

Meditation

In the Fourth Way, meditation is the principal means by which we come to understand what we really are. Meditation in the Direct Path starts by simply 'being aware of being aware'. As our understanding grows and meditation deepens and becomes more stable it is seen as 'abiding knowingly as the presence of Awareness – the real Self' and as such it is the simplest and most direct method of Self-remembering. Unlike most other forms of meditation, Direct Path meditation can be practised in all conditions and under all circumstances. However, at the beginning it is easier to learn to meditate sitting comfortably in a quiet room with your eyes closed.

The 2014 *Summer Programme*, and our paper from last term entitled *From Attention to Self-remembering* explained the use of questions such as 'am I aware?' or 'what is it that knows my experience?' to take us directly to what we really are. But we don't always need to use a question: we can 'go there' directly. The feeling 'I am' is a doorway to the Self. All that is needed is to approach that doorway and enter the vast, open, empty, luminous field of knowing that lies beyond the discursive mind. Here is Nisargadatta's description:

Go deep into the sense of 'I am' and you will find [the real Self]. How do you find a thing you have mislaid or forgotten? You keep it in your mind until you recall it. The sense of being, of 'I am' is the first to emerge. Ask yourself whence it comes, or just watch it quietly. When the mind stays in the 'I am' without moving, you enter a state which cannot be verbalised but can be experienced. [Nisargadatta, *I Am That*]

At first this feels like a focusing or directing of the attention and it seems to require some effort. But meditation is not something we 'do': in time we learn to allow attention to relax back into its source of pure awareness.

Here is some practical advice from Francis Lucille:

Q: Could you say something about using the thought "I" or "I am" as a way of returning to one's true nature? I find it very difficult.

...You know the direction of the "I am." It knows itself in you. Don't stop at any object, any thought or feeling. Gently take the attention away from this thought or feeling back to the "I am."

At first it might feel like an effort. Let this effort relax back into the source or the Self, which it is seeking. Keep the intensity, but let this intensity lose its contour, its contraction. Every time you get stuck with a sensation, a feeling, or a thought, think or feel "I" inside. Focus the attention on the deep feeling of "I." That will unstuck you. Although the one who meditates on the Self looks very quiet from the outside, there is in fact a great intensity inside. There is a great intensity of desire, of turning the attention towards the source.

Feelings, thoughts, and perceptions are not rejected in this meditation. They appear in the perfume of "I-am-ness." The attention is not directed towards them, but rather towards the "I-am-ness." The one who is afraid, the one who desires, the one who likes and dislikes, is a mere body-mind appearance against the background of "I-am-ness." Don't lose sight of the background. Don't feel you are unsuccessful in this meditation. You are successful every time you redirect the attention towards its source.

From the thought “I,” we go to a more subtle feeling, the I-feeling. And from there, it merges with the Absolute, with its source. It merges with the source of our intention, this presence, this all-pervading conscious space, this “I am”.

The problem we sometimes encounter in trying to do this is that either the conscious space or the thought “I” may remain as objects. The space may remain a physical space or a space in the mind, without merging with presence. The conscious space, the all-pervading consciousness, and the “I am” are all the same thing, which is not a thing.

However, this unique thing can be approached from two different angles. One is from feeling, from open space, open welcoming. The other is from the I-thought, and this is closer to the mind, to the inner world. ...

As we take the I-thought, we take it with the intention of understanding, of experiencing the reality that it refers to. We take this I-thought and we allow it to guide us to the source, and then we abide in this source for a few moments. To begin with, the habit of agitation in the mind or in the body, will take us away. At that moment, we can again gently take this I-thought, always in a living way, with a desire to experience its referent, our presence. ...

Q: You mentioned earlier the tendency to get stuck in this process of returning to the source.

There are two principal ways of becoming stuck at an intermediary level: one is due to passivity, the other is due to activity. Passivity, laziness, or apathy takes place when we discover a thought or a feeling that we do not really want to see. In order to cover it up, we create some sort of daydream, some sort of mental activity. This takes us away from the problem, from the tension, from the contraction. It is a refusal, an escape.

Activity or agitation takes place at a later stage. This occurs when we want to eliminate the problem rather than escape it. The desire to eliminate the problem sticks us to it. Although it is a higher level than refusing to experience the thought or feeling fully, it is still a level of stickiness.

We can be stuck for years with one single problem, either in passivity or activity. It is important to see that clearly, so that we can implement this understanding in our meditation, so that we don't waste our time at those intermediary levels. [Francis Lucille *The Perfume of Silence*]

Rupert Spira emphasises that ‘the impulse to meditate should just be love and interest’. We should not practise meditation out of a sense of discipline – ‘I should do this because it would be good for me’. For most us, the first impulse we feel comes from interest – the desire to understand ourselves and the universe. After a while, love of ‘being what we are’ takes over and at this point we may find that a more emotional approach is needed. This is how Francis describes the attitude of openness and surrender that allows meditation to bring us simply and naturally to the peace and happiness that is our true nature:

Q: Many traditions refer to surrendering at the feet of the guru. If the real guru is this impersonal presence and not a physical person, what is really meant by “the feet of the guru”?

Meditation is the constant offering of our hopes, fears, beliefs, disbeliefs, doubts, thoughts, feelings, concerns, and world perceptions to the guru, to the conscious presence. It is a constant *prasad*, a constant giving and receiving. We place all our hopes and fears, our problems, joys, and sorrows at the feet of the guru. The “feet of the guru” is the threshold of consciousness, this

place in the mind that doesn't belong to the mind, this openness, this window through which consciousness sees the mind. It is this conscious presence in us.

This offering is not something that we do once and for all. It is a continuous offering to the threshold from moment to moment. It is from the same threshold to which we offer, that we receive. However, we cannot receive if our hands are full of objects. So we have to give, to offer, in order to be empty-handed, empty-minded. We have to be in not-knowing in order to receive the gift from the guru, the grace, the understanding, the presence, the life. As long as we hold onto the problem or try to solve the problem, there is no offering. There is no not-knowing.

Offer your thoughts especially. Let the universe take care of the problem. If your thoughts are running in circles, just offer them to the infinite. This will break the circle of your repetitive thoughts so that you can be graced with intuition and understanding.

Let the emptiness pervade your mind and your body. Offer body, mind and world to the presence constantly. As soon as you realize that you are stuck, gently liberate yourself from the stickiness. It is not an effort. In fact, it is the ending of an effort. Don't make an effort out of it. It is a relief to let go. If you make an effort you pile up an effort on top of a pre-existing effort. This is not what "letting go" means. Give it back to the infinite. Let the infinite take care of it. You don't have to carry the weight.

At a certain stage in meditation, it is mostly your body that appears, so your body naturally becomes the principal object of your contemplation. At this stage, the principal offering to consciousness is the body with all its feelings and sensations.

Be willing to completely lose control over the body, over the feelings. It is our will to make things happen, to play God, little god, that prevents them from happening, that gets in the way of the natural flow of things. Understand that you are not in control of anything, that there is no choice you make as an individual, no decision.

Let your experience of the body be whatever it wants to be, however it spontaneously evolves. Trust this unknowing. Do not be attached to any image of the body. Become aware of all of the tensions that have been superimposed onto our natural emptiness and which have thereby created a separate entity or the illusion of a separate entity. Do not try to eliminate these contractions but don't reject them either. Give them complete freedom to evolve in space and time.

There is no goal, nothing to achieve, no need for striving. Consciousness is already a fact. It is the most basic of all facts. It doesn't have to be brought in. It is already here and everything is in it. So why strive? And what is it that we are striving for? We can only strive for an object, something of no value.

Instead of striving, contemplate the striving. Welcome your striving. Let it tell its story. Simply love, simply welcome the striving. Welcome the striving mind and the striving body without striving for them to be different in any way from what they are.

[Francis Lucille *The Perfume of Silence*]

Contemplation

Meditation is neither an activity nor the cessation of an activity. It is to abide knowingly as the empty, open, allowing presence of Awareness, in which all experience appears, with which it is known and, ultimately, out of which it is made.

[Rupert Spira]