

Falling in Love with Meditation *Meditation and Contemplation Homework*

Week One: June 1-8, 2011

- 1) Set aside at least 20 minutes for meditation daily. You can meditate at any time, though the early morning hours and the hours of early evening are considered optimum.
- 2) As you sit for meditation, following the posture alignment instructions:

Posture Alignment

After seating yourself in a comfortable posture with your spine erect (if you're sitting on the floor, make sure that your knees are at least 2-3 inches higher than your hips):

Inhale, letting the hips and thighs and sitting bones become heavy and sink into the seat.

Exhale, allowing the inner body to lift, up through the crown. The lift is not done with your muscles, but with the power of the breath.

Inhale, letting the chest lift and open.

Exhale, allowing the shoulder blades to release down the back.

Inhaling, gently imagine that the sides of your ears move back, just enough so that your head and neck feel aligned with your shoulders. Your chin should tilt just slightly downward.

Invoking Meditation

- 1) Begin by making the prayer offering your meditation for the sake of all beings.
- 2) Chant, read, or say aloud or to yourself the Om Namah Shivaya Gurave mantras. (You'll be able to download the audio of Krishna Das chanting that we did in class for

singing along.)

3) With your attention on the breath, become aware of the presence around you of a benign, loving energy, the energy of grace and love. Have the feeling of welcoming the energy. Feel that you breathe in particles of this energy and breathe it through your body. ASK that the power and presence of grace, of Shakti, the power of meditation, help you open to the presence of your own being.

Basic Meditation Practice

- 1) To become present to the inner belly and the inner heart, you can place your right hand over your lower abdomen, with the thumb over the navel; your left palm over the center of the breastbone. The belly center and the heart center are inside the body, in the very center of the belly and the chest.
- 2) Allow the breath to flow naturally, with the sense that you are opening your body to the breath.
- 3) With the inhalation, your attention touches the inner belly, with the thought "I am"
- 4) With the exhalation, your attention comes into the center of the heart, with the thought "I am."
- 5) As thoughts arise, have the attitude of welcoming the thoughts, and let them flow out with the exhalation, but with no sense of trying to get rid of them.
- 6) Your attitude is of ALLOWING the breath to flow, with the thought "I am" and of letting your attention tune into the inner belly and the inner heart. In that way, the breath and your awareness naturally center and open the inner body.
- 7) Adjust the pace and rhythm of the breath and the mantra to what feels natural and comfortable.

Letting the Practice Go and Opening to Awareness

- 1) At a certain point, when you feel that you are settled in the inner body practice, drop it, and let yourself simply sit, allowing your awareness to open and be present to whatever arises. Have the sense that your awareness welcomes whatever is arising inside your experience. If thoughts start taking over, welcome them as well!

Notice the effect on you.

- 3) If you start to feel distracted, bring yourself back to the basic inner body breathing and "I am" practice. Notice the effect on you of flowing into open awareness, then back into a concentrative practice.

Journaling

Spend a few minutes at the end of meditation writing in your journal. Write whatever comes up, but do spend a minute or two recording what happened in your meditation.

In tuning into your practice, consider the questions:

What did I do in that meditation?

What did I experience?

What am I feeling now?

Walking-Around Practice

1) During the day, spend two 3-minute practice sessions tuning into our meditation on I am, the breath, and the inner body. You can practice it while walking, washing dishes, or as a break from work. Focus on the breath in the inner body and “I am” with your eyes either closed or open, as a way of returning yourself to center.

2) Finish by opening your awareness to take in whatever arises, having the sense that you welcome whatever is coming up in your experience.

4) At least twice during the week, take a walk with the intention to welcome whatever you see. Trees, people, buildings, earth-moving machines, jackhammers, stores, dogs – whatever. As you become aware of everything in your experience, including your own body sensations, welcome it. Note the effect on you.

Self-Inquiry on Meditation

1) Set aside half an hour when you can be alone.

- 2) With a notebook in front of you, ask yourself: What is my relationship with meditation? What do I like about it? What other feelings do I have?
- 3) Then ask, "What do I want from my meditation?"
- 4) Write down whatever arises, being completely open.
- 5) Then, close your eyes, and become conscious of the presence of benign, tender energy in the air around you.

Feel that you are in the presence of Presence itself, Shakti, the energy in the universe that wants to open you to your inner world.

With no expectation, be with the breath, breathing in this energy and presence. Then ask, "What do I need to know to deepen my interest in and love for meditation? What do I need to let go of? What do I need to do?"

As soon as you've asked the question, pick up your pen and write. Write without thinking, letting whatever flows out flow out. Read it over, and consider how you will put it into practice.