
LIVING MEDITATION

4. Consciousness Realizing Itself

Yoga, meditation and life

The purpose of yoga and meditation (if we can use the word 'purpose' at all), is to remove impurities from the mind so one's true nature can be seen. Since one's true nature already is—yoga is not an attainment as such and it is wise not to approach yoga and meditation as '*doing something*' that will '*bring something*' as it will not.

Yoga is an alert way of living and the clarity or alertness does not allow wrong perception, wrong action and their resulting consequences. We have accumulated existing conditioning ourselves over time by careless living and must let go of it ourselves. This task cannot be set aside by brushing it out of one's present thoughts as each moment we perceive and act based on existing notions, we increase the grip of ignorance and its results.

If we could at one stroke abandon the very roots of ignorance and give rise to that level of vigilance that makes it impossible for existing notions to interfere in life—we would not need to consider yoga or meditation as we would be established in yoga naturally.

Practice is not to gradually rise towards some attainment, but to inwardly become willing and capable of abandoning all conditioning so as to be able to live in our natural state. For this, both in life and practice, we must discover existing conditioning and be able to continue doing what needs to be done without their interference. Life and practice are not apart or even complementary—they are different fields of activity for one's evolution.

When life is lived without the interference of conditioning, existing conditioning weakens by disuse and no new conditioning is taken on. Further, the inner intelligence gets brighter by use and empowerment. Practice and life act on one and other till they any lines between them vanish. Without living in the same principles of meditation—which is not fueling and therefore weakening existing conditioning and not taking on new conditioning—meditation is not possible as the grip of thought will still be on consciousness.

What we have covered in earlier talks, are not steps in a set order but thresholds of limitation that must be gone beyond to loosen the grip of conditioning for self-inquiry to be possible. Let us revisit them briefly because without understanding and going beyond thought, self-inquiry will be a psychological exercise at best. This understanding is not intellectual agreement of the words but looking directly into what the words try to point to—so things can be known for oneself.

Awakening to the danger

Sharpening the edge should begin naturally—if we have awakened to the fact, that *life as we thought earlier was quite different from how things really are*. In 'how things really are', we are not talking about an absolute view but rather, a practical view that anyone can have with a little attention to things as they are. Earlier, we saw the outer through the lens of conditioning, and this was responsible for much suffering as the outer rarely corresponds to the inner and it will always be this way. Please think on this, there is only one outer world but billions of inner worlds (kindly think beyond the human species) and this makes it an impossibility. So, one day we awaken that suffering is because of our ideas, notions, hopes and expectations and it is experienced by something within us. Something within is suffering because of something within. If we come to see this by our direct examination of things, we will naturally be very careful that we do not fuel the cause and that a way of living be found that is free of all self-caused suffering.

When we see the danger of carelessness, vigilance ensues and change just takes place. The struggle with change is our own resistance to change which means there has not been real awakening to things as they are.

The willingness to change, not change things or people—is the measure of awakening. In this awakening, one takes full responsibility as one sees the cause and effect within oneself only. The inner intelligence gets roused into action when the danger is thus clearly seen and both clarity and energy are at once available. One becomes very attentive in all things as it is necessary to see things as they are, instead of as thought would suggest. Things are seen as they are and thought loses its grip as awareness or consciousness engages life in direct perception.

Realizing the danger is very real and close, one sharpens the edge by not allowing thought to interfere in action. Simultaneously, one expands one's understanding by a vision of things that is universal and not self-centered. The body, mind and heart are also developed through life and practice. Understanding, body, mind and heart are essentially non-different—cultivating them, one cultivates being or who one is. In separating thought from action, awareness or consciousness is empowered in life, the ego and its activity of thought is watched without remission. This vigilance itself keeps the ego from acting as it must have the subject impulse to act and in being watched, it is an object of your awareness. We have to be careful here as we generally think of subject and object as spatially apart but this is not so in the inner space. We have to use words and language, however inadequate but it is hoped that what the words point to is seen.

There must be 'real doubt'

In the way of meditation I've mentioned earlier, we repeat and listen to the sound of the mantra mentally and begin an inquiry into the substance of the mantra, "What is this mantra, what is it made of and how come I am hearing this within me?" Initially, one may raise a conscious prompt only to spark awareness but one must not get the least bit comfortable and keep prompting or 'real doubt' will not be possible.

There must be 'real doubt' that surfaces as the mantra is heard within a few times. Often, this is not possible in the beginning stages due to our over-reliance on conditioning. We are so full of ideas, explanations, theories and stock-answers that 'real doubt' about things is rare if at all.

This doubt I am talking about is not doubt about the outcome of things but of things themselves. To see something, listen to something, smell something or meet someone without any preconceived notions is 'doubt' or not knowing. The doubt that arises because what you see does not correspond to your views or even understanding is not doubt. Without this 'not knowing' or 'doubt'—how can you discover anything? If you already know, you are seeking some kind of proof by experience or results to justify what you know or feel strongly about. It is not 'not understanding' some word or language but beyond—just not knowing things as they premeditatedly. We cannot even eat something without some comparison and categorization or parallel, "Oh, it is just like that!" This bubbling mind has to be quiet for 'real doubt' to arise and this cannot happen if we hold 'secret alliances' with thought selectively.

Raising the prompt is only so we can examine the mantra which is being repeated mentally is also being heard within you. Experience requires a subject and object but it is all happening within—in one space. "I am one and within, I hear this sound of the mantra—just how does this happen?" If this doubt is raised intellectually, the ignorant mind will furnish you a bucket of ignorance. The doubt has to be felt at gut level—in the same spot where earlier—answers, theories, ideas and explanations came from. Once 'real doubt' is felt in the gut—inquiry into the mantra will at once begin.

I did not cover this earlier when introducing inquiry into the mantra as it was essential to see the general flow and more important, to give room for 'doubt' to arise naturally which it should have naturally. Real doubt gives rise to inquiry and inquiry gives knowledge of things. When one sees doubt, inquiry and knowledge as the way to knowing—this feeling extends from meditation to life and we don't take anything for granted at all—this is called vigilance.

Attention, not tension

The flame of attention must become steady. In getting started, vigilance seems like something you do only because we are used to feeling—'doing' and 'being' as something different. Vigilance is not difficult if we get over this habit. If you stand in front of me, I am aware of your

presence and do not do something special to become aware. If I tell my eyes not to see you—you are still there and the eyes still see you. As long as the eyes are open, seeing happens. We will look into this deeper in the sixth talk.

Deep abiding interest is the key to attention, and attention ignites awareness or vigilance. If there are deep rooted attachments and feelings about things, this deep abiding interest to know things as they happen will not come about as we cannot have hidden alliances with thoughts and feelings while trying to overcome them. The interest I am talking about is not one among many or curiosity but something vital—you must know things as they are because you have clearly seen the danger in trusting thought and notions. Everything inner and outer must be in the same field of observation without any tension or unnaturalness.

For the intelligence to be roused, intelligence has to be kept in the saddle, there cannot be another rider on the same horse. Yoga is an all or nothing way. If the intelligence is empowered in life, it continues to stay on the saddle when you sit for meditation. Along with the outside, it has been watching thought all day and has learnt a good deal about not getting mixed up with it—this is important when you sit for meditation as the field inside is very fluid.

The different practices give us opportunity to do something with all our being, without any interest in result and without getting mixed up with thought. Learning to do what needs to be done with all our being and without motive, shows us how to respond in fullness to life. What does motive have to do with situations? Each moment there is something we face or something that faces us—if something needs to be done—do it without holding on and with all your being. This training is necessary to weaken the grip of thought so inquiry into the mantra can begin.

The 'what' inquiry

When you inquire into the mantra, you are trying to understand thought directly. Contact with the mantra is contact with thought, understanding thought and going beyond it. Without direct contact, you are still at the same rung on the ladder as the discovery of others will not help you. I can read the thesis of every person in the field of my research but, for my thesis to be approved, I must do my own research and be able to discover something for myself. You know these things well.

To go beyond the mind, you have to go beyond thought, and for this, you have to know it by direct encounter. You cannot go beyond thought if you have secret alliances with them—it is like pushing the snake out of the front door and inviting him through the back door with some milk and then crying, 'snake'. When there is this direct contact with thought, struggle ceases, there is still much work ahead but no struggle because you have thoroughly understood that which struggled, and what it struggled with, as waves in your own self due by direct experience.

When thought loses its energy by disuse, it melts back into awareness or consciousness as a function or capability of consciousness. Deep rooted thought patterns may still have some residual energy and will continue to rise and fall as they exhaust themselves but will be no longer capable of distracting awareness or consciousness is now the default means for everything from perception to action. Images still register in the mind as we go through experiences but they are devoid of the 'feelings' we infuse into them which are never part of what is experienced. The inner world starts to correspond to the outer world and dichotomy as well the struggle to balance the inner and outer start fading rapidly. There is a return to innate simplicity or closer to our true self. The conditions are just ripe for self-inquiry which is awareness or inner intelligence now seeking to become aware or conscious of its own self and this happens in deep and protracted meditation.

The 'who' inquiry

Self-inquiry can be direct, without any support or with slight support which falls away once the fire of inquiry begins to burn nicely. If one is able to set aside thoughts completely (which includes all desires and attachments), one can take to self-inquiry directly but this is a very steep climb from most.

Awareness which has up till now been inquiring into the mantra, must now become self aware. The mantra is still being repeated and heard within and we have understood the content of the mantra directly. As the mantra continues being repeated and heard, once again, real doubt is raised: "Am I the repeater of the mantra or am I the listener of the mantra?" Once again we have a 'seeming duality' in the oneness within that must be resolved. The mantra is being repeated and heard in the same place and at the same time, "How does this happen?"

When this doubt which is 'real not knowing and wanting to know' rises, awareness turns upon itself in self-inquiry. What happens next is different for each person.

Some hints

A good posture is essential, you have to be able to sit without moving at all and feel part of the space you are seated. When you become one with the environment or larger area physically, you will also learn to feel one with the larger mind space.

Simplify your mind by simplifying your life and not the other way around and realize that less is more.

Have a simple diet with regularity in practice without developing obsessiveness or becoming mechanical. Have a plan for the day and keep a spiritual diary—it is like the doctors charts as you must be your own physician of the soul.

You cannot have two sets of rules—one for spiritual life and one for your so-called 'regular life'. Endless deception, pain, sorrow and confusion will result. Let your understanding be slower but thorough so it is wind-proof.

The experience of fatigue mostly comes when you are trying to meditate with the mind. Meditation is beyond thinking—it does not involve thought at all. The body is motionless and very efficient for its functions, perhaps less than deep sleep too as that rolls in REM cycles. You are not thinking, thoughts rise and fall, exhausting residual energy. How could you explain the tiredness that comes from struggle? What are you struggling with and why? Awareness does not move, the inner space overflows in awareness so anything to be known does not require movement or energy. If you live your regular life based on personal gain, you have no option but to try and meditate with 'that mind'—with selfishness and this is an impossibility which will result in tremendous fatigue. This, not because meditation is tiring but because the vehicle cannot do what is being asked of it. This is why it is essential to have a solid foundation and this is where the earlier limbs of yoga are indispensable.

Life is an opportunity to exhaust existing self-centeredness and feel a more universalized sense of being. Yoga is an all or nothing way and any less is fragmentation—the results of which will be fragments at best.

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