of stone, plant and animal realms.

- Conscious enlargement of sympathy for the animal and human realms and the sense for the beauty of nature.

DIET

- Alcohol will eliminate all genuine spiritual experiences and, hence if it is not given up then **there will be little or no results.**
- Vegetarian diet is preferred but not essential although there are good moral arguments in favour of vegetarianism. The desire to go vegetarian will come as one progresses.

WHAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED

An enlivening of the subject matter being meditated upon and time becomes irrelevant.

Have experiences where the content is made alive and one is strengthened by it in everyday activities.

Have meaningful experiences, which elucidate life's riddles and are able to be cross-referenced with others who have had experiences.

Receive inspiration to life riddles outside the meditation period but knowing that the meditation allowed it to happen.

Receive suggested directions for one's life.

Become inspired with creativity in music, poetry etc.

Good feeling of peacefulness and relaxation

Some fleeting spiritual experiences occur

Nothing - boredom - not unusual for westerners with busy schedules - could be caused by not sufficient effort of focus with feelings and thought. Can easily lead for one to give up

Have fantastic and meaningful thoughts that revolve around one's life - solving problems, creating fantasy situations, future possibilities - but not directed by the self. (spiritual knowledge is all around us. It has been deliberately withheld until the self is strong enough to confront it)

During or outside the meditation period one can become overwhelmed by uncontrolled feelings and emotions and consumed by raging forces flowing in one's being.

Become blissed out

Become too sensitive to things that didn't bother one before in daily life

Experience of wordless living thinking/silence

A combination of the above

Everyday problems during attempts at meditation

Tiredness	it is necessary to regulate one's life to obtain sufficient sleep
Pain	All efforts should be made to get the body healthy
Lack of concentration upon the subject matter and Life's experiences flood in and take over.	Maybe not sufficiently focused – needs lots of effort to not revel in the thoughts.
Not enough time set aside due to -----	Need to consciously set real priorities. Don't give up but keep on trying.
Boredom	Maybe not sufficiently focused – need lots of effort to

Lack of enthusiasm	enliven the subject material. Attend lectures, talk to others on the path, read spiritual material.
Too many experiences where one become swamped	There is a need to get back to the basic exercises to heal oneself.
The mind can drift to all sorts of good and interesting thoughts and inspirations that one would not normally encounter during the day.	One here enters the etheric realm but without a strong captain driving the mind, even though one feels good one is not in control. When this happens and this is observed one can with, quite determination, resolve to refocus on the chosen meditation and re-enliven it. The drifting thought inspirational process is not bad in itself provided one has consciously <u>chosen to be in that state</u> . Perhaps one can, after the meditation resolve to enter that state for a period of time. Meditation is a good method for reaching this state but a conscious resolve is essential otherwise one can get caught - blissful but caught nevertheless.

Experience gained in one realm ie spiritual or physical should not be interchanged. ie should be kept apart - Normal life v's spiritual

Ability to self monitor and control

Physical realities should not be carried into spiritual realities and vice versa

Descriptions of spiritual experiences have correspondences to the physical realm eg writing to the object described. - blue to???, light to????

It can be said that meditation is the inner strengthening of soul life, not the be all and end all, and not the only thing necessary but nevertheless it is a necessary part of the processes for obtaining spiritual sight.

On crossing the threshold there is a point where one has to confront one's own perceived being as being in error - fear of annihilation of one's being are one of the possible feelings.

Many can't make the transition of crossing the threshold as they refuse to give up that part of their illusionary self as it is too precious to them or they can't recognise it as being illusionary. Either way they come to a blockage or a standstill. ie out of themselves they formulate subjective pictures and concepts of what the spiritual world should be and not what it is in reality. They don't want to see the reality. A recent example is where some senior Transcendental Meditation teachers sued the organisation because they felt that the organisation robbed them of a major part of their lives with promises of things that did not eventuate (spiritual gifts, levitation etc). Was it that these teachers came to the actual realities of what they were actually doing as opposed to what they thought they were doing? It took them 20 years.

Each Individual should take what he /she needs for his appropriate development. ie an individual now must be the judge and make his own decisions, based on true self observation and thinking, on the appropriate exercises for him/her self. Each individual should be able change the exercises as progress is made and as the situation calls for it, bearing in mind the requirements for balance in life.- No one else can take responsibility --THE NEW WAY

Rudolf Steiner recommends something totally apart from our day to day familiar situations to be used as a subject for meditation. Eg meditation on mantras, verses and symbols from spiritual teachers or from religious and spiritual works.

In reviewing our moral qualities

Do we regularly get into conflict with others where we are contributing to the situation?

Are we regularly uptight with others?

Are we regularly impatient with imperfection with others?

Are we regularly angry?

Are we regularly judgemental of others?

Are we regularly Emotional, uncontrolled?

Are we regularly not able to work with others?

Are we regularly trying to control others?

- Egotism is one of the first problems - then it is easy to fall into a state of self-denial about other qualities.
- Cultivation of veneration is a necessary state of mind.
- Man in a sense consists of a duality of good and evil in a balance - with self development they separate and the negative qualities then appear
- Distinguishing between the perishable and the imperishable
- Acceptance of one's situation in life.
- Not only do lust and passion grow ---- but opportunities to express these increase
- A very determined shaping of character is an indispensable foundation.
- Essential to begin with an immense strengthening of character

Obvious deception
 Stealing
 Consciously inflicting pain
 Rampant selfish sexuality

Each individual can decide for him/herself only - ONE CAN'T MORALISE ON ANOTHER'S BEHALF

If we possess some of the above characteristics then we probably need to work consciously on a few of our inner qualities. To become aware of these qualities is a great start. If we don't work on these qualities then these WILL become exaggerated and progress will be impeded. The forces of spiritual cognition are associated with moral forces just as a good diet is associated with healthy physical growth.

LOVE -the capacity for one to allow another being to express its essential nature within one self.

SOME MEDITATIVE EXERCISES

- Take a meaningful short phrase or word and immerse oneself into the word eg 'peace' or 'loving kindness'. Initially contemplate the meaning of the word then try to feel and experience the word to the exclusion of all other impressions. One can repeat the word to retain focus. After a period of time eliminate the language part of the word. What remains is the meaning-experience of the word or phrase.
- Use some phrase from a spiritual which has eternal worth to work with such as "wisdom lives in the light". Spend some time contemplating each word eg wisdom can mean profound knowledge, not just a clever intellect and then try to feel the meaning reached. The next step is to now link up two words with meaning and feeling and so on until the whole phrase is experienced as a unity with feeling and meaning to the exclusion of all other impressions both internal and external. It will be found that the experience and meaning will change as one practises. The important point is not the end result but the processes.
- Place a seed, of which one is aware of its plant stage, in a visible position (on a piece of white paper) and observe the seed fully in its outward appearances. Then contemplate the situation that

if this seed which I have before me will one day, if planted and with the forces of the earth and sun, put forth the plant I have in my imagination. Next imagine an identical seed placed beside it except it is artificial. Now contemplate the following thought: - If placed in the ground no forces of the earth and sun can draw forth from this artificial seed a plant.

Therefore this seed, which I have before me, has within it something invisible in it that is invisible. This something, which announces itself to me now through my thinking, will in future appear before my senses. At this point fix one's attention onto this invisible quality. One must be able to intensely feel the thoughts which one creates. **See knowledge of Higher Worlds for a fuller explanation**

Well you've probably figured out that you can use just about anything to meditate on 'successfully'. That is your spiritual organs will develop and you'll have experiences. So why bother with all the lead up work? In today's modern society, without involving a pathway of rigorous thinking leading up to one's meditative life one will enter the spiritual world and will not be able to bring back meaningful concepts and one can even become isolated from every day life.

Many avoid the hard work of developing up thinking and a balanced behaviour either by applying old methods through not knowing or just by avoiding the hard work with the result that there are not many individuals who are able to bring down spiritual knowledge from their experiences.

Recommended reading: -(in suggested order of reading)

- KNOWLEDGE OF HIGHER WORLDS and its ATTAINMENT
- ESOTERIC SCIENCE - AN OUTLINE
- FROM NORMAL TO HEALTHY - Georg Kuhlewind
- The Stages of Higher Knowledge
- The Effects of Spiritual development
- **A Road To Self Knowledge And The Threshold Of The Spiritual World ---** This is Rudolf Steiner's most penetrating book into the subject of meditation and spiritual experience but it is also the most difficult to understand.
- Guidance in Esoteric Training
- Esoteric development
- From the History & Contents of the first section of the esoteric School 1904-1914
- Any other objective material that one finds.