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## MEDITATION 301 – SELF-INQUIRY

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(Video Transcript)

Earlier, we covered stabilization, the first step; and in the last presentation we covered ‘mastery of mind’ – the second step. This brings us to self-inquiry.

Let us, once again, review some of the important points discussed earlier. We are distinct from thought, as we are aware of them. Thought is habit; and identifying with thought is also a habit. Each time we identify with thought, they strengthen their hold on consciousness.

Today, we take up the third step in guided meditation – self-inquiry. The inner intelligence, which is inquired into, and thoroughly comprehended thought is turned on itself in direct self-inquiry.

*Greetings...*

Earlier, in Meditation 101, we dealt with stabilization. Stabilization is the cultivation of awareness to a degree where the existing thoughts, or conditioning, do not overpower or impinge on consciousness. One is therefore able to see what exactly it is and what appears in front of one without existing notions and thoughts interfering in direct perception.

Then we moved on a little further into Meditation 201. Meditation 201 starts off with the same fundamentals, the same basics, but then it introduces a mantra. And the form of inquiry into the mantra includes – what? What is this mantra? Where is it being heard? What is the content of the mantra. ‘What’ is a little easier to cultivate inquiry with. ‘Who’ is a subtler form of inquiry, and we save that for when we can understand thought completely. There must be mastery of thought, or mastery of mind, before we begin self-inquiry. To begin self-inquiry and have the interference of thought or something that’s other, seems to be futile. So, it’s important to stay at that stage where the inquiry into the mantra results in actual confrontation with the content of the mantra, or the content of thought. We must directly understand what this mantra is, or what the content of the mantra is, or the content of thought is – or, mastery of mind. It is then that a state of inner balance comes about. When thought does not rise to impinge – thoughts may rise, thoughts will fall – but consciousness or awareness does not get mixed up and identify with thought. It is important to reach that state before self-inquiry will begin – or it could end up being an intellectual game and you may go on for a long time without realizing that the car has been parked all along and there has been no real movement.

When there has been this understanding of the content of mantra – by direct experience – then we know – this is it! This is what this mantra is made of, or the structure and content of thought by direct experience. At that point, there is mastery of mind. It is then, in that state of inner balance, that we begin *self*-inquiry.

So far, it has been mastery of the object, ... understanding of the object, thought, or the mantra. Now we begin from ‘what’ to ‘who’ – who is it that is aware of this mantra? And that subtle ... that is the subtlest form of inquiry – ‘who’. ‘What’ is a little bit coarser, so we start off with ‘what’, get all of the otherness out of the way, and achieve a state of inner balance.

Then begins the ‘who’, which is inquiry into the self. Who is it that is aware? That which was aware of the mantra, and of thought, has to become self-aware. Awareness has to become self-aware. And this we deal with in meditation 301.

*Let us begin . . .*

Sit in any cross-legged posture. The use of a cushion will raise the buttocks and remove the strain from the knees and hips while bringing about flexibility gradually. It is important to keep the back and neck straight and the head facing forward naturally without bending down.

If you cannot sit cross-legged on the floor, sit on a chair, but keep your legs uncrossed to preclude the urge to switch the legs over; and keep the feet flat on the floor, with your back straight.

Light a candle and/or some incense in your prayer area, and offer some prayers from the heart.

Set the timer for 20-22 minutes and close your eyes while you recite the mantra ‘Om’ three times.

You should not have any expectation from meditation itself, while still meditating with all being.

*Let us meditate . . .*

Om... Om... Om...

Become aware that you are seated here for meditation. Your attention should be on the act of meditation, on which you have embarked.

Now, become aware of this room or general space in which you find yourself. The awareness or attention will go from the activity of meditation to the room or space in which you find yourself.

Become aware of the footprint of your body. The footprint of your body is that space with which your body has contact with the floor, or the floor and chair if you are seated on a chair. You should be able to feel this intuitively or directly at one stroke.

Now let us take this attention within and become aware of the act of breathing. As you do so, this awareness or attention will at once start to investigate the breathing. As we have discussed earlier, awareness or attention discovers what *is*, what actually is – afresh each time, because it is independent of memory. And so if you feel concepts being applied, you know that awareness is not working, ... memory is. Interest is key to attention, or awareness.

Let this awareness follow your breathing as far in as it can go, and as far out as it can go. If your attention is keen, you will also be aware of the warmth and humidity of your breathing.

Introduce the mantra to the rhythm of your breathing so that you are repeating it and listening to it one time with each inhalation, and one time with each exhalation. Do not alter your breathing; simply stretch the mantra so that it covers the span and width of your natural breath.

Introduce the image that corresponds with your mantra or ishta devata, or an image that you have selected, and hold that in the center of your chest. The purpose for this is to stabilize your visual awareness and reduce distraction. The focus of your attention is still on repeating the mantra and listening to the mantra mentally within you. Let this question arise naturally once: “What is this mantra? ... what is it made of? ... and where is it being heard?” within me. This will give some direction to the awareness, which will begin to investigate. It is important not to create space – that I am here, and the mantra is there someplace, because this is all taking place within you, where there is no division. So you have to become aware by being very still. In that stillness, the mantra, ... mantra’s content and structure, ... have to be known. You have to contact the mantra and understand its content and structure by *direct* experience. This is called ‘mastery of mind’. Over two-thirds of your work in meditation are done when you come to this stage, because there will be tremendous balance in mind.

Now, for self-inquiry, there are a few ways. You can either directly inquire, “Who’s aware?”, ... but that is not very advisable for most, because you could begin intellectualizing: “It is So-and-so, ... It is such...”, and so on. To reduce intellectualizing and keep direct perception without interference of thought, it is better to use the structure we have so far and take it a step further by letting this question rise naturally: “Am I the repeater of the mantra, or am I the listener of the mantra? – are these two different?” The emphasis is still on ‘who’, but we are taking the support of the mantra to reduce intellectualizing and getting off the train early. It will still lead you to the same end; because you are looking to see if there is a seam in unconsciousness or a gap: “Am I the repeater of the mantra, or am I the listener?” Are these two? So you are looking

at 'who' with the structure that we reduce making a mistake. Still keeping the emphasis on direct inquiry of 'who', but without the risk of an open-ended inquiry. "Am I the repeater of the mantra or am I the listener of the mantra? Are these different?" That question arises just once and this inner awareness starts looking within itself.

*...meditation ends...*

Om... Om... Om...

*Some closing thoughts...*

Let us briefly recap what we have covered in these three sessions...

In Meditation 101, we become aware of the movement of thought. This cultivates awareness and brings about stabilization or inner balance.

Moving on to Meditation 201, there is an inquiry into the mantra. One must directly understand the structure and content of thought. To *know* the mantra is to know thought, or mastery of mind. And here, to *know* is not an intellectual grasp, it is to know something from within – directly, without the involvement of thought.

Further, into Meditation 301, we inquire into the self – That which was aware of thought and the mantra, must now become self-aware.

Meditation, however, is learnt while meditating. Meditation is not something you do on a mat or cushion, but a state of consciousness, ... the state of being.

Most of the work is in making the mind and body *fit* to meditate. The earlier limbs of Raja Yoga are indispensable in this, and anything overlooked will demand a turnaround later when the stakes are much higher.

Meditation does not involve any struggle at all, and any form of struggle or tension is a sure sign of something very wrong.

Remember, the mat or field of practice includes all life. Be diligent in your practice.

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