
MEDITATION 201 - MASTERY OF MIND

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(Video Transcript)

In the last presentation, we covered stabilization – the first step – where, by looking within, we realize our distinctness from thought, and can continue with practice and life without getting mixed up in rising and falling thoughts.

Today, we take up the second step in guided meditation, which is inquiry into the substance of the mantra, to directly understand its content. This results in mastery of mind.

This is the 2nd of three guided meditation sessions. In the first one, we didn't speak a whole lot – we tried to get into it. That is what meditation is all about. You learn meditating by meditating. You don't learn meditating by looking in books or reading of things of that kind. Those things can teach you a few things about how to look within, and they can give you a few pointers about what we call distractions or objects, obstacles, and further our understanding on it. But meditation is learned by meditating.

Let us recap a few points of what we covered last time and go on from there.

The first is awareness. Awareness is different from thinking. When you think of something, it is usually in exclusion to something else or other things. But awareness is not like that. For instance, if a bee happens to sit on my shoulder, I am instantly aware – at the very moment the bee sat – that it is now here, and it either has stung me or is about to sting me. So, time does not come into awareness. It is not – I think, and then a thought arises in my mind. As the bee sits on my shoulder, at that very instant I am aware of what has happened or what is about to happen, where. So location or space, and time, do not enter into awareness.

The second thing is that it is not in exclusion to something else. I could be talking to you and a bee could be on my shoulder. I am aware of both at the same time: that I am talking to you, ... and, of the bee at my shoulder without any separation of time.

So thinking is exclusive; and thinking also involves the time and space process. Awareness does not involve time and space and it is all-inclusive. *It is this awareness that meditates.*

So we give the awareness a little bit of direction only because we are not used to functioning with total awareness as yet. And we bring the awareness to the activity of meditation. We begin with that. Once we have seated ourselves and said a few prayers, we bring the awareness to that.

Then, next, we become aware of the room or general space in which we find our self.

Next, we tighten the awareness a little bit by bringing it to... ... 'tighten' is actually not a good word; we hone, ... we sharpen the awareness a little bit and realize that this awareness *can* do these things – and at the same time realize that it is not an exclusion to other things.

So we sharpen the awareness by bringing it to the footprint of our body – the footprint being that surface area with which our body has contact ... if you are seated on the floor, or the floor and chair. Then we inwardize this awareness and become aware of the act of breathing.

Now, something very important – unlike thinking, which is not curious at all because it is based on other notions, supported by the notions and it focuses on, mostly on concepts. This awareness is very curious. The minute you align into something it starts to investigate. The minute you bring it to the footprint of our body, it starts to move around and become aware of – 'This is it.' – not based on other notions or the past, or whatever, ... but based on right now, what actually is. This is it. And it presents you with that footprint – 'This is it.' As you inwardize this awareness and make it aware of the act of breathing or become aware of the act of breathing, it starts to investigate the breathing at once. It starts to follow the breathing in, and it starts to follow the breathing out. It is very curious because it is not based on any notions. It's based on direct, pure perception – which is to *know* something without the involvement of thought at all. And it starts to wonder how and why and in what way. This inhalation *itself* turns to exhalation. What is this, ... and where is it taking place? Then we introduce the mantra, and the inner intelligence starts to investigate the mantra.

Now we mentioned the last time about introducing an image to stabilize the visual awareness, and that's what it does. So we hold the image of either the ishta devata, your chosen deity, or any image that you have selected, in the center of your chest. While you hold that image in the center of your chest, you continue to repeat the mantra and listen to the mantra. That, my friends, has primary focus. And the inner intelligence starts to investigate the mantra.

Now, we help it along a little bit by giving it a little direction – again, not because it needs it, but this is how we sharpen this attention. We've never used this; we have relied on thought far too much and given thought far too much importance. So the reason for this direction is actually to sharpen the awareness, and to trust awareness.

Now we go one step further: we bring up this prompt, or this feeling, just one time to give this awareness some direction. What is this mantra? Where is it being heard? And, as you feel this, and as this thought rises just one time – and there are only a couple of times that thought is going to be introduced – as something to give direction to this attention. Otherwise, we'd be generally aware of everything that goes on, ... but we have to go into self-inquiry, and so, this sharpening of the awareness.

Now, you may know intellectually that the content of the mantra or the substance of the mantra is thought – but that has to be abandoned, because meditation is not possible if you start with thought. Thought is only introduced to give direction to the inquiry that’s about to begin. And why the mantra? The mantra, ... the content of the mantra, ... is thought; and consciousness must understand thought by direct perception, by direct contact --- in other words, the unlimited, or awareness, has to contact the limited to be able to go beyond it. In that there is freedom from all thought. The substance of worry, anxiety, stress – all of these things – is thought. In understanding thought, you go beyond all thought – and you are never bothered by thought again. This has to happen for self-inquiry to begin. If there has been no mastery of thought or mastery of mind – whichever, they are the same thing – self-inquiry, or turning awareness on itself, ... to know what it is, ... is not going to be possible. It is going to be continually interested in thought, distracted by thought, and mixed-up with thought. It has to be freed, ... consciousness, awareness, has to be freed from the grips of thought. For that, it must *totally and thoroughly* understand thought – not intellectually, because intellectual is thought again. It has to know it directly. This inner intelligence has to *apprehend it, touch it, feel it* and know – THIS IS IT! At that point you are free from thought completely.

So the second step may sound or may feel very familiar because we go through the same steps or processes till we come to the point where this question arises once again: “What is this mantra? What is this mantra made of?” and “Where is it being heard in me?”

Again, don’t create space. Because it is being heard in you, you are separate from that if it is being heard within you. So you have to feel this from within – the mantra itself. You have to understand the mantra from within – not from without – that this mantra or sound is over there and I am over here, because it is not so internally! It is all happening in the same mind-lake.

So as you steady yourself, the awareness is challenged to know *what* this is, and *where* this is. What is it made of? What is thought? It is here that a perfect understanding occurs where awareness understands thought *completely* and transcends thought. And that is why this is called ‘mastery of mind’.



Now let us meditate together for about 20 or 22 minutes and go through all the processes we did earlier, and then beyond into inquiry into the mantra.

Sit in any cross-legged posture. The use of a cushion will raise the buttocks and remove the strain from the knees and hips while bringing about flexibility gradually.

It is important to keep the back and neck straight and the head facing forward naturally without bending down.

If you cannot sit cross-legged on the floor, sit on a chair, but keep your legs uncrossed to preclude the urge to switch the legs over; and keep the feet flat on the floor with your back straight.

Light a candle and/or incense in your prayer area, and offer some prayers from the heart. Set the timer for 20-22 minutes and close your eyes while you recite the mantra 'Om' three times. You should not have any expectation from meditation itself while still meditating with all being.

Let us meditate . . .

Om... Om... Om...

Realize that you are seated here for meditation. As you do, your thoughts, feeling and attention should join the activity of meditation that you have embarked upon.

Become aware of the room or space in which you find yourself now. Awareness is instantaneous: it does not involve time, ... it does not involve thought. As you become aware, it instantly presents you: this is the room, this is the space.

Now become aware of the footprint of your body. The footprint of your body is that surface area with which your body has contact with the floor or the chair on the floor if you are seated on a chair. You should be able to feel this, ...visualize this, ... and know this at one stroke. Again, awareness does not involve thought. It is direct perception or apprehension of the actual substance of what you are aware of within you intuitively, ... directly.

Next, become aware of the act of breathing. As you do, this inner intelligence or attention will at once start to investigate this breathing to know what this is. If that does not happen, you're still thinking. Thought is based on other thought. Direct perception or the inner intelligence looks *at what actually is* and presents it without any time delay – this is it!

So this inner intelligence will start to investigate the breathing by following it as far in as it can go and as far out as it can go while inhaling and exhaling. If your attention is keen, you will also be aware of the warmth and humidity of your breathing.

Introduce the mantra, ... shorter mantras like 'Om Namah Sivaya' or 'Om Namo Narayana' – these are called ishta mantras, and you can select any one, but stay with it. Introduce the mantra to the rhythm of your breathing. So you are repeating the mantra one time while inhaling and one time while exhaling, ... mentally or within you. Do not alter the rhythm of your breathing. Simply stretch the mantra to cover, or fit, the natural rhythm of your breathing.

Introduce the image of your ishta devata or chosen deity or any other image that you have selected; but, again, just like the mantra, don't change it. Hold that image within you in the center of your chest. This will reduce visual distraction or oscillation. Your attention is still on the sound of the mantra being repeated within you. Let this thought or feeling arise in you just one time to give direction to this inner intelligence. What *is* this mantra? How come I hear it within me? Where is it being heard? – and, what is it made of? Don't keep asking these questions; just let this feeling come once, and the inner intelligence will start to investigate or inquire. It will become completely absorbed in the sound of the mantra and seek to know what it is – without thought.

Other thoughts may rise. Let them rise, and let them fall. If your attention is on the mantra, it will be aware of them, but it will not get mixed up or entangled with them. *The rise of other thoughts is not the problem – being distracted is.* And there is no force involved in meditation. You are simply interested in the mantra, and this interest is inquiring into it. Other thoughts will rise; try to be aware of the moment they have risen – and they will fall.

...meditation ends...

Om... Om... Om...

Some closing thoughts...

Meditation is a state of being. The keys to success in meditation – both on the cushion and in life – is sincerity and diligence.

Next, in Meditation 301, let us go through these steps – and further, to self-inquiry.

Remember, the mat or field of practice includes all life. Be diligent in your practice.

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