

MEDITATION IS WHAT WE ARE, NOT WHAT WE DO

I'd like to say something about meditation.

We normally consider ourselves to be a collection of thoughts, feelings and sensations: I, the separate self, living inside the body/mind, and made of the body/mind.

And meditation is normally considered to be an activity that I, this body/mind, undertakes in order to achieve some kind of goal, whatever that goal might be: enlightenment, stillness, peace, liberation.

In other words, from that point of view, the separate self is believed to be what we *are* and meditation is considered to be an activity that we *do*.

However, in this approach, meditation is understood differently. Here, meditation is understood to be what we essentially *are*, and the separate self is understood to be an activity that thought *does* from time to time.

I'm not suggesting that these conventional types of meditation don't have their uses; of course they do. But it is not what is understood here as meditation. Meditation, as it is understood in this approach, is not any kind of activity.

Meditation is what we *are*, not what we *do*.

In this approach, meditation has nothing to do with an activity or cessation of activity of the mind: focusing, watching, training or stilling it, or watching the breath. That is not what is understood here as meditation.

Meditation, in this approach, is simply to *be*, simply to *be* the presence of Awareness, simply to *be* that which is aware.

We are aware right now of our experience. We are aware of these words; we are aware of our thoughts and feelings, whatever they might be. We are aware of whatever sights or sounds are present in our room, the tingling sensations of the body. We are effortlessly aware of all this flow of experience. And we don't need to make the slightest effort to be that which *knows* or *is aware of* our experience.

Meditation is simply to be *knowingly* this one, the one that is aware of our experience.

This one is sometimes called 'Awareness'. The suffix '-ness' means 'the presence of' so the word 'Awareness' simply means 'the presence of that which is aware'.

So, be sure that when this word 'Awareness' is used, it doesn't refer to some extraordinary, abstract idea about something that we don't know or are not familiar with. It is simply referring to what we essentially, naturally *are*, to that which *knows* or *is aware of* our experience, to whatever it is that is knowing our thoughts, knowing these words, knowing whatever sounds or sights are present right now. Whatever it is that is known or experienced in any moment is known by 'you'. 'You' are that which is aware of your experience. That one is called 'I', 'Awareness', 'knowing Presence'.

Meditation is just to *be knowingly* that. All seven billion of us *are* that, but not all of us *realise* it. That is why we say it is to be *knowingly* that.

Most of us are *unknowingly* that; we don't realise that we essentially are the Awareness with which our experience is known.

We have overlooked this simple aware Presence that is our essential Self, and imagined ourselves instead to be a cluster of thoughts and feelings.

In this approach, we simply notice that we already and always are whatever it is that knows or is aware of our experience. It would be impossible to be anything other than that.

Just try to be something other than that which is aware of our experience. Try *not* to be that. It's impossible.

So meditation is the easiest thing in the world; it's even easier than breathing. Even breathing requires a very slight contraction of some muscles. To be, to know oneself as this aware Presence, is even easier than that.

Absolutely nothing is required of the mind to be knowingly this Presence. This doesn't mean that the mind should be rejected; it can be left exactly as it is.

Some minds may be relatively quiet, others may be commentating on what is being said here, or thinking about other matters. All kinds of thoughts may be going on. It doesn't matter whatever is going on in our mind. Give the mind total freedom to go wherever it wants, whenever it wants, and to think about whatever it wants.

Meditation has nothing to do with what is or what is not taking place in the mind. Give the mind total freedom to do whatever it has been conditioned to do. There is nobody personally responsible for the activity of the mind. In fact, the entire universe conspires to make every event take place. That is, every thought, every feeling, every action, every wind that flutters, every butterfly that moves, everything in the entire universe, is involved in the slightest thought or feeling. So the universe is responsible for our thoughts.

If we're going to take on our thoughts, we will have to take on the entire universe. Leave thoughts alone.

Be effortlessly and knowingly that which is aware of our thoughts. Notice that we *are* that, and simply *be* that knowingly. Know yourself as that.

And don't restrict Awareness to thoughts; include feelings. There may be no feelings present or there may be feelings of sadness, shame, guilt, fear, inadequacy, lack, etc. Let whatever feelings are present simply be as they are.

And likewise, be sure that bodily sensations are included. Let the tingling, amorphous cluster of sensations called 'the body' be exactly as it is. If the body is uncomfortable, allow it to move.

Meditation has nothing to do with sitting in a fixed posture without moving, bearing the pain in our knees or back, hoping that we're going to gain something by doing so. Be natural with the body: if it's uncomfortable, allow it to move.

And be sure that the world is included. And by the 'world', we mean sights, sounds, tastes, textures and smells. These are all we know of a world.

Let everything be included. We don't have to *try* to include everything – that would be an activity of the mind. Just see that 'I', Awareness, am

already wide-open in all directions to whatever is appearing. Just be knowingly this wide-open knowing or aware Presence.

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See that this Presence is not involved with any particular appearance. It just allows every appearance to be as it is, without getting involved in it, just as the screen allows every image in a movie to be as it is, without getting involved in it.

We don't have to make this happen; just notice that it is already the case. I, that which is aware of our experience, am intimately one with all experience and, at the same time, completely uninvolved with it.

We don't have to work for decades trying to become detached. I, this knowing or aware Presence, am already detached from all appearances and, at the same time, am intimately one with them, just as the screen is not attached to the image but, at the same time, is intimately one with it.

So this has nothing to do with standing in the background as an aloof witness, and holding the mind, body and world at a distance.

Whatever it is that is aware of our experience is intimately one with it – it pervades all experience and, at the same time, is free of it. The screen pervades the image, is one with the image, and yet, at the same time, is independent of it. It is not stained, harmed, hurt, altered, changed, moved or destroyed by the image.

Likewise, I, this empty, aware Presence, pervade all experience, but am never harmed by it, never stained by it, never hurt by it. We don't have to defend ourselves against any experience. We would only defend ourselves against a particular experience if we thought that it could harm us. I'm not referring to physical harm to the body; it's natural to look after the body. I am speaking of psychological suffering.

Don't follow me with your thoughts; follow me in your experience; check what is being said in your actual experience. See clearly that what we essentially are, that which is aware of our experience, is intimately one with it, and, at the same time, free of it.

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It is not possible to find this presence of Awareness or to know it as an object. To begin with, we may try to find or know it in the same way that we would find or know a thought, feeling, sensation or perception. But it cannot be found as any kind of object; the only way to know it is to be it.

Awareness knows itself simply by being itself.

That is why our Self, Awareness, is sometimes said to be ‘nothing’, not a thing, not an object, not a thought, feeling, sensation or perception. It is sometimes said to be empty, transparent or void. Such words are meant to evoke the experiential realisation that what we essentially are cannot be found, felt, known, seen or experienced as any kind of object, however subtle, not even the subtlest feeling of being.

At the same time, when experience appears – that is, when thinking, sensing or perceiving appear – it is utterly pervaded by the knowing of it.

All there is to a thought is the experience of thinking, and all there is to thinking is the knowing of it. That Knowing is this transparent, empty Awareness that is our Self, this no-thing.

This empty, aware ‘no-thing’ takes the shape of the experience of thinking, just like the empty screen takes the shape of the fullness of the image. The fullness of the image is made of the emptiness of the screen. The fullness of experience – thinking, sensing and perceiving – is made of the emptiness of pure Knowing, pure Awareness.

We are this empty, knowing Presence. All there is to a thought, sensation or perception is the knowing of it, the experiencing of it, and that is what we are.

So this empty ‘nothing’ turns out to be the fullness of everything. We are not simply an empty nothing, an empty ‘no-thing-ness’. We are that, but that is the substance, the reality, the stuff out of which all experience is made. As such, we are everything.

Wherever we look, we find only our Self. If we look around at the outside world, all we find is the experience of seeing, and the only substance present in the experience of seeing is the knowing of it. That pure Knowing *is* our Self.

It is only abstract thought that separates out a seer in ‘here’, the body, and the seen ‘out there’, in the so-called world. With that thought alone, the inside self and the outside world come into apparent existence.

But experience is not composed of these two essential ingredients, a subject, 'me', on the inside, and an object, called the 'world' or 'other', on the outside. These are just an abstraction that thought superimposes onto the reality and intimacy of all experience.

Experience itself is much more intimate than that. It is not composed of two parts – 'a-dvaita', not two.

Locate yourself nowhere; find yourself everywhere.

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The separate self – the imaginary separate self – is made of the thought that imagines that I, Awareness, the light of pure Knowing, am located in and limited to this little body/mind. With that belief alone, a separate self comes into apparent existence, and it is on behalf of this imaginary self that most of us lead our lives, thinking, feeling, acting and relating on behalf of a self that doesn't exist.

The experience of unhappiness is the signal that comes from the intelligence of the body/mind to indicate that we have made a mistake, that we have mistaken ourselves for a cluster of thoughts and feelings located in and as a body/mind.

Suffering is to the mind what pain is to the body, a signal that something needs attending to, a message that we have mistaken our Self for a cluster of thoughts and feelings. In other words, suffering is not here to thwart us; it is not a punishment. On the contrary, it is here to help us. It is a wake-up call.

To begin with, it is a gentle call, but in time it gets more and more severe. However, irrespective of its intensity, the wake-up call is always saying the same thing: we have mistaken ourself for a cluster of thoughts and feelings; we have overlooked or forgotten who we truly are.

The separate self is not what we *are*; it is an *activity* of thinking and feeling. Meditation is not what we *do*; it is what we *are*: simply to be knowingly this open, empty, aware Presence, and to find this Presence at the heart of all experience, intimately one with it and yet, at the same time, unharmable, indestructible, utterly free.

Thank you.