

What is meditation?

An explanation of what is meditation according to the teaching of Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi

"I find meditation very difficult and confusing. Can you explain it to me in simple terms?"

Sure! Meditation as taught by Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi is very simple and direct. Let me explain how it is simple.

The goal of all sadhana, whether it is reading scriptures, reciting shlokas, doing japa, visiting the Guru or meditation is Self realisation or Self knowledge, is it not? We will use the term Swarupa jnan for Self knowledge.

We then have to ask the question "What is Swarupa?"

To put it into words, Swarupa is that basic or fundamental thing or quality (it is not a thing or quality, but we have to use words), without which a thing is not itself. Let us examine this with an example.

I give you some white crystals which you taste and immediately say: "It is **sweet** so it is sugar."

Next I give you a white powder which you taste and say: "It is **sweet** so it is sugar. You must have ground the sugar into a powder".

Next I give you crystals of various colours – blue, green, yellow, red – and you taste it and say: "It is **sweet** so it is sugar. You must have added various colours to the sugar crystals".

Next I give you a big shapeless, colourless lump and you taste it and say: "This is **sweet**, so it is sugar. You must have made it into shapeless mass".

Next I give you some white crystals. You look at it and say it is sugar but when you taste it it is tasteless and you say: "Even though it looks like sugar, it is not sugar because it is not sweet."

So the colour, form, shape can change but what absolutely cannot change if it is sugar is sweetness. If it is sugar it has to be sweet.

So we can say the swarupa of sugar is sweetness.

And swarupa is **absolutely constant and changeless**. We cannot say that the sugar was sweet a second ago but is not sweet now, or that it was not sweet a second ago but it is sweet now. If it is sugar it has to be sweet all the time.

Let us move to the next point.

Our Sages, Rishis, Gurus and scriptures have given us 2 dictums or statements as tests to determine the nature of the Unreal and Real.

1. Whatever is not constant by nature, is changing all the time, is **Unreal**. The world is by its very nature changing all the time and is therefore, not Real.
2. Whatever is by its very nature constant and changeless all the time is **Real**.

They have not stopped at this but have also made a third statement which states:

3. Your true nature or **your Swarupa is changeless and is therefore, Real**.

Now, I want to test for myself, here and now, whether the third statement is true. I will not accept it as true just because the Rishis or scriptures have said it, but I want to test for myself whether it is really so. Is there something in me that is constant and changeless?

For our illustration let us take the case of yourself, the reader. Let us imagine that you are sitting on a chair, just relaxed.

As you sit there relaxed, do you 'know' the things around you?

"Yes".

Because of what do you know the things around you?

(Here knowing means whatever is there in the surroundings. So if the person is sitting at home he or she will 'know' the things like furniture and sounds like people around talking. If the person is in the forest he or she will 'know' the trees and sounds of birds and animals.)

"I 'know' the things around me because of my eyes, ears, nose – the five senses."

The five senses are just the instruments. But if a life size doll is sitting on a chair would it 'know' the surroundings? Or say a person is sitting and has a sudden cardiac arrest and dies. Would the person 'know' the surroundings even though the eyes, ears, nose etc. are present?

"I understand that I 'know' the things around me because of **Consciousness** or **Awareness**."

Ok, let us do a small experiment.

You are still sitting on the chair, relaxed but you are now a five year old child. You are just 2 feet tall. Your feet don't even reach the floor. You are still sitting on the chair relaxed. Because of what you know the things around you?

"Because of Awareness."

Now, in a flash you are 15 years old. You are still sitting on the chair, relaxed. But now you are 4 feet tall. There are immense hormonal changes happening in your body. Your voice is changing and also the outward physical change,

according to whether you are a boy or girl. Do you 'know' the things around you? And because of what do you 'know' the things around you?

"Because of Awareness."

Now, in a flash you are 30 years old. You have reached your full height. You are physically strong and confident of facing any challenge that you may face. You are still sitting on the chair, relaxed. Do you 'know' the things around you? And because of what do you 'know' the things around you?

"Because of Awareness."

Now in a flash, you are fifty years old. You are still sitting on the chair, relaxed. Your hair is greying, there is slight pain in the joints. You are not too keen to do anything new and are less physically active. Do you 'know' the things around you? And because of what do you 'know' the things around you?

"Because of Awareness."

Now, let us say for the purpose of our illustration, in a flash you are 70 years old. Your hair is grey. Many of your teeth have fallen and your eyesight is also not sharp. You feel physically weak. You are still sitting relaxed on the same chair. Do you 'know' the things around you? And because of what do you 'know' the things around you?

"Because of Awareness."

So we have taken the age of the person from 5 to 70 years in a few minutes. The body has changed immensely but has the Awareness changed?

"No. It has remained changeless."

So our true Nature or Swarupa is the changeless Awareness.

Let me ask you a few questions.

Are you alive now?

"Yes".

Are you conscious now?

"Yes."

Do you exist now?

"Yes."

Are you Aware now?

"Yes."

Do you have any doubt whether you are conscious, or aware or you had to think before you answered? Am I aware now? or Am I conscious? Without any words do you know your own existence or does someone have to tell you that you exist.

"I had no doubt about my own existence."

So you see for the simple fact of existence so many words consciousness, existence, awareness, I, I am etc. have been used which is very confusing.

But sitting there relaxed, without using any words you know that you are alive. This life or consciousness or awareness is spontaneous and is not given by anyone external to you. It is ***swayamprakash***, shining by itself.

It is self evident and no proof is required for your existence. If someone asks you to prove that you exist, what proof will you give?

"I will make them feel my pulse or breathing."

But this can be done by a machine like the heart lung machine. How do you prove to yourself, for yourself that you are alive, you exist. For example when you are in deep sleep or when you are unconscious for some reason, and you wake up or regain consciousness again, do you feel you did not exist? You do not doubt your existence even though you were not aware or conscious of the body or surroundings. So if someone asks you for proof that you existed during deep sleep or when you were unconscious how will you prove?

"I do not need any external proof that I exist. I 'know' that I exist even in deep sleep or after I regain consciousness."

Swarupa is Pratyaksh or directly perceived.

"So what does the advice to 'go inside' or 'look within' mean?"

There is no inside or outside for Awareness. Let us say that you are sitting quietly looking out of a large window. At a distance there is a tree full of beautiful flowers. You see the tree swaying gently in the breeze and it is beautiful to see. You are happy because you have many good memories of climbing the tree as a child.

How do you 'know' the tree, which is 'outside'? Because of what do you 'know' the tree and its swaying gently in the breeze?

"Because of Awareness."

How do you 'know' the happiness, which is 'inside'? Because of what do you 'know' the happiness?

"Because of Awareness."

Let us say suddenly there is a strong wind and the branches break and the leaves and flowers are scattered on the ground. You are sad and shocked at the damage to the tree.

Because of what do you 'know' the tree breaking and the flowers and leaves on the ground, which is 'outside'?

"Because of Awareness."

Because of what do you 'know' the shock and sadness, which is 'inside'?

"Because of Awareness."

Is it not the same Awareness?

"Yes, it is the same Awareness."

So for Awareness there is no inside and outside. So 'go in' or 'look within' may be taken to be terms to encourage us to be effortlessly Aware.

Infact, everything is within Awareness only which is one indivisible whole. This can be illustrated by an example.

Let us say there is a small pot. This pot is limited by its size and can contain or hold only a limited amount of material. There is space or Akash within the pot which seems limited by the size of the pot. Outside the pot there is infinite space or Akash. As long as the pot exists the space within the pot seems to be separate and limited. When the pot dies (breaks) the limited space 'within' the pot and the infinite space 'outside' the pot become one single space. But is it not a fact that there is infinite space in which the pot appears to exist for a limited amount of time. The limited space within the pot is only a mental concept – the mind limiting the limitless and indivisible space or Akash. This function of the mind of limiting and differentiating is necessary for practical purposes. But it limits to form of the pot, the space or Akash which is essentially infinite.

So also Awareness is One, Infinite, Indivisible whole but the mind limits it to this body which appears (is born) for a limited span of time. This limiting of the One, Infinite, Indivisible Awareness which is our true nature or Swarupa is the cause of misery and all sadhana is done to eliminate this division.

"Why do you say effortlessly Aware?"

Well, are you Aware now?

"Yes, of course!"

Do you have to make an effort to be Aware? Or is it effortless?

"It is effortless."

As we saw it is Swayamprakash or *shining* effortlessly, spontaneously by itself. So no effort is necessary to be Aware. So *just be, as Awareness, which is our own Swarupa.*

No other sadhana or exercise is required to purify the body or mind for Swarupa jnan.

"Is pranayama (breathing exercises) or yoga not necessary in order to purify the mind?"

Our Swarupa is always pure and no sadhana or exercise is needed to make it pure. For example. The outer space which we call Akash (sky) is so pure that we cannot replicate it in any laboratory in the world. That pure Akash which is all pervading is here around us as the background. If something is burning outside and smoke enters the room, the entire air in the room becomes black.

It is only the air (vayu) that gets affected and becomes impure, but does the Akash get affected? Does it become impure?

"No."

Let us say that there are many flowers in the room and the air is filled with fragrance. The air in the room becomes fragrant but does the Akash which forms the background get affected?

"No. It is always pure."

So also our Swarupa or Awareness is always pure and there is no need to purify it. It cannot be made impure in any way because nothing can affect it. Lord Krishna in the Bhagawad Gita says that the sword cannot cut it, water cannot wet it nor fire can burn it.

"So what is the Sadhana to be done?"

Do Nothing. **Summa Iru.**

"How so?"

What is your name?

"Advait." (The reader may replace Advait with his or her own name.)

What do you have to do in order to be Advait? (again replace Advait with own name.)

"Hmm..."

Do you have to do anything to be Advait? (replace with your own name.)

"Nothing."

That is the **Do Nothing**. Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi, when asked what is to be done as Sadhana would say Summa Iru (just be).

Why you have to do nothing in order to be Advait? (replace with your own name).

"Because I am already Advait." (replace with your own name.)

Yes, so also you have to **do nothing** to be your own Swarupa because you are already your Swarupa.

So if at all anything is to be done, some practical tips can be followed.

Sit comfortably in any posture such as sukhasana. One may even sit comfortably on a chair.

Keep the eyes open or 'half closed'.

Relax the body consciously and let go. Just sit relaxed, Sahaj, and just be as Awareness, which is our Swarupa. So one is effortlessly aware of the things and events happening around. If you run away with a thought, then as soon as there is awareness that you are caught in a flow of thought it stops and again be as Awareness. Understand that whatever is happening around you as you sit in meditation is merely the content of awareness. So if a dog is barking loudly, there is awareness of it. If there is irritation at the loud barking,

understand that it is a reaction of the mind and there is awareness of the irritation. Or if there is sweet music, there is awareness of it. If there is attraction to the music, understand that it is the reaction of the mind and there is awareness of the attraction. In and as Awareness there is no attraction or rejection of any thing, or event which is merely a happening in Awareness. Awareness is the power or 'light' by which everything is known which is neutral.

This then is the do nothing, Summa Iru, to be in the Now.

When someone asked Bhagwan "When can one practise sahaja samadhi?"

Bhagavan replied: Even from the beginning.

This relaxed Awareness or Effortless Awareness is itself meditation and can be practised at all times, even in the midst of activity.

Since everyone is effortlessly aware, all are Self realised or all have Swarupa jnan. There is nothing to be achieved.

Jai Guru!

Gajoba