
RESETTING THE MIND SERIES

3. Cultivating the Mind

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'Cultivating the Mind' is the third in the series: 'Resetting the Mind'.

Earlier, we have discussed:

- The flow of life
- What it enables
- What is needed

Today, let us together look into these:

- The dynamics of inner slipping
- What to let go
- Abandoning otherness
- Four good friends on the path

We started with looking at life and living, and saw that the problems are things that are caused outside, but by our reactions to them. Today, we must go deeper and see that they are not even caused by our reactions. They *are* our reactions caused by ignorance.

Let us look into this together from where we are right now.

I. From where we left off

We are aware of our problems - these reactions, but who or what is it that is aware?

Is that which is aware different from that which seems to be affected?

This cannot be as I am one.

Somehow, a split or division seems to come about, and a fragment of the same mind seems to start imagining *within itself* and then react to that which it imagines.

All the while this is happening, I can also be aware of this unless I get caught-up by identifying with the imaginer.

Our little experiment

Now, this may seem like philosophical theory, but it is what actually happens, my friends.

Why not close your eyes for a few minutes so we can focus on this inner drama and know for ourselves.

If you are able to sit upright, either on the floor or any seating, we can look within together. The sitting upright is because we are more alert, and this exercise requires a high level of alertness. If you are sitting on a chair, or any other form of seating, please do not cross your legs as you may have the tendency to uncross and switch, and every little thing can distract. So if you are on a chair, best to keep the feet flat on the floor.

Let us begin.

Please close your eyes and become aware of your breathing. Do not try to consciously alter your breathing; just become aware of the act of breathing. When you become aware of something, the inner intelligence gets roused into action, and starts to investigate or examine the act of breathing. It will soon follow the inhalation as far as it can go within, and then, follow the exhalation as far out as it can.

Soon, you will also be aware of other thoughts. Continue to be aware of your breathing. Awareness is wide enough to include all thoughts as long as you do not become involved with them or start thinking them. This is very slippery ground as you will soon discover. The moment you start thinking thought, awareness is *gone*, as you have identified with thought. Do not worry too much about this now; just continue being aware. If awareness is keen, you will notice these other thoughts rising and falling in awareness itself. Not only do these other thoughts rise and fall *in awareness*, but the one *thinking* them also rises and falls in the same awareness. The *thinker* and the *thought* both rise and fall in awareness - and all this happens without losing awareness. Let this be observed for a few more moments till you can actually see this drama going on.

pause

OK. Please open your eyes now and let's review a few points. This *direct* observation is very significant, as you must see that all thoughts - and the thinker - rise and fall in awareness *in you*. You are quite different from these thoughts, including the thinker, as you are aware of both.

Let's review

What we call our problems, worries and concerns are our complete identification with a fragment we call personality or ego, and the result of its facing all of what it wants to think about.

Now, all this is going on *in me*, but I am *one*! If instead of facing what the personality or ego wants to think about, if we include the thinker, the personality or ego into the field the observation, we will see the whole drama of a *fragment reacting to another fragment* and it will exhaust itself.

Let's not get too much into theory today. We will have time for that in a session on practice. Today, we must touch on these points personally to understand the cycle of how we get caught-up in turmoil and how we can best prevent it.

II. The dynamics of inner slipping

Why should there be inner reaction at all? Our experiment was just good enough - a little peek - to see that we are the only problem we have.

Now, this may sound extreme, but let's look into it. If there is a real problem, there is no *time* for worry or stress, as we are - at once - dealing with it.

Problems - not caused by situations

What we call our problems are not caused by situations. The worrying, fretting and fuming happens just a little later. Our dealing with situations is not the cause of our problems, but our reactions to situations - once the mind is able to react - can be. The mind is not able to react if there is a real problem, or should not be able to react, as *all of you* would be involved in a real response, devoid of thought's interference.

Friends, the inner slipping happens once the mind is freed up. But why should a free mind start worrying or reacting in *any* way? There was a situation - you've dealt with it. And now, the best you could have done has been done. What is the point in *any* reaction? - positive or negative? Once something has been dealt with, why should the mind react? Why will the mind *want* to react?

Prevention, not relief

In order to prevent the mind slipping, a part of the mind *itself* has to *be* of a different quality altogether. I have deliberately not used the word 'become', or 'take on', but have used the word 'be'. This is to drive home the point that what is needed is *not* action from the habitual mind that slips, but *cultivation* of a portion of the mind that is not prone or susceptible to slipping - and to abide in this *till the whole mind is healed*.

Now, friends, in mentioning a portion of the mind, I'm not saying that a small corner has to be of a different quality spatially - like, say, 10% and it has to restore the rest of the 90%. But you can look at it in any way you can to see what is being pointed to. Language is limited and finite. It struggles in expressing what is felt or known intuitively. But we have to work with language. So please, try to see what it is that's being pointed to *through* language and its limiting words. It takes some concentration - but, please, stay with it.

But why all this fuss?

Initially, reactions may occur by way of habit. But, if you are alert, you will not identify with them, and the circuit of reaction must gradually weaken by disuse.

Since we are aware of, or *can* be aware of, our reactions, it must be possible to abide in that awareness till we feel *distinct* from them - or distinct from habit. We get into slippery ground here as we are talking about portions and parts where divisions simply do not exist.

Example of the landlord

Let's get back to a portion of the mind, ... what is needed, ... and that mind has to be qualitatively different.

The old ways or habits may still reside in the mind, but something *new* has to take seed as well. Let me give you an example. A landlord has an apartment complex and it has gradually been on the decline because of the tenants who live there. To get 100% occupancy, he eased off on the tenant screening; and though it seemed a good idea at first, it *gradually* started becoming very expensive and he realized his mistake. Good and responsible new tenants did not want to move in because of the irresponsible and ill-mannered ones that resided there now. The place, too, was in poor shape and looked run down. All attempts at trying to make it better did not work, as the old tenants soon made things worse. He put up warnings and even sent letters, but it was all ignored, to say the least. What to do?

Well, he took charge and sent official notices: letting irresponsible tenants know their lease would not be extended or renewed, and the move out dates. All these old tenants were let go, and the old places were renewed from the ground up; and responsible tenants were screened to move in - even if it be at a slightly lower rent. Soon, the entire complex had good, responsible tenants and the place never looked better, as each was responsible and knew the landlord was *with* them in providing a better place to stay, at a break in rent. And so, they did their part in maintenance very nicely.

The point

Similarly, we have to have new responsible tenants in the mind and empower them to take over and keep things in order.

Let's start with not renewing the lease of some and instead, gaining the residence of better tenants in their place.

III. What to let go?

You will have to decide for yourself what must be let go. For this, you will have to become an impartial observer of your own thoughts, feelings and tendencies. *Everything* that goes on within - along with all that is happening outside. It's not that difficult if you want to bring about a change within. It's wiser to go to the very root and seek a cure or prevention rather than dawdle with some form of temporary relief.

First layer: everything outside

We are talking about *change*, so let's start where we normally look and call this the 'first layer' - everything *outside*. This is usually what many refer to in talking about change. "I have to change this" or "I have to change that." Something *outside* needs to be changed and it may involve people, things, or conditions. But these cosmetic rearrangements do not change the *dynamics* of things, and we must go deeper than the changes outside.

Second layer: habits or tendencies

One dictionary defines habits as 'a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that's hard to give up'. There are many ways to change our habits or tendencies, starting with new habits that are in-line with our aspiration so that the change we seek will work. But, we have to make sure that the old ways do not surface again in the same or different expression. So we have to get deeper than habits and tendencies, too.

Third layer: likes and dislikes

What causes one to have these habits or tendencies in the first place? We can clearly see that some habits we have today were not present at a given point in time. So, just *how* did these arise? - and *what* or *who* is responsible for them? We need to understand this is a very *fundamental* way, as habits result in habitual action or responses - and *this* is how we hurt and hurt others.

Suppressing habit may prevent an external spillover *for the time being*, but there will be internal implosion and the energy from suppression will create a volatile situation that *must* burst out sometime. Today, with the media presence real-time, we hear of the inner dam bursting more and more. Friends, suppression does not work and neither does changing the topic skillfully. There *must be* change within so these outbursts just do not happen.

OK. Let's get back to the point on *who* or *what* is responsible for these habits. Just *how* did they get there? Life is full of contact. We come in contact with people, things, and conditions as we go about our lives. Why is it not possible to make the most of each situation without registering: "I

like this!" or "I don't like this!"? What does like and dislike have to do with doing what needs to be done, or even enjoying things to the fullest as they occur.

Another example: when you give a baby, ... a little baby, ... a toy or something, their eyes light up! - and they start to investigate what this thing is. Is it edible? Does it make noise? Just what *is* this thing? Aside from investigating the thing, we have fun with it! If it is edible, the eating begins! And if it makes noise, the musical performance begins *immediately*! Can we not enjoy something fully without the "I like!" or "I don't like!" registering? Actually, you can only enjoy the moment if this 'like' or 'dislike' labeling is *absent*! - and then, the whole being can face *whatever* is on hand and make the *most* of things. Think back on the little child we just spoke about - investigating something and having fun! - *real fun*! Why? Because they are not burdened with memory - *yet*. And all of them face whatever or whoever is before them and they start checking things out while having loads of fun. If you happen to be the object of discovery, their little finger goes into the eye, nose, to find out just what you are! We never have fun, and are like poker-faced people who are whirring around with shrewd, calculating activity - all the while acting cool, calm and collected on the outside.

Fourth layer: ignorance

So, what needs to let go? The springs of reaction are in the labeling of 'this I like' and 'this I don't like', and this is at the root of habit, but it is not the seed. The seed called ignorance is a metaphysical error - an error in understanding at the very core of our being concerning the true nature of *being*, or who we are, and the world around us. Any corrections made at a shallower level may result in *some* level of control, but not the eradication of error - as ignorance will keep throwing up different reactions throughout the mechanism, which is the same.

What makes someone or something 'likeable' in the first place? Friends, please be *brutally honest* here, as we are looking into something of importance. "I like this person because ___"; "Somehow I feel happy around this person." And, by the same token, what makes something or someone 'dislikable'? "I do not feel happy around this person!". We have never stopped to ask just what does someone or something have to do with *my* happiness or unhappiness? Happiness arises in *me* - and this person, or that thing, is *there*. Just *what* do they have to do with my happiness? - or with happiness? If they had *anything* to do with happiness, *how* is it that even when things change, as they often do, we find one we thought likeable earlier not quite as likeable, or even almost disgusting, at some point later? If someone was likeable, just *how* do they become disgusting?

So, this thing called 'likeable', 'disgusting', must be *in us* and not in them. People, things, and conditions do not have 'likeable', 'so-so', or 'not likeable' *in* them. All things are just *as they are*. We think over them - and add the spice of 'like' and 'dislike' like salt and pepper, and then we

react to our own selves! - to our own seasoning! - never to people, things, or conditions. The idea that 'otherness' exists as the reality has to be examined and resolved.

Now, you may feel that this 'otherness' *certainly* does exist. You see me here, or you hear me here, and yourself there, ... someone else, someplace else, ... and that thing there, ... and wonder what I'm talking about in saying that otherness is an error - *the* error - where is this otherness? Is it *outside* or *inside*? If otherness outside is a *fact*, a reality, then it is the *end* of things, as consciousness will always react to something that it considers real. But if otherness is within, we must look into it, and get into it, as to *how* we can be free from all reactions? - as reactions *need* 'other' to react to. The great sage Yajnavalkya tells us, *dvitiam bhayam bhavati*—or, 'Where there is other, there is fear'. Otherness is inside. Friends, this otherness is inside us and not outside. Let us not concern ourselves with the external arrangement of things or appearances now. We can come to that later. *Here* is the problem that must be overcome: consciousness, or awareness, reacts to thought. Thought rises and falls in consciousness or we would *never* be able to be conscious of it. Remember our little experiment: in the *same* place we were aware of our breathing, we were also aware of the rise and fall of thought. Just like the waves rising and falling in the ocean cannot be *other* than the ocean - they are the ocean only - similarly, thought is a modified strand of consciousness *only*. Consciousness *itself* makes the error of seeing it as 'other' and reacts to it. If it did not make this error, it would not react to it and it would know that thought is *itself* only.

When we get angry

Let's take an example of getting angry. What happens when we get angry? When we get angry, for instance, consciousness is reacting to thought - not the person, thing or condition we believe is causing it. Hard to believe? Well, let's go with another practical example. Someone dings your very nice car out of what you would call sheer carelessness. Well, you may get angry or start thinking 'insurance'. *But*, if your dear little son or daughter were playing on their bicycle and happened to fall near the *same* car, and caused the *same* damage - "Are you all right? Did you get hurt? Please let me see! Show me!" You start thinking of medical care, if needed. We do not react to things outside, my friends, but to our own values, and our values are non-different from ourselves.

IV. Abandoning otherness

Now, let's get a little bit deeper on abandoning this otherness. So, just *how* do we let go of this otherness? It's going to take hard work for quite some time. There are no shortcuts, clichés to repeat, catchy slogans to adopt, or cliques to join. When you have examined what we call our 'problems', and track them down to the root of errors in understanding, real change has walked its first steps.

The need for vigilance

I think we can feel the need for vigilance - ongoing, unbroken vigilance. To be vigilant while going about our day-to-day duties does not happen with the flip of a switch. The spirit of vigilance has to be cultivated. In coming sessions, we will look into some simple practices for the spirit of vigilance, which is a condition where the mind is continually watched.

Today, let's look into different ways of doing things that removes some of the chaos involved with action so we can make vigilance a little easier.

Here are some practical ways to start the engine of vigilance, ... some practical ways to thin the mind and make vigilance easier.

1. Have a clear goal

The way beyond all sorrow and suffering comes with self-mastery or mastery of mind. This is also a prerequisite in the quest for self-knowledge. Self-mastery requires self-discipline which involves a way to do what is conducive to your aspiration and avoid the unconducive. You will not embrace self-discipline if you see it as something punitive. Who wants any form of punishment? *But*, if you see it as something very positive, you will be very quick to adopt it as the best friend and strongest ally that you can have. So, you must have a clear goal: self-mastery - or self-knowledge, which requires self-mastery first; and this goal, your goal, must be unwavering and firm. For this, you *must* see yourself at the root of all problems; and we have gone over this in some detail earlier.

2. Be organized

You have to be organized within and without. By organized, I'm not talking about being systematic, or following a 'system', but to be orderly, ... to have some order in ourselves or in our lives. 'System' leads to mechanicalness, and order allows full scrutiny of all activity or processes. You've already decided on a clear goal. Now, we must put ourselves and our lives in order so we are marching towards the goal that we ourselves have set. Put your plan on paper, like keeping a weekly diary of *all* that you must do and what must be avoided during that particular week or stage. Putting things on paper eliminates the need to remember them and reduces the activity of the mind. Watching the mind becomes easier when we thin the psychic activity level. So, keep a diary or a notebook and have a plan for the day.

Having made your plan, *work* your plan - not mechanically, but with full awareness and enthusiasm. If something comes up for action that is not in the plan, *scrutinize your motives*. Always examine your motives first. Too many adjustments to the plan for inclusion and deletion will not allow you to watch the mind. This is why you must give a little thought to your plan while

making it, as you are very objective at that time. When things pop up, we are not *so* objective and are easily swayed by emotions and feelings.

3. Time for introspection

Have time for introspection. Do not try to remember what can be put on paper, and this includes practical things, like needs for shopping, or what to have for lunch. For this, keep some time for introspection daily towards the end of your day - *but not* the last thing. The *last* thing must be meditation, and we will come to this later. Use your daily plan for introspection and note what you have accomplished and what was missed.

Friends, *be honest!* See the reasons for missing very clearly, and have some way of self-accountability. This may include skipping a meal and more time in japa and meditation, or some other constructive means that contributes to your aspiration. Review what you have to do the next day and first go over doing them *clearly*, so the mistakes of today do not repeat themselves tomorrow. It is important to break the cycle of mistakes, old habits and ways; and it cannot happen unless we take time to introspect. Each time you repeat the same old mistakes you weaken your will-power and resolve. Without these, change is not possible! - and we soon find ourselves in reaction mode. This is not a good state. You can overturn the force of habit by having a clear goal, a well laid-out plan for all the activities and practices, time for introspection and self-accountability.

Self-accountability is the other side of the coin of introspection. When you see you have slipped, there must be *meaningful* self-accountability or slipping will repeat and it will be easier to slip *again and again* and harder to avoid it.

4. Do one thing at one time and do it well

Perhaps the most important rule: Do one thing at one time and do it with all of your being; that is, your mind and feelings have to be with the body in whatever is being done. If you are eating, eat wholeheartedly without reading your mail, or anything else. You'll enjoy your meal better, too. This simple rule is key to gathering the rays of the mind, avoiding dissipation, and restoring harmony and order within. When you take a walk or jog, do just that! The mind must also be walking or jogging. One prominent ultra-marathoner - and these guys run a hundred miles as a run or a race - writes, "It is the *mind* that runs." Some people feel that they can live haphazardly and then run to a retreat center for some meditation to deep their lives and understanding. This does not work and it *will not* work. It will only increase the confusion, delusion, and desperation. The way you train is the way you react. *Every* athlete knows this! - and it must be the way you live. Meditation requires a concentrated mind or a mind that is together, not dissipated, scattered and imbalanced. And this mind is cultivated in our daily lives by living in a meditative way.

But, most important of all is to see the inner slipping which we have discussed earlier. We will need order in the mind, reduced mental activity, and this cannot happen if we ourselves are fragmented - one part doing something and another part doing something else.

Moving on

We have looked into some practical ways of gathering the rays of the mind, restoring some sort of order. Now, let's talk about making some new friends, *good* friends. So just like the landlord example, we can have new tenants that are responsible and trustworthy on the inner property. Some of what we will talk about has already been covered, so there will be some overlap and redundancy, but it will be a good roll-up of what we must make friends with - four friends: tranquility, the spirit of inquiry, contentment, and good company. We'll get into each one of these a little bit in detail coming up. If all four are not possible to make friends with, make friends with a couple; and even if this is not possible, *make real good friends* with at least one, and he will introduce you to all the others. The great sage Vasistha called these the four sentinels to liberation. We're going to get into these good friends that we need to make - four of them. But once again, friends, let me bring to mind - it's going to take hard work for quite some time, ... no shortcuts, ... clichés to repeat, ... catchy slogans to adopt, ... or cliques to join. We examined what we call our problems and tracked them down to the very root of understanding - and real change has walked its first steps.

V. Four good friends

Make good friends with these four - they will help you tremendously on the path. If you can't make friends with all four to start, make good friends with three or even two. If this too is not possible initially, keep very good friendship with any one and he will introduce you to the others.

1. Tranquility

Inner balance, or the avoidance of the pitfall of inner slipping, is tranquility. If one is full of desires and wishes, one cannot have tranquility. These wishes need not be for things of the world or nice-to-have things. They can also be for conditions. "I hope this happens!", or "I hope that does not happen!" We hope for things so that we may have peace and happiness without realizing that hoping is *itself* the loss of peace and happiness, and that will continue to burn like a log aflame once ignited, and give rise to more and more of the same hopes, desires, or different ones.

To pray to God, or do some ritual, *with this and that end* - personal end - can increase selfishness, as the end is self-centered or centered in the ego who wants. There is nothing wrong with prayer and ritual, my friends. It's a beautiful and necessary thing - excellent expressions of our love for God. When we introduce a *need*, love, however, is absent and its opposite is present, which is

selfishness. If we want peace and happiness, we have to avoid the outrush of consciousness towards all things - people included. This involves sense-control, mind-control, and ultimately, self-control. When we are tranquil, the mind rests in itself and does not run about here and there. Why can't the mind stay in itself while doing all that has to be done in life? Why can't I *do* what needs to be done with *all my being* and enthusiasm - but without doing it for this and that purpose? Why does something have to be the carrot or stick for action? Why can't *action* stand on its own merits? Simple. Do it because it needs to be done, and do it well. There may be movement *in* consciousness - but there should not be movement *of* consciousness. And this only happens when there is this otherness that we have talked about earlier. You can either see nothing is yours, ... or all things are yours, ... and avoid the outrush of consciousness which results in the loss of balance or tranquility.

2. The spirit of inquiry

The spirit of inquiry, or vigilance, happens when the mind is constantly observed.

The simple rules for healthy living that we have looked into - four of them, including doing one thing at one time - will make it easier to continually observe the mind. The prerequisite is to reduce mental or psychic activity for vigilance. Friends, you cannot see your own reflection or the reflection of things *outside* if the pond or lake is going to constantly have ripples on its surface. When the pond or lake is free of agitation, *reflection happens*. Japa and meditation are invaluable to cultivate vigilance, or the spirit of inquiry. And we will be looking into them in upcoming sessions.

When we practice, we are doing in a controlled area what can and must be transplanted in life. Life is an open field with all kinds of stimulus. Our practice helps us cultivate heart, mind, and body; and these enable us to live better. Living better, or healthier, results in improved overall wellness, including psychical wellness, and this helps us practice better. Practice and life feed on one another till any distinctions felt earlier are not felt. Practice *is* life and life is practice.

3. Contentment

Contentment is not just satisfaction with what we have, but the absence of craving and desires for what we do not have. It does not have anything to do with our effort. You should still do your very best! - in all that you do - but without: "I'm doing this *for* ___" or, "I hope this comes." And, these are not necessary for effort. You must see that the carrot and stick are not necessary or even conducive to effort. A situation is there - and it feels to do something. Do what has to be done with *all* of your being - all-being. What do expectations have to do with action? Actually, you can only do your best when you've completely removed expectations from action, as then the whole mind is free to give itself to the task on hand. When you look at the stick or carrot, you only do what *seems* to be profitable or supportive as you go along. This thinking will make you

change course several times, lose focus, will-power, perseverance, and do shabby work. Contentment is always with what comes, or what is naturally available.

Another practical example: when mangoes are in season, eat mangoes. They'll be fresh, easily available, and perhaps cheaper too. But if you have your mind set on mangoes that the store always carries, because nowadays, they fly things from all over - overnight or sooner - and it does not look good, because it's not in season. You may either be disappointed or continue searching. What is wrong with seeing what is locally available? You want to eat? Good. Let's eat what's fresh and available. You will always find something good.

Try this experiment: have a general idea of groceries you need, but look at what's fresh and available and pick those instead, when seen! You can apply this principle of making do, or doing with what's available, to all areas of your life - and remember, doing your best has nothing to do with contentment as long as you are not doing your best *because* of something. Do what needs to be done *because* it needs to be done, because the situation asks for a response and your whole being feels it needs to be done.

4. Good company

This is a very broad and inclusive term that is not limited to people, but to things outside *and* inside. You have made a resolve towards self-mastery or self-discovery. You *must* be able to move towards your resolve by the company of *all* that is good and conducive to your own aspiration. And this involves, or includes, people, things and conditions. Let's look at each one of these a little more in detail.

People

The first under good company is people. You are under no obligation to continue the friendship or relationship of those who choose ways that are not conducive to your aspiration. This said, two things must be clarified: first, we are not talking about being unfriendly, indifferent, or judgmental to anyone, as that is the seed of hatred. But you are not *responsible* to consciously associate with *anyone* who chooses to be, or live their life, in a way not conducive to your growth. Secondly, we are not talking about moral judgments on people. Instead, we are looking to see if associating with *this* person - whether related or not - supports my aspiration or not.

A young sapling has to be given some care from the elements in order for it to survive long enough to stand up to them. Here again, don't cross wires in thinking you are passing a moral judgment on those who *choose* to be and live differently. They are making their choices - consciously - of being and living a certain way. And you can make a conscious choice of being and living in a way that *you* feel best. And if the paths are different, let them be so. Nature weaves an intricate fabric and strands come together and go apart for her design. We try to make others

see our point of view or a better way, or feel under some obligation to walk with them even though we know our paths are different - and invite much suffering unnecessarily. Lots come together and go apart in the river, and this is the same with people, things, and conditions in life. Each is responsible for their own choices. You have taken the responsibility for your evolution. Now, support it. Let others walk their own path. Avoid judging them, but be bold enough to support your own! To thine own self be true.

Things

Under good company, ... now let's look at things. Here again, we must remember: from what is available, select what is best. There are always choices at *every* step. Choices may differ depending upon the conditions we find ourselves in, but there are choices nonetheless. A person may be able to select organic foods over regular foods; and another person may have to select the best fresh vegetables among what's available in regular foods, and affordable. Choose all that is good or that supports your aspiration amongst *all things*, too. In selecting, always ask yourself if you need it, or just want it. You can take care of your needs with what is easily available and affordable. But never satisfy your wants.

Conditions

Still under good company, let's now look at the last: conditions. Our present conditions are the reflex of our earlier thoughts and feelings, and the future conditions will be shaped by what we think and how we feel today. No one can take these two choices away from you: *what* you think and *how* you feel. These two are enough to bring about a total revolution within and renew yourself fundamentally. This said, you have a certain degree of choice among the conditions that *have* arrived. Say someone I was friendly with and had similar ideals and aspirations at one point - but they have changed. I have the choice of avoiding conditions together and choosing conditions that are more conducive. This is not selfishness at all. It is selfishness of the other person to want me to continually walk the path with them and douse my aspiration. It is wisdom to avoid downfall. The yoga sutra states: 'Pain and suffering that has not come can and should be avoided'. And in another verse, the sutra states: 'What cannot be solved, must be dissolved'. I am using friends, here, but it doesn't matter if they are relatives either.

Now, there are some conditions where there is no choice; and it is then that we remember: 'What cannot be cured, must be endured' - and do so without grief, or disdain, and that particular condition will strengthen endurance. And there are things in life that *must* be endured. Make the most of them, too, by gaining endurance.

Summary

We've covered a lot of ground today, and looked at quite a few issues today, starting with our problems and a simple exercise to directly see that awareness is distinct from thought - *all*

thought. We then saw that inner slipping results from our habitual reactions and bring and cause pain, and these can and should be avoided. We saw that looking into avoidance, from the view of relief, will do nothing. We *have* to look at cure or prevention. To prevent reactions, we must go deeper than the external conditions, internal habits, and even likes and dislikes which seem to trigger everything. We must go to the error of *outsideness*, as consciousness makes the error of seeing thought *outside* itself and reacts to it - one way or another, positively or negatively. Looking deeper, we saw that the mind - and all thought - *must* be brought into the field of observation. We will get into correcting the metaphysical error of outsideness in sessions to come when we talk about practice as meditation.

Next, we went over some practical ways that we can reduce mental clutter, or the activity of the mind and make it easier to observe and calm.

Lastly, we looked at some new friendships - good friends that must be made, ... friends that hold the keys to the door of liberation.

In the next session, we'll look into some small, simple spiritual practices which, along with living wisely, will reset the mind to its natural state.

Friends, thank you for joining me today in this long session. Look forward to your presence in the next session soon.



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