

An introduction to Meditation: Techniques and some Terms

House of Ikat, St Heliers Bay

Introduction

The objectives of the meditation instruction to be discussed are three-fold. By following this outline you will learn:

- 1) to still the mind in order to ensure “release of pressure” and to develop the ability to attain the **“tranquil state”** at will;
- 2) attainment of the **“root or base-state”** of personal consciousness (this is the consciousness you experience prior to birth or at least prior to any specific trauma involving birth or survival);
- 3) to **see and understand your true self.**

These goals are necessarily sequential because the third cannot be achieved before the second and achievement of the second depends on attaining the first goal. One might note that a “stilled mind” can be achieved through ways other than by deliberate intent and many of these are dependent in some way on “surprise” as when the mind is surprised into a blank state – clearly this is not a method to depend on directly although meditation on “disjunctive” ideas such as “form is emptiness – emptiness is form” can sometimes serve as an effective substitute. But still, even this is really a subject-matter of meditation as such since it involves “prior intent”.

Apparel: It is advisable to wear non-constricting clothing when meditating since this will minimise distraction. Consider also that bright colours may be initially distracting so that lighter colours may also be favoured. White, off-white, cream and so forth are ideal in that such colours set an initially calm tone.

Seating: It is of primary importance that you be comfortable. Perhaps you may wish to try to use some variant of the “Lotus Position” although this is not absolutely necessary. A good compromise is to use a cushion to sit on but for those unable to assume such a position a chair or a couch may also be used to promote relaxation.

Surroundings: Pleasantly furnished, burn a small flame to represent the “light of the spirit”, burn incense (if tolerable) to link meditation sessions one to another through the sense of smell.

Understand: that the personal self (also termed “ego-self”), which embraces most aspects of personality, can be likened to an eddy floating on the otherwise undifferentiated sea of consciousness. The ultimate aim of all meditation practices is to enable one to reach beyond this whirlpool of the personal self and to gain direct access to the base-state or root of consciousness as such. This eddy can also be equated with “the mind” wherein thoughts arise endlessly, circulate and then spin-off into the depths of consciousness. Concerning itself only with the character of the eddy, the mind’s actively disguises and even prevents the direct apprehension of the great pool of the (higher) self, by the individual.

Initial exercise:

Close your eyes then focus down onto the level of consciousness that is immediately aware of its part in reacting to stimulation received from the senses. Let the ideas associated with personal intent slip into the background – ignore any chatter arising from the mind, particularly that associated with the “I” thought: “How do I look?”, “what am I doing here?”, “I have other things to do!” and so forth. Become quiet and still; hear only the sounds of the creation as they impact on your consciousness. Focus on this momentarily and then slip into the deeper state represented by the answer to

the question “what is this aspect of self that recognizes an exterior?” Deepen that association through concentration and do so in such a manner that the sounds of the creation fade from attention. This is the **“base-state” of personal consciousness** – allow the sense of “I” to co-occur and involve this base-state of consciousness. This is **“base-state ‘I’** in repose – not directly associating with any externally sourced aspect of identity such as “I am a teacher”, “I am this” or “I am that” etc.continue to hold.....

Another way to do this is to focus on the sense of “I Am”. Start with the words and then concentrate on the feeling that these words address. While holding steadily to this feeling, your core (so to speak), slip past the words to the state of your being which is prior to any words. This is also the base-state of personal consciousness.

Release base state “I”, re-focus on the sounds of the creation and ask “who am I that thus observes this panorama - these effects and so forth?” Rejoin the base-state consciousness (as above) but swoop deeper totally abandoning the senses - feel the entity so encountered as a strong pillar of being, a force of identity without form – base-state I, without direct superficial ego-identity but the as yet undefined region of the strong enduring and endless self.

Re-surface, hear the sounds of the creation, open your eyes.

Second exercise:

Close your eyes (as before) but this time, quickly review the events of “yesterday” in succession. Subsequently, shift your focus and see yourself as you were on your last birthday, then skip back to an earlier event of the same nature – say 10 years prior. Take a little time to do this and step back year by year, counting as you go so that you make sure to be focused on the

correct time-frame. Now shift to your last day of high-school, recall your classmates of that time one by one. Move next to the first day of high school, then see yourself as you were in the sixth standard of primary school (Form II). Move now to the first day of primary school. Take some time here to recall yourself fully at this stage.

Now move back to the earliest possible distinct memory that you have of either your father or preferably that of your mother. Take a deep breath and try to recall the moment of your birth – particularly the sharp burning sensation that you experienced upon taking your first breath. This breath lands squarely on what might be called the base state of personal consciousness. This state can be intensified by going back further still to a point prior to birth. Generally this is a placid, comfortable, peaceful and stable consciousness. Pause here for a while – the color red along with black is likely a dominant theme. Now that you have reversed along the pathway that leads to where you are today it should be relatively easy to take a moment from time to time during a busy day in order to revisit this state and to use this peace to discharge some of the stress associated with daily pressures.

Third exercise:

For this exercise commence by first locating a specific object within the view-field in front of you. Gaze at it intently as though you were a scientist examining all the objective characteristics displayed by the item. This is objective or “outward-looking” consciousness. Now switch your attention to yourself as observer. Notice particularly your state of “being”, this is “subjective”, inward-looking or personal consciousness. Now change you focus yet again so as to encompass both the object you were studying previously as well the subjectivity indicated above. It is likely that you will at first only be able to maintain this stance for brief instances

but when you do you will see that it involves a state that is “more removed” than either of the previous foci. This is the state represented by the “observer” (also called, the watcher or again, the witness) and it involves a brief glimpse of the root consciousness. Once this state has been isolated from the general background activity of the mind, concentrate and identify with it to the extent that details fade or are dropped from the appearance of the outside world. At the same time, you may notice that the sense of your personal self also commences to dissolve.

Alternately, close your eyes and simply observe the succession of thoughts that flow through your mind. Make no attempt to follow or develop the individual thoughts and do not engage in tracing them back to a possible source-feeling. Simply observe the thoughts as they arise. At first it will appear that your thoughts move very rapidly through the mind in an unending and unbroken stream. Relax and just let the flow continue until you can pick up a thought here and then another one later. As you pay attention you will find that the stream slows perceptively so as soon as you apprehend a thought let it go immediately and pick up the next. Soon you may come to see that the thoughts are really discontinuous, one ends and another begins – almost immediately but not quite. Pay particular attention to the gaps, to the instances of “non-thought”. As soon as you are able, move your attention through one of the gaps and penetrate into the relative calm represented by the outer reaches of the observer.

When you are ready, surface by deliberately recalling the nature of the outside world.

Forth exercise:

The eyes are gently closed and a mental focus is then applied to an internal point between, and just above, the eyebrows. To

do this you may wish to actually turn your eyes toward that point and to then concentrate your internal gaze there. Upon first closing the eyes it will be noted that internal colours may tend to swim aimlessly in the “mind’s eye”. Ignore superficial thoughts and proceed by allowing relaxed concentration to be maintained until a coloured spot or bulls-eye can be evolved and stabilized. This may take up to half an hour or so to accomplish the first time as colours may “swim” until you learn to control them.

Once this stability is achieved, practice allowing the spot to expand, contract and change colour. As a gross generality you might initially see that the dominant central colour is red (representing the physical body). This may then shift to shades of yellow (the mental body, the home of the ego) and later, to blue (the subtle body beyond the ego). Dissolve the spot into waveforms, spirals or through successive ascending or descending planes. Search for “lights” (presences) or growth patterns involving coloured geometric forms. The latter often originate from other people engaging in the same type of meditation. A clear black endless zone may also appear. This is free from aspects of lower consciousness but not yet associated with the higher self and beyond. Typically one may briefly experience a white, blue-white or gold focus in association with the higher self but all sense of colour will vanish as this level is transcended to be replaced by a direct conscious association in which being will appear as a unity and bliss which can only be described as light but which is totally beyond light in any form. The above description is offered as a guide or a possible target but no element therein is a necessary state. Do not assume these are “stages”. The words advanced & retarded have no meaning in this work. In this sort of meditation one first of all concentrates on the colors - take time over this and get into stable blue and sink into yourself here.

The purpose of the exercise is to expand consciousness; in effect the procedure creates a state very similar to that developed through hypnotism. As one progresses deeper into the meditation it may be noted that the periodicity of repeating wave-forms becomes deeper and the frequency centres on something that resonates with the heart beat. At this point it will be possible to single-out feelings of unease and trace them back to their origin. Refocus by visualising a golden light and open your eyes when ready.

***Note:** the “spot” should not be confused with a physical “after-image”; it must be developed as an internal function of consciousness without a physical light.*

Fifth exercise:

Obtain the stable blue state and dwell there for some little time. When as far back as you can achieve gently shift your focus to the region of the heart. If you are deep enough you will find wrapped around the heart layers of pain - they will be as layers of an onion. Some will be very painful and buried deep whereas others will manifest merely as vague annoyances. Take the sorrow which is nearest to the surface and "stand prior" to it - by this I mean react as you would in the morning (say someone close to you having been injured or even died a day or so previously) --- first you awaken to a clear (if momentary) state of consciousness and this is then replaced by a nameless dread the cause of which is not immediately obvious. Now to identify the cause one stands "prior" to the dread i.e. one goes back to the feeling, the state of mind, of consciousness etc. just before the dread manifested (manifests) - then, immediately, by moving forward one understands the reason for the dread (so & so has been hurt severely or died or whatever). Now, in the same way, all negative emotional pains, regrets (the death of your father for instance) are wrapped around the heart chakra (chakra =

emotional knot, whirlpool) in some form (note that such pains are also stored in other parts of the body and in many other chakras as well). They feel like heavy stones, deep wells of pain, we all have them and that is why we project ourselves into this world - to try to rid ourselves of these influences, to do "better" etc. So, that being the case, if one successively uncovers and comes to terms with such "sorrows" one can eventually arrive at the uppermost layer of the self that has experienced the emotional wounds. Coming to terms with the pain simply means understanding your own part in the situation concerned, fully absorbing the surrounding circumstances and taking responsibility for the effect and then letting it go.

Left alone, such knots of emotional pain play themselves out in the field of the personal self as "innate tendencies" which collectively obscure the pure nature of the true self, the "higher self" so to speak. However, one can unwind these tendencies (vasanas they are called in Sanskrit) in a stepwise manner or, sometimes, after a bit of practice, shed a whole heard of them at once through execution of what is essentially the same technique. Getting rid of the whole load (or most of it) catapults one into the region of the self standing prior to the pain as a whole - essentially structure-less, except for a one-pointed "awareness" (which itself can even be dissolved) this is what the Buddha called Nirvana - without desires or perhaps "blown out" (as the flame of wants and desires is extinguished). Vedanta holds this to be equivalent to realisation of the "One Self Alone", that from which we all derive. Christianity calls this "God" and affirms it to be separate from man - as indeed it is but this is a core which differs from one person to another only in the extent and the identity of the overlay of "pain", experience etc. Strip off the pain and you are as you really are as indeed as are we all, ONE.

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