



*another
day
in paradise*

Meditation — The Art of Letting Go

“In order that the mind can see light instead of darkness (Peace of Mind), so the entire soul must be turned away from (The Voice of Darkness in our minds) changing world, until the mind can learn to contemplate reality and that supreme splendor which we have called the good. Hence there may well be an art whose aim would be to let go of darkness and walk in the light.”

—**Socrates**

A Still Mind

A common aim of many techniques of meditation is to bring mental activity to an end and so reach what Indian teachings describe as Samadhi—a state of “Still Mind.”

A still mind is free from fear, free from fantasies, free from ruminations over the past, free from concern about what may or may not be happening to it. It is a mind no longer disturbed by the many thoughts that come from believing that fulfillment lies in what we have or what we do. For once the ego-mind has fallen silent.

Consciousness itself remains; you are still awake, you are still aware. You, the experiencer, still exist. For a while you are free from your hopes and fears, your social status, judgments, your character and personality, and all those other things that gave you a sense of personal identity. You are free to know the underlying self unveiled—without a mask.

By stilling the mind you accept complete responsibility for your life—both consciously and unconsciously. This knowing comes from a direct acquaintance with the Self. I simply am. I am not anything.

It is this transcendence of the ego and remembering of one’s underlying nature that gives meditation its value. Here is the identity, peace and serenity that we have been searching for all along. Here is the fulfillment for which we have been yearning. Then, when we come out of meditation, we return to active life with a taste of this inner truth, and a little less attached to the things of the world.

No single moment of transcendence is likely to enlighten us forever. Our conditioning is so deep that it does not take long before we once again are caught up in our hopes, fears, worries and concerns, and once again start looking for external sources of fulfillment. But a little of the taste remains, and our attachment to the world may not be quite as strong as it was before. And perhaps after another taste, a little less strong still. This is why regular meditation practice is usually recommended—a daily remembering of ourselves in our unconditioned state.

Different not Difficult

Meditation is often thought of as an activity of the mind, some form of mental “doing.” However, a mental activity does not easily lead to a state of stillness; and meditative practices which take this approach tend to be very difficult. True meditation is not difficult so much as different—completely different from the mental processes we are accustomed to.

Transformations



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Most techniques aimed at stilling the mind are exercises in attention rather than exercises in thinking. One does not quiet the mind by changing what one thinks, but by changing the direction and quality of one's attention. In their own particular ways meditation techniques shift the attention away from the world of the senses—the world we once thought would bring us peace of mind—and turn the attention inwards towards our spiritual being, (eternal truths a state of knowing).

As the mind begins to settle down it discovers an inner calm and peace. The attention has found what it has been seeking along, and needs no coercion to continue in this direction. This is reflected in the art of letting go and just being.

To go to a field of greater happiness is the natural tendency of the mind. Because in the practice of meditation, the conscious mind is set on the way to experiencing bliss-consciousness, the mind finds the way increasingly attractive as it advances in the direction of peace, hope, and unconditional love for self and others. It finds increasing charm at every step of the journey—living in the moment. This practice is, therefore, not only simple but also automatic.

Practice

In this respect, the art of meditation can be the essence of easiness. It is just letting go—allowing the mind to return to its natural state of its own accord.

Any difficulty that may be experienced usually comes from the difficulty involved in unhooking the mind from its domesticated or conditioned thinking. So strong is our attachment to finding happiness through the world we experience—and this includes not just what we experience through our eyes, ears, and skin, but also the things we see, hear, and feel in our imagination—that the mind holds on hard to its cherished beliefs.

Even when we do let go and the mind begins to relax and settle down, it usually is not long before it is disturbed again as some unfulfilled desire starts once more to work out ways of finding future satisfaction. In this respect, stilling the mind requires daily practice.

This is why specific techniques of meditation are of value—not as things to do, but as aids to release the mind from its deeply ingrained patterns. They are skills we can learn to disengage our ego/pride mode of thinking.

Another important consequence of allowing the mind to sink into the silence of pure consciousness is that the qualities that usually distinguish one's self from one another are no longer there. All markers of individuality have gone. We become aware that we are the light of consciousness, and that this light is the same light that shines within all beings. We become one with all beings.

This is the divine union of which so many great saints and mystics have spoken. And, as they have repeatedly told us, it is only through a direct personal knowing of our deep inner unity with all beings that we will be saved.

This is our challenge. Can we wake up in time? Can we continue our evolutionary journey and grow from our current state of semi-wakefulness into the full realization of our true identity? This may sound a lofty goal, but it is, in fact, where each of our lives is taking us. It is just the state of full human maturity.

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