

What is Meditation?

Before coming to the Direct Path, most of us followed a progressive path which involved some form of meditation or mindfulness. Those forms of meditation generally involved directing attention towards an object – a mantra, a flame, an image of the guru, the breath, the pause between breaths etc. The aim of these methods was to take us away from thoughts and external sense perceptions to reach a state of inner silence and stillness. If we have come from an Indian tradition, we will probably have come across the story of the arrow maker whose attention on fashioning the tip of the arrow was so complete that he was unaware of any external sense perceptions.

On the Direct Path, meditation is entirely different from the traditional methods and from mindfulness. It is non-objective in that it doesn't involve focusing on an object, and is completely effortless. Here is an explanation from Francis:

When my mind becomes still during meditation, I am still aware of sense perceptions. How does this relate to the story about the arrow-maker whose attention was so perfect that he was not aware of the king's wedding procession passing by outside? Is my meditation incorrect?

There are two kinds of meditation: meditation with an object and non-objective (or non-dual) meditation.

The first kind of meditation requires focusing the attention onto a specific object, gross or subtle, such as a statue or a mental image of the divine, various bodily sensations, a series of sacred sounds, or a concept. In this process, an effort is necessary in order to remove one's attention from the usual objects of desire, which, if successful, gives the impression that the ego is weakened. The mind is focused on the object and one experiences a stillness, an absence of thoughts or emotions other than those referring to the object of meditation, even in the presence of the king going by in his wedding procession. However, the samadhi which is experienced is a mind-created state which has a beginning and an end. Sooner or later, the yogin must come out of samadhi. Unfortunately, the ego is still present, along with its cortege of fears, desires, and pains.

A special form of meditation with an object is one in which the object is a void or blank. In this process, one makes an effort to keep the mind free from thoughts or sensations. Sometimes a tool, such as the repetition of a sacred formula or some form of breath-control is used to achieve this end. As in any kind of meditation with an object, a temporary weakening of the ego ensues, and the mind may experience, for some time, a blank state, an absence of thoughts and sensations, or simply an absence of thoughts, depending on the depth and the nature of the experience. However, this is also a mind-created state which has a beginning and an end. This form of meditation is often mistakenly believed to be non-objective meditation. This is not the case because the absence of objects (sensations and thoughts) is still a very subtle projected object. Although this state may temporarily bring some satisfaction, and even unleash some mind powers, it turns out to be barren. The meditator remains within the prison of the mind, and the fullness of the heart remains unknown to him. This state is devoid of the absolute freedom, creative joyfulness, and wonderful immortality of the natural non-dual state.

In non-objective meditation, our attention is drawn toward the non-objective, the ultimate subject, consciousness. This occurs spontaneously as a result of understanding. At the first stage, the truth-seeker is asked to notice that the happiness for which he is really looking, the causeless bliss he experiences in the presence of his teacher, is non-objective, meaning "not contained in any object, gross or subtle." When this is understood, the mind, which can only

grasp mentations (thoughts and sense-perceptions), realizes that it can't have access to the non-objective realm; that any attempt to secure happiness through the mind is doomed to failure. As a result, the mind soon finds itself in a natural state of stillness. In this natural form of meditation, sensations or thoughts are neither sought nor avoided; they are simply welcomed and seen off. It could be described as a total openness, in which we are totally open to our sense perceptions, bodily sensations, emotions, feelings, and thoughts.

[Francis Lucille, *Eternity Now*, ch2]

When we first encounter them, expressions such as 'true meditation doesn't start and stop', 'meditation is what we are, not what do', 'meditation is a universal yes-saying to everything', can seem a little puzzling. Is there anything we need to do? Are we always 'in meditation'? Is sitting down to meditate a pointless activity? What is the purpose of guided meditations? Here are some answers from Francis:

Although in this perspective, meditation is understood as that which we are at all times, it is sometimes referred to, in a more relative sense, as a period of time during which we sit in silence and are present without intention to whatever appears in our awareness. However, it would be wrong to construe this as a practice, as an activity motivated towards a goal. On the contrary, it is the complete lack of any motivation in this experiment that enables us to become aware of the motivated activities of the body and mind, of which we are normally unaware.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*, ch 13]

There are several forms of meditation. One definition would be 'meditation is our true nature, what we are'. That would be a synonym of consciousness. And it would be legitimate to say in this case that all beings are always in meditation, whether they are aware of it or not. That's one definition.

The second definition of meditation is 'to be in meditation knowingly'. How does this 'knowingly' manifest experientially – knowing to be meditation, as we meditate? It manifests as peace and happiness. It manifests, it shines as the perfume of the background in the absence of ignorance, meaning in the absence of identification of the self with an impermanent object.

And finally, the third definition of meditation would be a somehow artificial process during which we try to temporarily suspend ignorance. And as ignorance gets temporarily suspended, the causeless joy or peace of the background can be experienced. Not in its full power, not in its full freedom, but still its causeless aspect gets revealed in this process.

[Francis Lucille, [Meditation 13 of 24 - Three Questions: What Is Truth, Inquiry, Meditation?](#)]

What they [*the guided meditations*] are is an experiment – they are a little bit artificial in that sense – which enables us to experience in a limited and artificial context, the state in which we take our stand as consciousness, instead of taking our stand as a separate individual. Of course the true meditation is whatever our condition is when we don't believe and when we don't feel to be a separate entity. That's a much better definition of meditation because it could be called the natural meditation versus the experimental meditation.

[Francis Lucille, 10/9/2021 Online retreat, week 1, day1]

Here is an example of part of a guided meditation in which Francis explains how this artificial experiment works:

Just sit comfortably. I suggest you keep your eyes closed, but it's not mandatory. Simply welcome the flow of all appearances – thoughts, images in the mind, bodily sensations, sounds.

For the duration of this experiment, we have the luxury of having nothing else to do. We don't have to move the body, do things with our hands or to do anything with our brain. So we can function at the minimum level of activity, which is somehow artificial, because in real life we need to be active, to do things, to think. But the beauty with this trick, this artificial experiment resides in the fact that ignorance, the belief to be a separate entity, requires the presence of thoughts or bodily sensations to maintain itself, to perpetuate itself.

These thoughts and bodily sensations are not functional, therefore as we conduct this experiment, when we establish our functioning at its minimum level, the activities that relate to ignorance, to the perpetuation of ignorance, will either cease, or they will become very obvious because they will appear as some form of resistance against conducting this experiment. If these ignorance-related activities simply cease, then we will enter the meditation – the form of meditation, at least – which is temporarily devoid of ignorance. And as a result, we can experience first-hand, our natural state.

In the second case, if we experience some form of resistance against performing this experiment, all we have to do is not to follow what these resistances would like us to do. But rather, allow for them to fully unfold in the field of our awareness, because they appear as bodily sensations and thoughts. The precondition for the dissolution of these residues of ignorance, both on the somatic level as bodily sensations and on the psychological level as beliefs, thoughts, is our fully becoming aware of them in the light of our awareness. We are not fuelling them any longer. It's only a question of time for these patterns to run out of fuel. That's it in a nutshell – the general idea of this experiment which we could call meditation, or guided meditation if you want to.

[Francis Lucille, 24/7/2021 Guided Meditation]

Meditation is essentially very simple. But it needs to arise naturally as a response to a loving invitation from the self. No goal, no agenda, no feeling 'I ought to meditate'. Francis describes two pre-requisites:

There are two prerequisites for meditation: one relates to the intention and the other relates to the attention.

Our intention has to be directed towards the impersonal, towards the divine. The intention to get rid of a problem, to solve a psychological issue, to acquire powers, or to become healthy, is not the kind required for meditation. Such an intention inhibits meditation. To check your motive, ask yourself, "What am I really looking for? What do I really want?" You will find the answer in the privacy of your own heart. If the intention is for anything less than the divine, for less than that which is beyond all limitations, there won't be meditation. However, if there is such an intention, meditation is already at hand. It is potentially there.

That is where the second prerequisite applies. For meditation to become actualized, our attention has to be free from any object. However, there is no possibility of liberating our attention from objects if the intention is not pure. If the intention is not pure there will always be a fixation onto something, a fear or a desire, a personal involvement. However, if the intention is pure, all that is required for the attention to liberate itself from objects is to simply notice its fixation on any object.

This fixation of the attention can take place within any one of the three realms of experience: the external world, the thoughts, and the bodily sensations or feelings. For instance, if you discover that a thought is running in circles, that would be a fixation in the mind. If you notice

that your attention is drawn outside towards sounds, that would be a fixation on an external object. These two kinds of fixations are usually easy to notice and after a while we no longer indulge them. However, the third kind, the fixation on a bodily sensation, is a habit that has stronger and deeper roots for most of us. It is harder to detect because it is sometimes mistaken for stillness or peace.

We often seem to reach a place of stillness in meditation. However, although it is a quiet place, it has no juice, no perfume. If we look closer we see that the mind is in fact resting on a bodily sensation, a localization in the body.

Don't let your mind rest upon any object. In this sense, meditation requires a kind of vigilance. The only place to rest is the Self.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*, ch 5]

In time, meditation becomes our default state. Life becomes a continuous meditation regardless of what is going on in mind, body or world. We may choose to set aside time to sit down quietly and meditate, or we may just carry on with our normal activities, knowingly standing as our true self. We see that it makes no difference.

Meditation should be part of daily life and daily life should be meditation. We can put time aside to meditate if we are invited, if it comes out of the desire to cooperate, if it comes from goodwill. However, don't separate it from daily life. Don't feel, "I have done my chores," and then disconnect. If we meditate in the morning and the evening, we will have spontaneous reminders during the day, although we may not recognize them. The moment in which a reminder comes to us is very creative. We just live with it, let it flow through us. Sometimes it is a thought, thinking about the truth. Sometimes it is more like a feeling, being invited by meditation.

If we make a special time for meditation, in order to go towards a goal, then there is some rigidity, some discipline. If we make time for it out of love, without a goal, without the notion that it will take us nearer the mark, that is fine.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*, ch 10]

Contemplation

Remember that meditation is not an activity. Meditation is about not knowing, not wanting, not holding on to anything. We are openhanded, open-minded, open-bodied, and open-hearted.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*, ch 14]