

## SUMMER PROGRAMME

### Intelligent Practice

Is practice or meditation necessary on the Direct Path? It depends what we mean by 'practice' and 'meditation'. If we mean the traditional concept of disciplined practice or a method of meditation which is designed to lead to purification of the body-mind and the eventual attainment of some higher level of being, then that is unnecessary on the Direct Path. We are already what we are seeking. There is nothing to be attained. As Rupert says 'there is no pathway from ourself to ourself, from awareness to awareness ... and therefore no room for a practice'.

But if we use the terms 'practice' and 'meditation' in a broader sense to include investigating the nature of ourself, or abiding as awareness, that is a different matter. This is what Rupert means by meditation, and the practice of meditation:

In this approach, meditation is not confined to half-hour or 45-minute periods, morning and evening. Meditation means to explore the nature of our experience. And in particular, to explore the nature of the one who experiences, or that which experiences. And that can be done sitting in a formal sense, morning or evening, before you go to work. But it can also be done sitting on a train or walking down the street or having a meal. So what's important is that it should come from our love and interest, not forced.

[Buckland Hall 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017 *The Realisation of Infinite Potential*]

Here is another perspective from Francis Lucille, given in answer to a long-term practitioner of mantra meditation who wanted to know if all forms of meditation practice should be avoided in the Direct Path:

I wouldn't recommend any form of blind practice – the kind of practice that appeals to some kind of magical power, or which seeks some magical effect. Intelligent practice is something else. In other words, whatever we call practice, whatever we do, we should be clear about two things: first, what is the goal; and second, *how* does this process take us closer to the goal? ... So here, the only practices we are interested in are the ones in which the goal is happiness and the practice is intelligent. Intelligent means not magical, out of understanding, out of clarity. A practice that comes out of clarity or intelligence – it means we understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.

A practice is always about changing patterns in the mind and in the body. So in order to change patterns in the mind and in the body, we have to know how to change patterns, which patterns to change and what kind of change we expect in these patterns. ...

The practice I recommend here is one that changes our patterns of perceptions and of thought. So practices are about mind transformation. We have to understand how the mind and the body work. The mind and the body can be programmed. They are not programmed in the way a computer gets programmed by just changing a line of code. The programming mode of the body-mind is through repetition. As we repeat a pattern, the pattern tends to become automatic. As we keep repeating a pattern, we reinforce it or simply we maintain it. A pattern which is not repeated over time gets forgotten. So when we want to change a pattern, we have to do two things: 1 – avoid repeating the old pattern; 2 – repeating the new pattern, the correct pattern.

So that's the 'how' of the intelligent practice. The intelligent practice or meditation is about patterns, about understanding how we change patterns – it is about the body and the mind, and it's about refraining from repeating the old patterns and trying, doing our best, to integrate or

repeat the new pattern. We know this – it's how we learn a language, how to play a musical instrument, how to play some technical sport.

So which patterns do we have to change, when here the goal is truth? We have to change the patterns that are not in line with our understanding. Where we believe ourselves to be separate individuals, separate consciousnesses, as a result we experience suffering. At some point we become aware that the ending of this suffering cannot be found in something, in a new event. Our psychological suffering is always related to our belief in being a separate entity. As a result, we question this belief, and as a result of this investigation or questioning, we are open to the possibility that after all, our true being or consciousness, is not limited or separate but rather, universal.

The goal then of the practice is to stop the old patterns – thinking as a separate individual, feeling as a separate individual, perceiving as a separate individual and acting as a separate individual. So the practice is two-fold: 1 – stopping the old patterns that I've just enumerated; 2 – and then replacing them with the new patterns – thinking as universal consciousness, feeling as universal consciousness, perceiving as universal consciousness, and acting as universal consciousness. It's an experiential path. Since we have no evidence that we are a separate consciousness, why not try this new approach as an experiment? Why not try to change the patterns in the meantime?

[\[Francis Lucille, 8/10/2017: Should Meditation Practice Be Avoided?\]](#)

Notice that in this approach, some investigation must come before practice, otherwise it would not be what Francis calls 'intelligent practice'. The initial investigation, the *neti-neti* process, ends with the recognition 'I am awareness'. Further investigation opens up the possibility that the awareness that I am is universal, I am not separate from anything or anyone else.

Here is some detailed guidance from Rupert on the practice of 'thinking as universal consciousness, feeling as universal consciousness, perceiving as universal consciousness, and acting as universal consciousness':

The *neti-neti* process *ends* with the recognition 'I am awareness'. We *start* with the recognition 'I am awareness'.

I know that you all understand 'I am awareness'. I want us all to *feel* 'I am awareness', and that everything I experience takes place upon me or within me. As a concession to the belief that the body is an object in space and the mind is an event in time, let us allow ourselves to consider awareness a kind of space, a knowing space. Normally time and physical space are considered to be the containers within which all objects and events take place. So here, we borrow from that conventional belief, the idea of a container, a space within which experience appears, and we give awareness a space-like quality. Awareness is not really a space – it has no dimensions – but as a concession, we allow ourselves to feel that awareness is a kind of space. Not a physical space, but a knowing space, an aware space within which all experience arises. We *start* as this space.

Don't try to find the space of awareness as an object of experience. Any object of experience would be something arising *within* this space. We cannot *find* this space or *know* this space as an object. We can only *be* it knowingly. In order to be knowingly this space, we first understand 'I am the space of awareness', but then it is necessary to *feel* 'I am the space of awareness'. It has to become as clear to us and as obvious to us, as the feeling 'I am the body' used to be. Don't just subscribe intellectually to the idea 'I am the space of awareness'. Don't just pay lip service to the idea – make it your lived and felt reality.

When a thought or a feeling arises, or when you have to make a decision in relation to an activity, or a relationship, pause, and ask yourself the question: 'On whose behalf does this thought, feeling or decision arise?' Does it arise on behalf of the feeling 'I am the body', 'I am the mind', or 'I am awareness'? Be very clear about who your thoughts and feelings, and subsequent activities and relationships represent. On whose behalf are they arising? I don't mean to imply that it is not legitimate to act on a thought that arises on behalf of the body. The thought 'I am hungry' or 'I am sick' should not be ignored. I'm just suggesting being very clear about who the thought and feeling represents. On whose behalf does the thought I am afraid, I am guilty, I am lonely, I am unlovable etc. arise? It doesn't arise on behalf of the body and it doesn't arise on behalf of awareness.

Once we know and feel 'I am the space of awareness', we can begin to explore that space. When I say we can begin to explore that space, what is it that would know or explore the space? Only awareness is aware. Only awareness knows anything about itself, or indeed anything else. So ask yourself the question, 'do I, awareness, find any limits in myself?' Everything I am aware of, has a limit. We are not exploring what we are aware of, we are exploring being aware, or awareness itself. Do I, awareness, ever encounter a limit within myself? In order to find a limit to myself, awareness, we would have to arrive at an edge to myself, or a border to myself. Do you, awareness, ever come to the end of yourself? See if you can find the end of yourself, the edge of yourself. This shouldn't involve any thinking whatsoever.

Imagine that the physical space in the universe was conscious or aware. So take physical space and add the quality of awareness to it. And now imagine asking this aware, physical space, 'do you ever find a limit to yourself? The space wouldn't start exploring the objects and the people that exist within it. It would start exploring itself. So it's the same here. Don't explore your thoughts, feelings, sensations or perceptions. These are the objects that appear within the space of awareness. You, awareness, are exploring yourself. Can you find the edge of yourself? You, awareness, pervade the experience of the body. But are you sure you are limited to the body? Although this question is formulated in intellectual terms, and may start, for some of us, as an intellectual investigation, take the investigation deeper into your experience. Intellectual conviction is not enough. It paves the way, but it is not enough. Experiential conviction is necessary. The reason why there is a discrepancy between our understanding and our experience and behaviour in life is because there is a gap between our understanding and our experience, between our intellectual subscription to these ideas and our actual living, felt experience.

Have I, awareness, ever experienced a beginning of myself? In other words, have I, awareness, ever had the experience of 'being born', of starting. Of course, thought that believes awareness to be located within and a by-product of the body, believes that awareness starts, or was born, and ends, or will die. But thought knows nothing of awareness, although it is made of it. What is awareness's knowledge of itself? Your knowledge of yourself? Do you, awareness, ever have the experience of starting or stopping? Beginning or ending? Have you ever had the experience of your own birth or death? Or, in your own experience of yourself, are you ever-present? Not everlasting in time but ever-present now, eternally present, now.

Ask yourself the question, 'am I, awareness, ever disturbed or agitated by anything that takes place within me?' Don't work this out intellectually. I know that you all know that the space of awareness cannot be disturbed. Do you *feel* it? That is, do you feel that *you* can never be disturbed by anything that takes place in experience? And if so, do you live the implications of

this feeling-understanding? Do you express it in your life? Do we demonstrate it in our relationships?

Ask yourself the question 'do I, awareness, need to acquire anything from experience in order to complete myself or fulfil myself? Again, I know that we all know the answer to that question is 'no'. We all understand that. Do we feel it? And do we live our lives in a way that is consistent with our feeling-understanding? Or is there a discrepancy between what we understand and how we act and relate in life? How we act and relate in life is the true measure of our understanding. What we say – words can lie. But the way we act and relate never lies.

Ask yourself the question 'do I, awareness, know anything of "time"?' Don't ask thought what it thinks. Another way of asking the same question would be 'do I, awareness, ever know anything other than "now"?' Do I know anything of a past or a future?

Do I, awareness, ever have a problem? If you feel you have a problem in your life, ask yourself the question: 'is this a problem for the body, for the mind, or for myself?' The body's problems should, of course, be attended to. Psychological problems are ultimately resolved by understanding and feeling who we truly are.

[Buckland Hall 27<sup>th</sup> May 2018: *True Understanding Is Felt Understanding*]

These are not questions to be asked once and then abandoned. Intelligent practice means returning to them again and again and again, whenever a mismatch arises between our understanding of our true nature and our thoughts, feelings, activities and relationships. In each case the question is formulated by the mind but not answered by the mind. Awareness is asking itself the question. So we take our stand as awareness and proceed from there.

At some point, we become so familiar with the nature of ourself, awareness, that whenever we find ourselves lost in experience, we simply respond to the pull from awareness and return to abiding as that. It happens in a flash, before we can even formulate the question. After a while this can no longer be called 'practice'. It becomes natural and automatic, our new way of life – the true meditation that never ends.

## Contemplation

*Happiness is the absence of resistance to what is. It is the highest spiritual practice. However, it is not a practice of the mind; it is the ever-present nature of Myself, Awareness.*

[Rupert Spira]