

What is Creative Meditation?

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Meditation has been carried on through the ages in many different ways, both in the East and in the West, and it has been the basic means of penetration by the human mind into the higher or subtler areas of Life. But in a wider sense it is also a universal activity which, in its first and simpler stages, may be quite unconscious. Then, through various phases as the mind develops, it becomes more conscious and purposeful and consequently powerful. It concentrates thinking which, in time, produces integration and definite personality achievement and, while often carried on without awareness of its real nature, it is, in fact, a simple form of creative meditation and has produced all the creative wonders of our modern civilisation.

We have only to look at the process by which man creates everything around him to see the role of thought: the first and necessary step is an *idea*. This he then develops by clothing it with more and more thought and planning and by giving it the energy of his desire and intention until it eventually emerges in a tangible form. This is the method employed by all who are successful in the material world - how much more important for it to be used for spiritual purposes!

Although the power of thought is becoming more recognised, it is still usually employed in unconscious and haphazard ways or, worse, for selfish, aggressive materialistic or destructive purposes. Therefore it is most important that all men and women of goodwill should learn how to use it effectively for constructive ends. The main method for utilising the power of thought is *meditation*. In this sense it is not something purely intellectual or abstract, but is an effective means of inner action. It can be used in two main directions and ways:

To bring about changes and transformations in ourselves

As a form of service to the world

Both produce outer, tangible results because what we do, whether individually or collectively is the outcome of what we think, feel and will. The need for personal meditation to redeem our lower natures and learn to participate in higher levels of consciousness is generally acknowledged, yet even more urgent in the present serious and perhaps decisive hour in the world's history is the need for creative meditation on the principles and qualities that will bring about a new and better era. The beginning of this can be seen; out of the present conflicts and confusion the new characteristics leading towards practical realisation that we are ONE humanity can be seen. But they are only beginnings and much has yet to be done. Active and sustained meditation is needed to make these vital ideas clearer and more developed before they can become accepted and adopted by not only the pioneering minority, but the bulk of humanity.

Basically, the great and urgent task is to create *order* out of the existing chaos, *understanding* out of the prevailing ignorance, prejudice and condemnation, and *synthesis* out of the present division and strife. To accomplish this, we need to penetrate to the levels where these higher realities exist, and then, through meditation of a creative nature, bring them *into* human consciousness and manifestation. All who are seriously concerned for the present situation feel impelled to serve in some way, and here *is* not only opportunity to contribute, but the responsibility all have as thinking people to take part in bringing about a more harmonious and humanitarian future.

One of the outstanding trends of the present time could be mentioned in this connection - the development of organised group action. Although we are still in what could be called "the stone age" where true group life and work is concerned, this development is helping to counteract the fact that the isolated individual is, generally speaking, ineffective and an easy victim of anxiety, negativity and even despair. The sense of isolation is, in fact, artificial; we all participate consciously or unconsciously - and willingly or unwillingly in the life of the whole of humanity, and even more,

in the Life of the Universe. The more we recognise this and tune in to and work with the laws of the larger Life, the happier and more effective we become, and one of the most practical steps in this direction *is* meditation. In meditation we join on inner levels with others having the same purpose, and there is the added power of concerted group action.

It is not generally recognised that meditation is inner *action*. Usually it is regarded as a process of quieting the personal self, especially the mind, and of entering into stillness and silence. But this is only one part of and kind of the many varieties of meditation. We have to realise that the “silence” is not just an empty or static realm. I have sometimes called meditation “exploration of the inner worlds” because these dimensions are full of energies and there *is* much to be discovered and co-operated with in them. In a sense we are living in them all the time in part of our nature; the psychological life has tangible existence in these fields, which are the realms of not only energies and qualities, but, consequently, of cause and meaning. In them originates all that happens in the outer world. They are, in fact, more “real” than the visible world, and to learn to work within them consciously and constructively is therefore an important way of serving our times. We are told that God first thought (meditated) and then spoke, symbolically, and created. “From above downwards” is a spiritual rule, and our outer work and service should always be preceded by planned, illumined meditation, that is, by inner concentration and reflection. This is a very important part of true service.

Creative meditation is not something only subjective and abstract, nor is it a purely passive or reflective state. It is a precise and scientific process requiring positive effort and working according to law. The usual contraposition in our Western society of meditation on the one hand and action on the other is misleading; they are two successive phases of any conscious, deliberate, purposeful action.

Already, in everyday life, we carry out many kinds of inner action. All hoping, aspiring, desiring and imagining, as well as thinking, are activities of this kind. But they are generally spontaneous and more or less automatic. Creative meditation, on the other hand, is a conscious and carefully undertaken use of thought and other aspects of our nature, such as the dedication and aspiration of the emotional nature, the prayer of the heart, the visualising power of the imagination, and the affirmation and intention of the will. It entails concentration, reflection and understanding, receptivity and a clear conception and formulation of the ideas or thoughts received; then the careful considering and visualising of the ways in which they can be given expression. This is a true building process, “from above downwards”, and is a technique of the New Age.

The first step in all meditation is to gain control of the mind. This is usually a struggle. It cannot be done when the mind has been at full speed without giving it time to slow down; the brakes cannot be imposed too suddenly; and we cannot blame the poor mind if it does not switch off its activity at once like an electric switch turning off the current. But it is aided by certain attitudes; first that of relaxation and slowing the breathing. This also calms the feelings which if uncontrolled will shut off the “light” and negate spiritual realisation as much as an unregulated mind.

Concentration is aided by the power of aspiration and of will to rise to a new dimension or area of consciousness; but aspiration alone without control of the mind, will not suffice, any more than steam could drive an engine and do useful work if it were not harnessed. Two other attitudes are helpful: one is to bring the spirit of joy into meditation, for joy is an instigator and revealer. It brings deep inner strength; it also ensures the co-operation of the emotional nature.

The other attitude is detachment. This means detachment from emotional attachments and the removal from the mind of all preconceived opinions, thoughts and personal reactions. This is necessary because we are all enclosed within many “thoughtforms” - those imposed by our background, our traditions, our social groups, families, and so on, and we have to learn to stand free from these before we are able to build clear and unprejudiced thought patterns, and receive without colouring or distorting them the impressions and energies which may reach us from the higher planes.

There is another reason also for detachment. Great care should be taken as to our motives in meditation. Often these are selfish or self-centred; some practice meditation as a noble way of escape or hoping that it will put them in touch with some wonderful teacher. But, rather than for specific ends, creative meditation should be given to the great impersonal energies and qualities which will bring them about. A detached attitude is essential because we cannot know the right outcome of any particular situation or what lies in the "Plan" of God. From our limited personal viewpoint and environment we are likely to be coloured if not prejudiced, and what may seem to us the best solution of some problem may be but a short-term or one-sided answer. Therefore, creative meditation should be used as a means of co-operating with and helping to bring into the world the spiritual principles needed for a better age without any preconceived convictions or formulations of the specific ways in which they will work out. Our task is to strengthen them and invoke them so that *they* can do their work.

After adequate preparation, which I emphasise is important because it prepares the ground for the effectiveness of the other stages, comes *elevation*, the raising of consciousness. At this stage it can be helpful to use the symbology of mountain climbing: first, we can visualise the mountain, it is a universal symbol of the holy places and of retreat for spiritual renewal; then we proceed to the inner mountain climbing, that is, raising the centre of consciousness towards the soul. This is the proper sequence in the use of symbols. First the concrete symbol, visualising it to impress the imagination and reorient the mind, and then, leaving the formal symbol, identifying with its *meaning*. This is the stage of penetration.

The many stages of creative meditation cannot be fully gone into here, but after a period of reflection comes the stage of reception, which should be held long enough to make it possible for the energy or idea received to descend and act in the "cup" we offer. But always we must keep well aware, and whatever we receive or which comes into our consciousness should be formulated clearly so that it *takes form* and can be expressed.

Prayer and invocation are further important stages, for here the heart and the will make their spiritual approach and appeal. Then let us always end with *radiation* - blessing.. The word blessing should not be considered merely in the sense of a loving act; it has and is a magical power. Blessing is a transforming, magical action. As an example, let us imagine the globe of the Earth with all the beings, visible and invisible which exist upon it. Then let us follow the Buddhist Blessing of the Four Divine Estates and say:

Love to all Beings... visualising it going in six directions - north, south, east, west,
above, below.

Compassion to all Beings - visualising it going forth in the same way

Then *Joy to all Beings*

And *Serenity to all Beings*.

Let us try to imagine how the effective use of this Blessing could solve all human problems, and also realise our undoubted responsibility to co-operate with the spiritual levels and principles which must increasingly inform and qualify the civilisation now in the making.