

Sir George Trevelyan: thoughts and writings

Meditation and its Purpose

A Wrekin Trust Lecture

by Sir George Trevelyan



FIRST STEPS IN MEDITATION

This essay is offered as an introduction to meditation for those who enquire: *What is it? How do we begin?* It is no attempt to make a comprehensive study of the various methods. It will offer a simple approach which any can follow in the initial stages.

Essentially, meditation is the art and practice of creating an inner centre of quiet and stillness within the self and then allowing this to be flooded with light from the higher planes. It is the way to inner contact with the realm of eternal being. In our hurried and anxious world where everything is on the rush it is not easy to be innerly still. Emotions and thoughts and the concerns of our day crowd in and fill any vacuum of quiet. Yet how precious it is when we can achieve a spell of time in which we are quite freed from the inroads of active thoughts. How shall we achieve this?

First we withdraw to some place which itself is still. It is good if we have a sanctum in our house where complete privacy is possible, but any place will do. We sit comfortably so that we may be as little aware as possible of our bodies. It is desirable that the spine should be vertical because power can flow through us from high sources, but from the outset the forgetting of the physical body is important. The East, of course, always uses the "lotus" position with the feet folded and crossed. For most of us in the West this is difficult and uncomfortable and is quite unnecessary for our initial approach. The hands can be lightly folded in the lap. We close our eyes and sit in absolute physical stillness. While keeping our upright sitting position, without slumping, we relax all unnecessary tension, checking forehead, eyes, jaw, neck and so down through the body and the limbs.

Here we may borrow an absolutely basic teaching of the Buddhists. As far as feeling goes, everything in us is still – except the breathing. We are aware of this perpetual gentle rhythm. Turn your attention to the breathing and watch it – in: out: in: out. The Tibetans watch it as air is inhaled and exhaled through the nostrils; the Siamese teaching is to be 'mindful' of the gentle rise and fall of the solar plexus. "Mindfulness" of breathing is a basic exercise. The Buddhists use it as

a training in directed thought and therefore pupils are made to master it through long hours of meditation.

For our initial steps in the West this is not necessary. We are concerned with creating the centre of stillness and for this the mindfulness of the breathing rhythm is most helpful and can run as a thread through our period of meditation. We are not concerned with any of the yogi training of breathing. This is very advanced and specialised teaching, not to be lightly undertaken by a Westerner. It is desirable at the outset to take perhaps three slow, deep breaths, exhaling steadily and fully. This helps to change the rhythm of thinking and still the self. Then, as we watch the breathing happening on its own, we shall probably find it growing ever more gentle. With this our mood also stills until in deep meditation we really cease to be aware of any breathing at all.

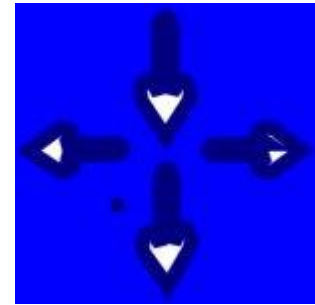
Now as to those roving thoughts which will come in and distract us. In imagination we may see ourselves enter a chapel and close the door and seat ourselves. It may be a circular chapel with a dome. We know that this really symbolises ourself and we experience the inner self as a hollow space. Into the chapel will come these disturbing thoughts, like an intruding bird or bat. If we give it no lodgement or point of landing it will fly out again and leave us. The thought only becomes operative when we acknowledge it and accept it. While in the outer world we are concerned with dealing with thoughts and emotions as they come along. We grasp them and respond to them with an act of will. In the silence of our inner chapel for this precious half-hour of inner peace they have no place. We do not need to fight against them with will. We simply withhold any response to them and watch them fade like smoke passing through the window. "Stilling my thinking, I inhale.... and exhale...." Turning to watch the breathing (not doing the breathing) gives us a positive alternative to the unwanted thought. Soon a great stillness begins to settle down. The chapel becomes completely silent. The disturbing thoughts and emotions give up the attempt to enter and a great tranquillity descends upon us. "Experiencing tranquillity, I exhale.... and inhale". So the inner quality and condition is built up.

So important is the achieving of this stage of inner stillness that it may seem almost to be an end in itself. For this chosen period in our busy day we have found how to withdraw from the world and keep its demands at bay by moving inwards and creating a chamber of silence in the heart. The longer we can hold this the greater the joy. Indeed it can approach what is called "bliss consciousness", for it is leading the soul towards touch with that world of absolute manifestation in the relative world of thin~ and events.

Now we can begin to open ourselves towards the higher planes of light. It is the second great objective to be impregnated by the Divine Light from above. Let it be clear that by 'higher planes' we mean not spatial distance, for we are moving out of the world of space and time. Rather we must conceive that the planes of being and extended spiritual consciousness are spheres of higher frequency or wave-

length. There is Light of the Spirit behind physical light, a Spiritual Sun behind the physical sun. This spiritual light will fill the vacuum created by the individual who has achieved the inner stillness. Thus we may very gently allow light to flood through the dome of the chapel, i.e. the top of the head. We can see living light filtering through, exploring the head, feeling its way down into the heart until our whole being is flooded with light.

Then we shall feel that something happens in the heart. The imagination may take different forms. We may see a great shaft of light descending from the zenith and passing through our whole body down into the earth as if Spirit is being 'earthed'. The sense of descent of this power may be quite strong and this is helped by the sitting position with the vertical spine. The light has entered through the 'centre' at the top of the head and can be transformed in



the heart centre. It is as if the heart is an electrical transformer and can give out the Light as love for all life. We can experience the horizontal outflow from the quiescent heart. It need not be directed at anything or anyone special. It is the beginning of the experience of the heart centre as an organ pouring out love for all beings. We realise in ourselves the symbol of the cross.

Meditation can of course include development of "imagination", which is the ability to begin to see the reality of higher worlds in the form of picture images. We can, however, be tempted to be too active in this direction. Hence the perpetual warning of the Buddhist teachers to us in the West that we should come back to the mindfulness of breathing and allow all else to follow at its own pace.

The inner chamber has been diffused with silence and light We can if we wish allow the experience of rising as if, in a balloon lighter than air, we were passing up through the dark clouds. As we rise the clouds become thinner and more translucent until we break through into clear sunshine with the endless dome of the blue ether above us. The symbolism is obvious, for we are moving up through the emotional atmosphere of earth life until we float clear and in orbit beyond the gravity drag of earthly concerns. Then we bask in the radiance of the spiritual sunlight which penetrates every pore of soul and body. In this imagination we may find wonderful peace. Also we begin to experience an expanding consciousness as if we were no longer tightly held by the limitations of the body. This is the mystery. We look inwards in order to expand on a higher plane. This is no harmful introspection. It is a developing of inner faculties which open on to widening vistas. Blake wrote:-

"I cease not from my great task - to open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eye of man inwards into the Realms of Thought, into Eternity, ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination."

Through meditation, we begin to understand that imagination is a faculty of profound significance, leading us towards contact with the Divine worlds. It is by no means merely the weaving of fantasies. Our materialistic civilisation is largely concerned with outward-looking. Meditation balances the trend by turning to look inwards and so through to realms of extended awareness. It is in the condition of absolute inner stillness and lifted consciousness that we can listen with alert attention and suspended thought for the speaking of the "still small voice".

The time comes for return into ourselves. Gently we fall back into the body, carrying in the heart the fine flowing light and warmth of the spiritual sun. During our meditation we have on a soul level been open to the Light and its power. We should do what is called 'sealing the centres' with light. There are psychic and spiritual centres in the brow, throat, heart and solar plexus, and also we have in imagination 'opened' the crown of the head. In thought these should be closed and protected by mentally placing the cross and circle over them in light.

We can also see ourselves wrapped around in a protective cloak of light. Then we can safely move out again to meet the events of our day, but carrying with us the inner stillness of the heart filled with light and love. This should colour our every reaction to the outer world.

Half-an-hour is a good length for a meditation. Twice a day is valuable if it can be achieved. Regularity of time and place is important since it gives a discipline and habit. Early morning is favoured by many, but each of us can work out a plan. Fifteen minutes is better than nothing and a period of inner silence and stilling before entering into sleep is of first importance, since in sleep the soul is in touch with the beings of the spiritual planes.

The need for meditation in our time cannot be over-emphasised. If the consciousness of man is to evolve and expand, more and more people must be seeking the silence and penetrating the barriers between the different levels of being. Meditation is the one right and safe way that this can be done. It is therefore our task to embark on the meditative path. On the personal level it is not a selfish deed to withdraw into the peace, but a necessary training. Through meditation we should become better members of the community because tensions are relaxed, and by experiencing love for all being in meditation we should bring this back into our daily life. It should help us to become more capable, more contented, more joyful and more peaceful. Many find that meditation brings them better physical health. Others find they develop the capacity of receiving inner guidance and help in different ways.

Methods of meditation vary a great deal, but all must include the inner stilling and the opening to the inflow of the Light. These short introductory suggestions

wilt perhaps show how meditation differs from prayer, though obviously the two practices are complementary.

It is to be expected that, at this time of increasing interest in meditation, many people are turning for inspiration to the teachings of the East where it has been practised for so long. It should, however, be stressed that the emergence of spiritual science in the West has led to highly important teachings on meditation which are consonant with the intellectual development of our time, and which relate to Christianity in that they acknowledge that in opening to the Spiritual Light they are approaching the exalted being known as the Cosmic Christ. It is He who entered the stream of earth evolution through the vehicle of Jesus and who now over-shadows the earth as "the Revealer of the Word". Thus meditation which opens head and heart to the Light is making entry for the healing powers of the Living Christ for the redemption of man. The concept of the Cosmic Christ, the "Christos", as the exalted Being of the Light, relates to all mankind of every creed and colour. In understanding the different methods of meditation, the wisdom of East and West may unite as we come to an understanding that all religions are essentially one and that our task is to work towards World Harmony.

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THE PURPOSE OF MEDITATION NOW

Our society really needs missionaries right in the heart of it to propagate the very idea of God once more. In this society of ours so many have lost God and have above all lost the sense of the super-sensible world, the reality of higher worlds. The world is divided into those who take the agnostic, atheist or materialistic view and those who realise that there exists a higher world, a world of beings, who are part of the living will of the Almighty and Eternal God and that the core of man belongs to this higher world. Many talk about the spirit and spiritual values, but implying by these words simply the human endeavour in the direction of art, music, altruism and the churches as opposed to politics, economics and money making. Spiritual values in this sense do not imply what we understand by the living spirit. This implies the dawning in our consciousness of the truth that we are in fact in touch with higher beings, that higher planes of consciousness exist and that we are destined to move on to these planes of consciousness because that kernel which exists in every human being is eternal and is part of the whole consciousness of the living God. The implications of the emerging view are obviously enormous. It is terrific news, if one might put it that way. It is the most important piece of information that anybody nowadays can get.

To put it another way, you are not your body; you are a spiritual being and eternal, seconded to a society on this earth plane for a limited spell of time in order that, when your task is done and your experience made, you may be

released from the limitations and shackles of that fading body, that worn-out overcoat. Then you may move back again on to extended planes of consciousness but enriched in your understanding and through experience of self-will and self-hood, having attained something of the quality of a free moral being, who like the prodigal son, can find his way back towards the Father. We begin to see that this earth, as Keats so well called it, is not a vale of tears, so much as "a vale of soul making". We are all here for a very good purpose in order to undergo these experiences which can only be learned in the separation of the body and cut off from the direct experience of the Divine worlds. It is as if the beneficent imagining of the world of absolute being, call it God or eternal consciousness, or what you will, has chosen to split itself up and to work down and down and down, until the original and archetypal ideas conceived and imagined are realised into physical form, in order that within the whole pattern of nature, there might evolve an organism which can carry the living spirit of man. This is the human body, this consummation of the design of nature, which is able to bear and house a spiritual being.

On whatever plane it may be living, a spiritual being obviously needs to be embodied so as to have the vehicle through which to work. Were we living on a flame planet we should have flame bodies but; living on this planet of which gravity is the chief force, we need a physical body in which the limbs are given over entirely to the world of gravity and the head is lifted so that it is open towards the heavenly world, and can think divine thoughts. Here is the perfect vehicle, in which the spiritual being can experience aloneness, isolation, cut-offness, shut inside himself. We are a world of lonely and separated people, cut off from the truth that we are part of the great living oneness of things. This is the truth which we apprehend with our thinking and with our imagination, that the whole of life is divine, and is all part of the Great Oneness which manifests on many different planes and gives on this plane the appearance of separation into a diversity of parts.

As far as we are concerned, this planet is relatively so huge that it needs the effort of constructive imagination to realise that it is a great living organism and we are the blood corpuscles, as you might say, in that organism. Yet we have the illusion that we are just shut inside our skin. That of course is not so; we must recognise that our auras extend into a higher plane. When we are released from the body, consciousness and sense of identity continues, though we have lost the physical sense organs and the brain. Obviously there is brain-free thinking on that plane. We don't need the brain. The whole of the universe is thought – it is thought that has made the convolutions of the brain and not the brain that makes thought. The Brain on this plane is an organ of perception to perceive ideas and to experience thought in every-day contact in the sense world. We have to imagine the great spheres and spaces of thought, the whole of the cosmos shot through with living thought, of which we will be part, according to our faculties of perception, when we are freed from the body, and of which we can be part now in so far as we can

develop true imagination and vision. Brain-free thinking can in fact be developed while we are here.

We are, I repeat, our auras, and the 'body' on the higher plane is the focal point of consciousness. The aura is not limited to the immediate surrounding of the body but is part of a vast radiating field of life which can extend indefinitely and contact everything else with which it has relationship and which has a kindred wavelength. This means that there is the possibility of infinitely wide experience. We must struggle to overcome the ridiculous limitation that has so riddled our consciousness in tacitly assuming that we are simply this little body. First of all we wipe out the idea that we are the body. It is nothing but the housing which we reject when its usefulness is over. We recognise that with every step of decaying or ageing of this organ, the spirit is gradually freeing itself in preparation for its final release.

Next we must realise that we are our aura and that our consciousness can be in this wide field. It is from there that we think. We begin to see that there is nothing to stop us from being in consciousness anywhere. It will need practice. Some people obviously have the faculty highly developed – some of us get a glimmering of the width to which human experience can extend in exploring these higher worlds.

Now the great step in our thinking is to grasp that there are planes of consciousness, and by planes we mean different frequencies, different vibratory rates. A higher frequency can simply pass through lower rates unimpeded. These walls and our bodies are being passed through continually by television and wireless, and there is no difficulty in our minds grasping that. So also it is perfectly possible for a fairy palace on a higher plane to be coexistent on this spot or there could be fields or a celestial river with higher beings walking along it. Space is an illusion. It is not that these wonderful realms are vastly far away. They are very close. The sense of distance is due simply to the degree of our lack of vision and the decaying of those organs of perception which exist in us all.

We must admit that this is a completely different idea from the more orthodox concept which is tacitly or overtly held all too often that human consciousness starts at conception, the soul evolving through a life and then passing on perhaps to eternal life. The concept of the levels of consciousness means obviously that *we were there before we were born*. Once we grasp the concept of pre-existence it ceases to be necessary to discuss whether there is survival of death.

This becomes axiomatic. We are eternal; therefore we didn't start at conception. What started at conception was the beginning of this housing for the soul. We were there before

birth as a spiritual being, as an aura which extended indefinitely. May I quote that wonderful passage from the 17th century poet, Traherne, whose work was

rediscovered only in 1920. He had the faculty of perception into the womb and even beyond it. Many of his poems are concerned with this experience. He describes the experience of being in the womb and then says:

*"I was within
A House I know not – newly Clothed with Skin.*

*Then was my Soul my only All to me,
A living endless Eye,
Scarce bounded with the Sky,
Whose Power, and Act, and Essence was to see –
I was an inward Sphere of Light,
Or an interminable Orb of Sight
Exceeding that which makes the Days,
A vital Sun that shed abroad its Rays:
All Life, all Sense,
A naked, simple, pure Intelligence."*

That is what the embryo experiences, if we may take it from Traherne. He is looking through the gateway backwards to that oneness with the enormous plane of light, and then he narrows down into the grave of the body.

Birth into the body is indeed a form of death, and release from the body at what we call death is the great rebirth. That is the turn round in our thinking which our age has got to achieve. It is of vital importance because the world is teetering upon the edge of disaster.

It is perfectly obvious by the things that even the great scientists are saying that there is grave danger of our so polluting the world that life on this planet is threatened. We may even blow it up in our vast, wise ignorance. What we are doing is playing as children with wonderful toys. This is not to belittle the fantastic achievement of mankind in making a moon rocket or atom bomb. It is an amazing example of creative group activity and it opens vistas of immense hope if man can only use his sense, but nevertheless it is like playing with toys, until we see that the universe is spiritual in essence. It is felt by so many scientists that the universe is essentially mechanical, physical and dead, and that this planet is nothing other than a dead speck of dust in the vast and indifferent universe, not, as is the truth, a living seed, so important that it is capable of evolving consciousness, and bearing the Lord of the Spiritual Sun, the entry of the Christos into this stream of consciousness.

That is the highest compliment that the heavenly world could possibly pay to this tiny seed. We must learn to think of our solar system as an organism, a spiritual organism, and you cannot blow one small part off its orbit without damaging the whole, any more than you can obliterate the pituitary gland of a man and think that this will do no harm to him because it is so small an organ. Man is playing

with these toys in almost total ignorance that he is handling the physical image of spiritual forces and is watched by a spiritual world.

It is clearly of desperate concern to the higher world that man does not, in his folly, over-reach himself. This beautiful planet must be saved. It cannot be saved without our cooperation for the very simple reason that the Divine plan is that man should develop free will, and if free will is violated by an uninvited invasion of the forces of Michael and the Light, then the whole aeons of human development are negated as an experiment in free will. Yet it is not thinkable that the forces of the higher world will allow man to blow up his planet This has got to be stopped somehow.

Many who have now left the body and moved on into the higher consciousness are certainly working, as scientists, doctors, musicians, artists or sociologists, to think into our thinking. They are seeking channels by means of which they can get into our hearts and into our thinking and so by inspiration and intuition and flashes of new ideas build up the possibility of a new society. It is this cooperation within our thinking and within the flash of intuition in the heart, that needs to be made conscious It is all very well for us to get good ideas and say "wasn't that rather splendid; didn't I think of nice ideas?" What we should do is to give thanks in humility, for the ideas we have produced, and for the flash in the heart that guided us to take the right course. We must realise that we are in close co-operation and in the presence of guides and angelic powers and of our own friends who can in universal telepathy keep us in touch and guide us from the higher planes.

First, however, we have got to invoke and to invite. Here are the waiting forces of life which in co-operation with man can transform this world, can overcome the pollution, can rebuild society into the new Jerusalem, by flooding the hearts of man with love and joy and the intellect with understanding. Look down in imagination from the higher planes and see this darkened planet, obscured by hate and cruelty and all the disturbed emotions that the diabolical forces are creating and inflaming, and here in the fog and murk of this planet you may see visible points of light, points where it begins to glow. Porchester Hall and the gathering here may well be such a point offering the dedicating of its endeavour upward towards the light Considering the urgency of the situation it is certain that such points will immediately be flooded with the light We are like a resistance movement with invasion notified, and wherever the little signal light goes up secretly from the forest the paratroopers will drop. The invasion has certainly been notified by the forces of light and is imminent though we cannot tell when or how soon or in what form.

It is possible for us to rededicate our own wills, lives and actions towards the purposes of the higher world of God, thus co-operating in the forming of a new society. The world is in so critical a state that, to put it at the very lowest level, we might just as well put our last dollar on the spiritual world-picture. It is a picture

full of peace, light and love, and above all joy and hope. There is essentially nothing to be worried about once we grasp the fact that we are eternal beings, co-operating with an eternal plane.

This is the most exciting adventure that human kind has ever undertaken, and it is the culminating point of aeons of evolution. Human consciousness has reached just that point when the huge step can be taken of opening itself to the higher world. This is the great breakthrough, the great home-coming. Nothing else matters. Whatever our own affairs or concerns or hopes, nothing is so exciting as this attempt to co-operate with the higher planes which we know to be watching and waiting, alerted for action. The difficulty for our friends on the higher plane is to devise ways of getting through to us without interfering with our freedom.

In our hearts and our minds we can create a centre of stillness and open it to the great vertical shaft of light pouring in from above. That light in the human heart can be transmuted into love which can be sent out on the horizontal beam and we create thereby the true form of the Easter resurrection cross. It is a way of seeing the six-pointed star three dimensionally. The great beam of light shoots from the zenith right through us into the depths and the cross form radiates out in love into the four directions of the compass. Surround this by the radiating aura and we have the majestic picture symbolised in the Celtic cross, but it is an eternal symbol for every religion representing the earthing of spirit and the transmuting of it in the heart. It is a marvellous image and this is the Easter image, no longer the agonised cross of suffering but the true Cross of Resurrection, which combines every religion in recognition of the one basic, spiritual fact that the higher worlds are alerted to co-operate with us as soon as we can make the gesture of invocation that opens us to their guidance.

In a bewildered world this is a picture of great joy and hope. This has been called the new Elizabethan age. We have entered into exploration, not merely round the world with Drake, but into the depths of space and not only physically but across the ranges of different vibratory rate into new spheres and dimensions of the universe so that we understand the living Cosmos for the first time and wake up to the enormous joy of this responsibility. It is almost as if we are reviving the Elizabethan picture of a Merry England forming a new society which is based on love and on joy and on the unshakeable conviction that, as eternal beings, it does not matter if we are ill or broken or poverty-stricken or tortured by negative forces, because nothing can kill the inner core which is co-operating with the Christos and the Powers of Light, in bringing about the new Jerusalem.

It is for this that we are meditating. We make our gesture towards the heaven world in order that they may come to the rescue and redemption of mankind. There is in the forces of Light a sense of urgency that their Commander-in-Chief has clearly demonstrated. This it seems to me is the purpose of meditation now

and that is why we all, in our different ways and methods, are concentrating on this way of making our breakthrough upwards towards those eternal worlds.

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED

The following books are suggested.

Meditation: The Art of Meditation

Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment Rudolf Steiner

From Intellect to Intuition Alice Bailey

The Silent Path Michal Eastcott

Meditation Friedrich Rittelmeyer

Meditation in Action Chögyam Trongpa

The Science of Being and Art of Living Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Grace Cooke Joel S. Goldsmith