
LIVING MEDITATION

3. Consciousness and Thought

Life is the field where we learn how to keep thought out of action. The doing is a means to discover and transform being and reveal our true nature. This requires direct perception and direct action which is observing 'what actually is' and then doing what needs to be done without the interference of thought.

In our practice, we realize that we are distinct from thought without spatial separation from it. It is not like thought is over there some place and I am here but more like the ocean realizes that though waves rise and fall in it, it is not the wave. Let us pause and look into this word 'realize' before moving further. We use this word 'realize' very lightly and it has lost some of the 'real' that its meaning suggests. To realize is to make real and this can only happen by direct experience of something. There must be actual contact with the substance or truth of something to realize or know it and these two words are synonymous.

You cannot realize or know something by standing outside it like the academic or intellectual knowledge we are accustomed to. When you realize something or know something in its true sense, there is absolutely no doubt or ambiguity as there is direct contact with the substance of the thing. When I taste honey for example, I know it is sweet and there is absolutely no doubt in this as I have tasted it and this involved not only direct contact but assimilation. I can never forget that honey is sweet, not because I have an opinion or notion about it but because I have entered into the substance of honey and it has also entered into my being. Hearing all about the taste of honey from others will not help me really know what honey tastes like.

So, you can hear about these things like thought, its interference in life and that it is not only the substance of our problems but the problem itself and it would stay as hearsay—something we have heard and something we can talk about. You must realize or know this for yourself which is you must see the movement of thought and its interference to realize the danger of carelessness with it. It is not that I am trying to demonize thought as something inherently bad—not at all. I harp on this repeatedly because I would like to bring your attention to thought that has not corresponding reality and that we continually not only mistake for reality but use over reality—over what really is.

Every problem in our life is not only caused by these thoughts—it is these thoughts only. The content of worry, fear, anger and the like is thought and these are non-different from the thoughts that got them started. The worrier is non-different from worry. Just why should we create stress for ourselves and then experience it? It is like cooking up something very

distasteful each day and then relishing it while we complain about how bad the food tastes and how much we would like change—isn't it?

The mental images the mind records that are factual or correspond with reality are helpful in life. These are never the cause of our worries and concerns and the mind will record just these if we are careful which is if we rely on the inner intelligence each time to know and act. We have to rewire ourselves (by 'ourselves' here, I mean our very sense of being and not just the psyche) so to say to function in a different way if we want the brain to function differently. For this, we have to be completely on board or as we spoke about earlier, change will only be a struggle at best. This sense of being is non-different from consciousness and it has to be enthusiastic about abandoning its reliance on thought. When this sense of being or consciousness realizes that it can get on perfectly fine or better without thought—there is no struggle with abandoning thought at all. Once again, we see this word 'realize' which means this feeling has to be real to consciousness and not an idea to try out when it suits one.

We also use the word awareness a little loosely and narrowly as when we are aware of something or someone, we are also aware that we are aware. Not only do situations, people and things come into that background awareness but the 'I', personality or ego-self is also there. That background awareness is not different from consciousness as there is no feeling of subject beyond it and objects rise and fall within it without any spatial separation or feeling of distinction from it just like waves in the ocean.

If we are awake, attentive and aware in the real sense in life, each situation will strengthen the sense of being as distinct from thought. Thoughts will rise and fall, exhausting the residual energy that powers them as awareness or consciousness engages life from perception to action. When this becomes steady and natural, the mood to meditate rises in one quite naturally.

Separating thought from action weakens thought but going beyond thought happens in meditation. As we discussed earlier, you must have contact with something to know it or for it to be real to you. In meditation, awareness or consciousness seeks to know thought directly. The second of three videos on mediation take on this adventure of understanding thought by direct contact. We introduce the mantra and align it to our breathing and our attention is on repeating and listening to the mental sound of the mantra within us. Now, intellectually we know that the content of the mantra is thought but that has to be cast out just as a scientist seeking to discover something may know something theoretically but must know by his direct experiment and experience.

Sincerity is more concerned with being than doing. Who you are has to do what needs to be done. The ego cannot do yoga though it will try if it is not abandoned by vigilance and relying on awareness instead. Without sincerity, meditation will be some sort of psychological

experiment at best. If there is sincerity, there will be a natural discipline, not only to meditate but in regulating your life so all things support living and functioning in awareness and the periods for meditation. One clearly sees that leading an unregulated life is just like walking a ways to get water with a leaky bucket. All this is very important as it is one thing to separate thought from action which involves tangible elements of situation, people and things and instant feedback or reaction. But, in meditation, it all happens in the same inner space. If you've tried to meditate or do meditate, you know that 'being distracted' is a serious obstacle. We are so deeply identified with thought that when a thought rises, we feel we are thinking and start to think the thought. This is called being distracted or drifting.

We call other thoughts distraction but they are not distractions really, they are just other thoughts. Just as the lungs breathe, the mind breathes with thought. Breath does not distract you, why should the rise and fall of thoughts—especially if you really want to meditate which includes awareness of thought? Being distracted is very different from the rise and fall of thoughts in meditation. You are aware in meditation, a thought rises and we get mixed-up with and start thinking it—this is a problem. Getting mixed-up has everything do you with 'us' and not the thoughts that rise and fall.

This is why yoga is an all or nothing way. You have to live a life in awareness, not just practice awareness as an activity. If you are living a life in awareness, each moment you are getting better established in awareness and less mixed-up with thought. Meditation should not become a completely different world; it should be a deepening of how you live and who you are.

Meditation is like a wave trying to realize itself as ocean while in the ocean among other waves who it has known as fellow waves for a long time. The temptation to get mixed-up is high in those moments of trying unless trying is not just some activity for it. If the wave starts abiding in that wanting to know itself, sure, it may wobble and slip many times but each time will teach it something new, give it new insight and will strengthen its resolve to stay the course. It would be very slippery at best as it is all the same substance within and misidentification is easy. It is not very different in meditation, the core of the substance is the same and habits are strong. If we do not let go the feelings about those habits, we do not let go the habits and there is endless struggle in the effort. We may even come to believe that we are not cut out for mediation but, this is not true. Anyone can meditate if one understands that it is not an activity but the deepening the direct quest of self-realization which must span one's entire life.

If my fist is closed, I cannot hold something new. Similarly, if I hold on to finite thought patterns at their core, I cannot be aware and all efforts will be like trying to row a boat that is tied to the dock. Why should there be struggle in letting go thought, knowing that in empowering awareness or consciousness there is no loss? Examine it for yourself but without reasoning or

justifying—by looking within to know. Reasons, logic and justifications will rise and fall and when foolishness exhausts itself, you will know clearly.

Let us return to meditation. In the meditation, you are repeating the mantra and listening to the mantra within you. A feeling should arise just once to know, "What is this mantra, where is being heard, how come it feels it is something apart from me?" The inner intelligence at once begins to investigate the mantra being heard within. There is no analyzing, reasoning or applying theory—just a direct looking within without creating space between awareness and the mantra. It is not like I am here and the mantra is over there someplace and there is some gap in between. It is not so. Waves rise and fall in the ocean and the ocean must become very still but fully alert to know the wave from within and not from apart.

Awareness or consciousness must contact the mantra to understand it by direct experience. When the mantra is known, thought is known and when thought is known and thoroughly comprehended, there is mastery of mind as the content of all thought is same.

Meditation requires a different kind of mind, one that has been carefully cultivated through the day and life. This is why we have been talking so much about life and thought. The earlier limbs of yoga become very essential as universalizing one's existence is requisite for any universal experience in meditation. You cannot have a secular life and spiritual life where these two have different rules—all that is self-deception. The very sense of being must be thoroughly overhauled towards in life itself. The soil has to be tilled and be made fertile in life for a harvest in meditation.

All this requires a real wanting to know or to realize the truth that is far beyond any interest and is more like a hunger which we shall discuss separately later in the second segment.

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