SADHANA MANDIRA
तत्त्वमेव त्वमेव तत्

P. U. T.
Approaches to Meditation

While there are hundreds of ways to meditate, the essence of it all is to be free of the ego. Sometimes a certain exercise reduces negative emotions in us while another introduces a positive vision. Yet another method is characterized by concentrating on a symbol while a fourth prescription highlights breath-observation. Some insist on particular postures of sitting and give importance to time, place and arrangement of the setting. Some others give us the liberty of meditating while we are taking a walk or doing some household chore.

Some wise people say, in sharp contrast to all the above, that meditation has no method at all. All methods do injustice to the very spirit of meditation. For them, it is a spontaneous freedom from the very sense of being a doer. There is then no goal kept in mind and there is no evaluation. Just be, they say, and undo your false sense of the separate self. Grounded in intense negation (of the false), they propose that the truth just does not need to be asserted. When clouds move away, the sun shines on its own!

Most people have quite an agitated or burdened mind. They are looking for some relief in an easy way. The following three prescriptions of meditation may appeal to a vast majority of spiritual seekers.

Purify the mind, unify the mind and finally transcend the mind. We have thus a P.U.T. outlook to this matter of meditation. Purify (P) your thoughts through dwelling on inspirational passages. Unify (U) your thoughts by holding on to a mantra (sacred chant). Transcend (T) the medium of thinking by standing apart and watching the flow of thoughts.

PURIFY: Sit down daily – say for 20 minutes – and go through the lines of some uplifting poem like the one below by Tagore (in *Gitanjali*):

This is my prayer to Thee my Lord,
Strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And, Lord, give me the strength to surrender my strength to Thy will with love.

Sit comfortably with your backbone held straight. Let there be no tension either in body or in mind. Keep your eyes gently closed. Hopefully you have memorized the inspirational passage. Go over the passage (poem, verses, and paragraphs) slowly and try to feel the spirit of the words in your heart. If you have not memorized the lines, you may read a line at a time

and then dwell on it with closed eyes. This will help you give to yourself a new direction or outlook. "As you think, so you become" goes the old saying, after all.

Select your own 'inspirational passage' from the Geeta, the Upanishads, any ancient or modern work. Prose or poetry, Hindi or English, the only requirement is that it inspires you and nullifies negative emotions in you. Stick to the same passage for three to four weeks, or for even longer periods. Regular practice helps you go deeper into the wisdom of the words.

UNIFY: Repeat a mantra, sending away all other thoughts and words gently. A mantra like ***'Om Namah Shivaaya'*** is time-tested and has benefited millions for centuries. With or without associating it with a detailed description of Lord Shiva, go with the mantra with a sense of it being sacred. Believe in its capacity to change you for the better. Chant the mantra with love and faith. Your mind typically has varieties of thoughts scattered over many themes. Repeating the mantra brings about a movement from "many thoughts" to "one thought". So we call it unification. With less thoughts rising within you, you can more easily handle your own mind. This further leads you to understanding and overcoming a lot of inner enemies like lust, greed and jealousy.

Begin with loud chanting. Go into the practice slowly, reducing the loudness and then saying the mantra just mentally. As you gain more control over the thoughts, increase the gap between two mantras. Watch the gap in quietude.

TRANSCEND: There are deeper levels of thought in us – deeper than what we typically are aware of. Even as we repeat a mantra or dwell on the lines of the inspirational passage, we typically harbour certain hopes or fears at the core of our being. There is a practitioner in us that practices the exercise. Can we be aware of this practitioner, standing apart from him/her? Can we be the witness of even the idea, "I am meditating"?

Just stay aware of thoughts without doing anything. Do not bring any words or ideas. Do not recite any mantra. Just notice them if thoughts or emotions arise on their own. Do not choose, judge or reject any thoughts. Do not label them as good or bad. If a judgment arises, be aware of it. Keep out of **RIVAJ** – Resist, Indulge, Verbalize, Analyze and Judge – the various kinds of what you may do with thoughts. This choiceless awareness will do wonders. Thoughts subside. The thinker (who is also a thought, really) also subsides. Pure awareness remains.

Wish you success. Meditate without seeking success!