INTRODUCTION

Meditation and Yoga have been practiced and studied for thousands of years, and was thought to be mastered only by the holy priests of the Hindu religion, ever since it was only thought to be associated only with religion and spirituality. But today this scenario is changing, and meditation is being thought to and practiced by people of every age and genre. Meditation has now received the household name. According to Walsh (1999) it is practiced by millions of people in the United States alone, and by several more all over the world. It is no longer related to only religion and spirituality. Meditation is recommended for a variety of problems by experts, these include psychological and physical health problems.

India's contribution to the spread of meditation and Yoga is immense. The practice of meditation and yoga in the western cultures has significant effects on their cultural, religious, and intellectual world, and it has also contributed to globalisation. Ever since the introduction of the transcendental meditation in the west, in the early 1960's, several researchers showed their increasing interest in meditation. One of the important landmarks was the work of Herbert Benson and Keith Wallace, in establishing the physiological correlates of transcendental meditation.

With the help of several researchers we can now say that meditation is an effective method of stress management and self-regulation strategies. Physiologically, self-regulation through meditation reduces the activity of the sympathetic nervous system which is important in causing stress and tension. Through more important research work done, it was found that practicing meditation regularly enhances psychological growth and wellbeing. Meditation is known to also enhance
personality, creativity, emotional intelligence and it also serves as re-educative and re-constructive therapies, besides also serving as a supportive therapeutic technique.

Personality is an abstract concept, so what makes personality so important? Corporate organisations invest on personality developments for their employees, and others use their personality to gain success. These are the indicators that personality plays an important role in the way the individuals perceive themselves and how society perceives them thereafter. Personality is something that is innate in an individual and is nourished or enhanced using various methods. The use of breathing and concentration technique affects mostly an individual's psychological dimension of personality. The more conscious and focussed one is with breathing patterns; it serves to relax the body and senses. Thus breathing techniques are important during meditation as it affectively brings about a calming effect. Once calm enough then the ability to pay attention to details can be improved and vitality can be increased.

From the breathing technique, meditation evolves into a deeper kind of experience that involves the intellectual personality. The goal of meditation is to sharpen up the mind to the extent of focussing on a thought or idea without being distracted by external or negative thoughts. According to experts, meditation help in shaping better personality as an individual is more capable of looking at things more objectively and making wiser decisions. There are three stages of the mind that we cultivate through meditation, and each stage fosters creativity. Letting go of the 'Me, Mine, Myself' mind tape. In order to do something as if the whole earth were spewing flames, one needs to dive completely into the action and forget oneself completely in the process.

Being kind to oneself, a kindly attitude allows one to experiment with failure without the grumpy inner editor ripping us into shreds. Stilling the mind, a mind
cluttered with thoughts lacks the spaciousness needed for creativity. It helps to be still for a few minutes before starting a creative endeavour. The easiest way to still the mind is to pay tender regards to the breath, or to listen to sounds. When one starts the creative process from this point of stillness, ideas flow naturally and freely. In order to enhance the interpersonal skills and personal skill and abilities to succeed, one has to take on the subliminal consciousness. The subliminal mind is a hidden area. Nearly all the emotionally based issues come from this area, which we must face; otherwise, those emotions will proceed to rise. If the subliminal mind is challenged, hidden answers from this domain can be revealed. One must discover some methods that function for and help one to grow ones social and face to face skills.

The function of meditation is to condition the body and mind to be calm. It is very well recognized for the cultivating of how to instruct an individual to use their minds. Meditation can help train the body and mind to relax and will help to challenge the subliminal mind and in turn enhance interpersonal and personal skills.

**Swami Sridharanandji's philosophy of Atma Vidya**

Swami Sridharanandji was a great enlightened seeker of the soul who called himself a student of Atma Vidya. He believed in the incessant process of learning enabling the sadaka to keep his mind open to the experience of life. Swamiji thought of the circumstances of common man in the background of socio-psychological contradictions which perplexed him and rendered him confused about the goals of life. His vision was to bring about social transformation by setting the individual into the grooves of self-actualization. Human individuals should develop prudence and wisdom to enable them to attain a sense of equanimity in the process of living.
Atma Vidya means the knowledge of self (absolute truth). Keeping in view the ordinary human being, WHO AM I? Is an important question raised in the Upanishads. To answer this question Atma Vidya makes use of two basic concepts; Prakruti (the universe) and Purusha (human being). Swami Sridharanandji says that an inalienable unity between the universal processes and the human being is attained by atma vidya; that is one realizes the absolute truth.

Perception of the self and the universe in absolute unity is the vision of reality; that is the perception of the whole truth. According Swami Sridharanandji, meditation thus is the process through which one can move towards this whole truth. Atma Vidya leads to a mode of living based on true knowledge of the self “WHO AM I?”

Life is a delicate movement of breath. It is this breath that helps to unite the universal processes and the human being. For example a foetus does not have a mind of its own and depends entirely on the mother for its needs. A human being is born as a mass of conscious material without self-awareness. An individual breath is born in the universal breath and will continue to grow under the influence of socio-psychological and cultural forces operating on his personality leading to a unique organism. In essence an individual breath is born in the universal breath. As one grows older, one becomes more conscious of the external world and less conscious of the internal self. The degree of fundamental unity between the individual self (internal) and the universal processes (external) depends on the frequency of breathing.

While meditating using the technique of Atma Vidya which focuses mainly on breathing, one will notice that the breath becomes very slow, gentle and subtle. In theory what happens at this point is that the difference between the external and internal forces will begin to reduce and there will come a point when the difference
between the two will automatically diminish and the universal processes will integrate with the individual self. At this time one will have the holistic perception of the universe and the self which is the perception of the whole truth; self-realization.

The conception of wellbeing in the context of Indian heritage is extremely comprehensive, as it is charged with the socially noblest dimensions. Addressing the problems of the liberation of the individual through self-realization and the humanistic development of the society by advocating the development of spiritual dimensions between the individual and the society, focussing on the total development of both, the conception of wellbeing of the individual is inalienable from the wellbeing of the society and the rest of the world. The underpinning philosophy guiding the comprehension of the wellbeing of the individual, conceives the individual as an inseparable dimension of the cosmic processes as a whole. Thus in Sridharanandji’s conception the individual and the social wellbeing is holistic and fundamentally cosmic.

Resulting from this spiritual heritage of wellbeing is the unique system of perception of the world and the self and also the relationship between the two. The dynamics emerging in this context determines the degree of realization of the potential of the individual and the society, thus determining fulfilment and happiness. There are different ways of perceiving the self, depending not only on one’s own experience of the world, but also on the philosophy, religion, ideology, socio-historical conditions the self is exposed to and also the perception of the world and the relationship between the two. Underpinning all these are the inherited potentialities of the individual.
One’s perception of the self would determine for example how one should interact or deal with the world around and also the self which would determine the degree of fulfilment and satisfaction. However, perception of the self itself would be determined by the living conditions of the world around. Therefore, perception of the self and the world and the interaction between the two would be central to understanding the possibility of the realizable degree of satisfaction and wellbeing.

Central to the understanding of the relationship between the self and the world, is the framework within which the individual is conditioned to understand the self. The understanding of the worldly and the spiritual dimensions of the existential process as in this context, the spiritual history of the culture in which the self is formed; this is extremely crucial.

In the Upanishadic insights, existence consists of two dimensions: the transitory dimension and the spiritual dimension. Existence is basically conceived as immortal, continuous, changing forms, the forms being transitory. The worldly transitory dimensions in the absence of the operation of the spiritual dimensions present themselves as having independent existence from the immortal basic process of existence. Thus in the absence of a unified, spiritually determined perception of the self and the world, the illusion of dualism between the self and the world starts operating, rendering the existential process vulnerable to all forms of schisms.

In the absence of the Upanishadic spiritual dimension penetrating all the interactions, the subtle and the gross, between the self and the world, uncollating the artificially divided existential process by the empirical world, the schisms and the contradictions emerge at all levels. The basic contradiction being between the transitory and the ephemeral on the one hand and the permanent and the real on the other hand where the former dominates all the existential processes and experiences
thus peripheralising the latter: the individual is thus thrown into the world involuntarily, into an existential framework, changing and confusing him as he is exposed to ignorance of self and the world and the essential unity between them.

Meditation enables the realization of the permanent and the real as the essence of existence, it generates the linkages essentially spiritual in nature between the immortal and the real on one hand and the transitory and the illusory on the other hand, thus allowing the realization and perception of the holistic nature of the existential processes.

**Importance of Swami Sridharanandji’s technique of Meditation**

One way out of the mess of modern day life is to take up the practice of meditation. Especially, the technique developed by swami Sridharanandji is very beneficial. Swamiji expressed his concern regarding the clarity of self-concept and authentic self-image lacking in the common man which is responsible for the misery of the individual and suffering of the masses. One reason for such unrealism about oneself is an utter neglect of human being to implement the life stabilizing values unto one.

While meditating the practitioner should identify what is within him which is unconditionally his own that is his being. The best way to enter the being is to observe the process of breathing non-analytically and gradually reach a point of true beginning, “nija prarambha”. At this level of true beginning there is neither ‘I’ nor ‘mine’, but pure consciousness undefined, undirected, undifferentiated potentially capable of infinite possibilities. Reaching this point will bring a psycho-physical unity of consciousness which is indispensable for the realisation of one’s self.
SatGuru Sridharanandji always dealt directly to the study of soul he has prescribed a very simple path, which is almost similar to Patanjali’s Astanga Yoga. In SatGuru Sridharanandji’s path certain culture appropriate, time suitable techniques are included. For example time consciousness, diet consciousness, inter-personal sensitivity and law abiding are fundamentally required virtues. In the process of meditation the Sadaka should not anticipate through imagination, the steps that unfold towards attainment of oneness.

To set a common man into the path of self-realisation, Sridharanandji impressed upon the Sadaka, the necessity of understanding that his relation to his duties, and self-realization. The larger context of universal consciousness is in a unitary form as individual consciousness like Eric Form’s productive orientations and Maslow’s fully functioning individual, Riff and Singer’s vision of psychological well-being, Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination.

Sridharanandji believed the movement of breath is the ‘Karya’ and the power within which causes the air to enter into the lungs and thereby to the whole system is the ‘Karana’. Once the Sadaka realizes that the being to be realized is ever active resplendent his task is to only wipe the mirror of mind or cause ‘manorlaya’ extinction of modifications of the consciousness. He will see himself appear in every bit of the creation as reflected into his soul. The movement of breath is the sure medium to suppress the modifications of the mind or consciousness present in the creation both animate and inanimate is finally controlled, covered, modified and extinguished by the moving breath. Understand it, save yourself, benefit from the knowledge of this; never crave for the wealth or belongings of others. Because human being is born with a soul, the task of emancipation is to wipe out the entire images super imposed on the state of the being. All the experiences of the individual are
recode one over the other creating a super structure of cognitive framework. Meditation will wash out or subtract one by one all impressions until the original fabric of supra-mental consciousness becomes clearly visible.

With passing of time the Sadaka will acquire the technique of entering his true being, in which all the sense organs will merge into the supreme power and thereby charged with the power of the supreme which helps him to lead the life dispassionately without being tossed by the contradictions of mundane life. Thus, individuals will attain an indissoluble state of oneness which provides a supportive psychological setting for intellectual, emotional, behavioural and spiritual development of the individual. Naturally, he remains calm, collective and happy.

Sridharanandji's suggestion would be to restructure or reconstruct or don't anticipate or expect thoughts not to bother because thoughtlessness is not the ultimate goal. Thoughts remain active until final merger. If you don't expect that, thoughts do not bother, when they appear just ignore them without trying to evaluate the thoughts. Unevaluated thoughts disappear and cannot reappear. In this way the appearance of thoughts backed by motivation operative on choice and context will gradually reach a point of no return. With thoughtlessness the next step would be to maintain this thoughtlessness and make it spontaneous. This can be achieved by overcoming the fear of disengaging or descending from the ascent state.

Sridharanandji stressed the need for waiting without any terminal point at the 'Ishwarasannidhana' or final surrender. Nobody knows where one ends. The ocean of peace dormant inside the abysmal depth of the being will charge the individual novel, creative, dilative insight and he will notice by his 'Anthahkarana' or the third eye a delicate thread of all pervasive witness binding all the souls on the planet. Psycho-physically a common man can derive lot of benefits from this method of meditation.
because a 15 to 20 minute of meditation during the early morning hours will redeem the individual of all toxins present in the body providing him a balanced state schism free state of consciousness.

*Atma Vidya Parishilana Yoga*

In this technique developed by Swami Sridharanandji, the individual begins meditation by joining both palms at the centre of the eye brow; he then positions the hands on the thighs and gradually breaths in and breaths out. This process of deep breathing continues for about 10 minutes, during which the individual attempts to hear the sound of his breathing and keeps a relaxed posture. After a while the individual is required to do fast breathing for about five minutes after which he would produce if he can, a humming sound which is technically called ‘Brahmary’. While observing his breathing, he should question his intellect by asking ‘who am I?’, visual impulses will distort the unitary state of consciousness, and are checked by fixing the focus on the centre of the eye brows, auditory inputs which disturb the concentration and can be removed by focusing on the heartbeat. Thus all the concentration is diverted inwards, the individual is left with the breath and gradually the sense of duality between the practitioner and practice goes away and the individual will remain in a timeless all pervasive state of oneness.

As he begins observing the frequency of breathing, slowly and gradually the thoughts emerging from the cognition subside and eventually go away, this helps the individual to remain un-disturbingly observing the process of breathing until the moment when breathing becomes un-noticeable. This state of oneness dissolves within seconds due to the surging non-adjustable humming thoughts and again they go off when the breath movement is persuaded until finally it ends up with the true
source – “nija prarambha” (True Beginning). Therefore, meditation begins with the end of succession of the sporadic meaningless thoughts and ends with the True beginning. According to Swami Sridharanandji, in the state of meditation, the sense organs which naturally flow outside are consciously focused on the inner state of being and thereby recharged by the transcendental awakening, enabling the individual’s uninhibited state of oneness. This state of consciousness will spread to a major portion of wakeful hours, during which the individual will experience ‘Sarva Sama Bhava’ – a sense of equanimity, which dilutes in the later hours of the day and once again to be replenished by meditation during the early part of the day. The practitioner, with every passing day finds a very minor change in his nature. As practice continues, the pressure on schism reduces progressively and the individual remains in an un-disturbed state of oneness. The quality of concentration or ‘Dharana’ depends on the initial goal of meditation. If the goal is ‘liberation’, or freedom from the mundane and addressing oneself to humanity at large, the frequency of self-centred thoughts, disturbing concentration will be very low. With this objective the behavioural orientation would be not to return to mundane existence, but, to liberate one-self to self-realization and be in that stage as a fully functioning individual.