

## Loving Your Way to Awakening Meditation & Contemplation Homework Week 5

### **Are You Looking for Me? *by Kabir***

Are you looking for me?

I am in the next seat.

My shoulder is against yours.

You will not find me in stupas, not in a shrine room, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals,  
not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around your own neck, nor in eating  
nothing but vegetables.

When you really look for me, you will see me instantly—

You will find me in the tiniest house of time.

Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God?

He is the breath inside the breath.

—translated by Robert Bly

### **Meditation Practice**

**The meditation on connecting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Eye center with the Heart center that we did in class is available as a separate audio named *Ajna (Soft Palate) Meditation* on the Student Page under Teleclass 5. I recommend practicing it several times this week. The written instructions are at the end of the Meditation Practice section.**

Below is the protocol we've been working with for the last few weeks of the class.

Please begin with ten minutes of Hatha Yoga postures or light stretching to wake up your body. Then do 5 minutes of Nadi Shodhana breathing.

Offer your meditation, asking that it be of benefit to all beings or to a particular person (or animal or place).

Chant the opening mantras that we provided or the mantras of your choosing

### **Preparatory Grounding**

For a minute or two, *practice whole-body attention with the following four steps*. This will both ground you and expand your awareness of yourself as a unified physical entity.

1. Inhale and exhale, feeling the air flowing in and out of your nostrils.
2. Expand your awareness to include the movements that the chest and abdomen make when you breathe.
3. Allow yourself to be aware of your heartbeat or pulse in your body.
4. Include in your awareness the sense of your muscles holding your body in a balanced posture.

## Core Practice

Begin by asking, “Let me feel the presence of love, in whatever form she appears now.”

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 or allowing the energy to breathe you, even to hold you.

*Feel or sense* that your breath is arising and subsiding on its own, drawn by the power of love, which is breathing you.

Have the sense that your heart center opens like the shutter of a camera. Have the sense that love (tenderness, acceptance) is flowing in and out through the heart.

Now, add the mantra:

***Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare  
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.***

**Or you can use the thought “Trust,” as we were doing in class.**

Feel that the syllables are being dropped into the heart like flower petals or drops of water.

Feel that the Beloved is saying the mantra to you.

Imagine that the mantra surrounds you like a cloud, and that you are breathing it.

To understand the real power of *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* mantra (or any other deity mantra), try adopting this attitude: Feel that, as a poet saint sings, “When you say these words, you touch God with your tongue. When you think them, your mind and heart become filled with God.” Notice whether taking this attitude creates a more sacred feeling.

As thoughts arise, notice the thought with the feeling that the thought is actually made of particles of love. Love in the form of thought. And let it flow out with the breath.

At a certain point, as your meditation deepens, let go and simply rest inside.

## Inner Beloved Meditation

(An audio of this meditation is available on the Student Page, under Teleclass 4 section.)

The inner beloved is a unique and very personal presence for each of us. Some of us find the beloved to be a facet of our inner divine self, an aspect of our own inner being. For some of us, the beloved takes the form of a distinct other, even when he or she is being experienced inwardly. Even when we sense the beloved as an inner presence, he or she can appear as a teacher, or a lover, or a deity, someone we can dialogue with, feel guided by, or simply be present with as a guide into the deepening immersion into love.

Not everyone has a distinct sense of the presence of an inner beloved. For some of us, the beloved is always another person—someone you can physically touch or talk to. Or we may find that the idea of a beloved—a second person inner friend or lover or deity—feels dualistic, when our overall experience is of meditation as an immersion in unity. Yet,

whether we are aware of it or not, we all have within us a figure of the beloved other. The beloved is a facet of yourself, but she is also other. He is your true soulmate, the one who can never disappear.

In this meditation, allow yourself to be as open as possible to the presence of the Beloved. In whatever way the beloved reveals herself, or hints at his nature, be present with that.

**Instruction:**

Find your seat—sitting bones grounded, upper torso lifting, shoulders relaxed down the back. Be present with the flow of the breath in your nostrils, taking time to center your attention on the flow. Notice the other parts of your body that move with the breath.

Your eyes are closed. Your hands are palms down on your thighs, or lightly held, one palm resting in the other, on your lap. Your eyelids are soft. Your cheeks are soft.

Place one hand over the center of your chest, and begin to softly think to yourself, “Beloved.” Imagine that you are calling the beloved who is present in your heart. Even if you have never been aware of this presence, let yourself call the beloved. Notice the emotions that arise as you do this. Stay with the calling, letting the word beloved begin to arouse a sense of this inner presence. It might be very subtle. You might be aware of a feeling of warmth, or of mystery. You might not be sure you feel anything. Perhaps you might find yourself remembering someone who is beloved to you, or who has been beloved in the past. Someone who’s presence kindled love within you. Someone you have loved, or been drawn to, or even infatuated with. Recognize, if you can, that this person may have been a guide to your inner beloved.

Now, keeping your awareness in the heart, imagine yourself in a twilight grove. Feel that your eternal beloved, the one you have loved for lifetimes, is present with you. The beloved may have a visible form, or may simply be present as an energy, as a sense of pure presence. Whether the beloved appears to your inner eye, or is simply a felt presence, let yourself sense how personal this being is. How the beloved loves you, with all your personhood, all your quirks, all your insecurities.

Sitting in the presence of the beloved, let yourself Breathe with the beloved’s presence, letting his love, her love flow towards you and through you with the breath. Let your sense of the beloved’s presence become more and more real. Let yourself breathe out your love to the beloved.

Now, breathe the beloved into your heart. Breathe the beloved in through the center of your chest, and feel that as you do, your heart expands backwards forwards and on all sides. Let yourself feel that you receive the beloved back into your heart. And as you breathe in that very personal, very specific love, the love the beloved has for you, internalize it completely. Feel, “I am loved, and I am love.” Let yourself sense from within how the lover, the beloved, and love itself are one. Bringing the beloved into your heart, sense that you yourself are the beloved.

## Soft Palate/Heart Practice

- Find the soft palate's location by touching it for a moment with the tip of your tongue, then let the tongue relax on the floor of the mouth.
- Sense the breath flowing through the nostrils, through the nasal passages. Sense it flowing up the back of the throat towards the soft palate.
- Let your focus center on the sensual quality of the breath, how it touches and caresses the nasal passages. Have the feeling "I open to the breath" If you like, you can softly inhale and exhale with Ham and Sa.
- Mentally direct the inhalation to the soft palate, letting the inhalation touch the soft palate and then rise up through the center of the head to the area just inside the skull.
- Exhaling, let the focus flow through the center of the head, the *Ajna* Chakra. Feel the touch of the breath, touching and expanding the area in the center of the head.
- Using your inner senses, explore the sensations in this area. (This is *dharana*, where you use soft focus to deepen your connection to the object.)
- As thoughts arise, notice, and let them go.
- Gradually allow the exhalation to connect the area inside the head to the area of the heart center, behind the breastbone. The breathing now begins to become lighter and more refined. Little by little, begin to feel that the current of breath is moving inside the whole area. Gradually allow the breath to relax and become more and more refined until you experience it as an inner current of energy that now moves from the top of the *Ajna* (just under the skull) down to the top of the heart center. Let yourself settle into this feeling, allowing your attention to become more and more inward.
- You are now poised within the subtle 'body' of the upper chakras. There slowly ceases to be a distinction between *Ajna* and heart as you relax into this inner body. Feel as though your awareness is riding the gentle up and down flow of the breath currents. Now there is nothing to do but rest inside the inner body. So, rest within, letting the attention follow the breath flow, exploring the sensations in this region. You might also receive subtle 'signals' to allow that current to expand. Notice the inner sensations as they morph—this is one way to keep the mind focused in *dharana*.

Notice that at some point, you may become aware of a luminosity in the region of the *Ajna*. This is a sign that the area is opening, revealing that the real nature of this center is light. You may also become aware of a feeling of inner satisfaction, contentment, or peace. These are signs that you are flowing from *dharana* to *dhyana*.

## Contemplation and Writing Practice

These questions can be the basis of a partner discussion. If you are not working with a partner, do this as a journaling practice.

Set aside at least half-an-hour this week to sit with a notebook or journal and contemplate some of these questions, and/or discuss them with your partner:

### Contemplation on Harmful Company (duhsanga)

#### *Questions:*

- How would you define harmful company for yourself?
- Are there people in your life who cause you to forget your path, or who activate harmful or distracting emotions or tendencies? Which negative reactions do you find most common in their company? How do you handle them? Is this effective or are there other practices that might be more so?
- How about reading and viewing material, including press and social media? How do you discern what negatively impacts your inner state?
- What would you need to do to maintain a balanced inner state in regard to the company you keep?
- What does it mean to you to shun harmful company? Are there people in your life who impact your state negatively yet whom you can't put out of your life? How do you (can you) handle this creatively?

## Exercises

### **Cord Cutting with Another Person (to loosen co-dependent attachment)**

- 1) Imagine this person near you
- 2) Sense the energetic "cords" that connect you. These can be visualized or just sensed as energy.
- 3) Imagine yourself cutting the cords.
- 4) Alternatively, imagine yourself pulling out the cords from your own body, as if you were pulling off suction cups
- 5) Notice and journal about your feelings after doing this exercise.
- 6) Notice how it impacts your interactions with the other person.

### **Contemplation on Good Company (satsang)**

- Who in your life is good company for you as a practitioner and as a person on the path?
- Why are they good company? Notice the effect of being around them and journal about it.

## Contemplation on Virtues

### Ahimsa: (Unwillingness to do harm)

**Question:** See if there are ways you unconsciously do harm to yourself or others. What are they? Can you create more awareness of how this happens?

**Question:** Spend a day imagining yourself as the epitome of harmlessness. How do you walk? Eat? Talk to people? Move around your house? Talk to yourself?

### Truthfulness (Satya)

**Question:** Under what circumstances do you lie, dissimulate, speculate, talk knowledgably about things you don't fully understand or have information on?

**Question:** What, at this point in your life, does it mean to you to be loyal to the highest truth? To your authentic Self? Have you seen progress in your life in this regard? What is the relationship between being 'real' about who you are as a human being, and being true to the Atman? (This is an important question, I've discovered, because there really is a deep relationship between personal authenticity and loyalty to the highest Truth. But that relationship is quite personal)

**Exercise:** Approaching a situation that creates challenge for you, or simply looking at your life right now, ask, "How would I function in this situation if I were truly in touch with my true Self?" or "From the point of view of Love, how should I look at this situation?"

**Self-Inquiry:** Resolving pain, discomfort or confusion demands that we begin by looking at it truthfully and authentically.

So, when you feel uneasy or out of sorts, do some inquiry and notice what seems to be the cause. Sometimes it's a physical situation, but often it's an attitude that you have been unconsciously carrying, or an unresolved situation that you haven't fully processed. Get in the habit of doing this kind of inquiry, and then, if possible, looking for a way to work with your discomfort or unease.

### Generous Compassion (Daya)

**Question:** Is there a situation in which you could exercise more compassion, more generosity, either by giving time or material things to someone, or holding compassionate love towards them?

**Question:** Consider a situation or a person who needs compassion. Including yourself!) What are some active ways you can offer compassion to them right now?

## Exercises:

### Practice Loving Kindness with yourself and others:

Inhaling: May I be happy

Exhaling: May I be free of suffering

Inhaling: May I be loved

Exhaling: May I be safe

Then extend this wish to someone you love, someone who needs compassion, someone you don't like. Use your own words as appropriate.

### **Incarnation of Compassion**

Spend an hour this week imagining that you are the incarnation of compassion. How does compassion walk, sit, talk to people, eat, cook, view your own life?



## Sutras

Below, find Sanskrit transliteration and English translation for Sutras 43, 44, 45, and 78.

Spend a few minutes reading them, and if you are working with one of the commentaries, such as *Narada's Way of Divine Love* by Swami Prabhavananda, or *The Yoga of Spiritual Devotion* by Prem Prakash read through the commentary on each sutra from that book and include its insights in your contemplation.

As you read through these, repeat the Sanskrit three times out loud. (This helps you feel the energy in the sutras, which is considerable.) You can also sing it, draw it, or take it into a Hatha Yoga asana.

Here is a contemplation process to use:

- Say the English to yourself (or sing it!)
- Close your eyes, breathe into the heart, and hold the sutra in awareness for a minute or two.
- Open your eyes and write down any insights, experiences, questions, or conclusions about the meaning of the sutra and your relationship to it.

You can also do this process a partner discussion.

### Sutra 43

दुःसङ्गः सर्वथैव त्याज्यः ॥

duḥsaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ

**Harmful association in every respect is to be given up.**

**Commentary:** What we associate ourselves with affects our inner state. Monitoring the effects of different types of inner and outer company is crucial, since we want to cultivate states of inner devotion as much as possible. The words “in every respect” indicate that Narada doesn't just mean other people. He is also referring to mental and emotional associations—identifying with your own negativities etc. And this applies to reading and watching negative or distracting material, wherever possible.

### Sutra 44

कामक्रोधमोहस्मृतिभ्रंशबुद्धिनाशसर्वनाशकारणत्वात् ॥

kāma-krodha-moha-smṛtibhraṁśa-buddhināśa-sarvanāśa-kāraṇatvāt

**Harmful association is the cause of selfish desire, anger, delusion, lapse in remembrance, loss of clear wisdom and the ruin of all.**

**Commentary:** Harmful association is the cause of selfish desire, anger, delusion, lapse in remembrance, loss of clear wisdom and the ruin of all.



Harmful association is more than spending time in the company of people who bring out these qualities. It also applies to identifying with egotistical constructs within ourselves, and to believing the ‘stories’ that we tell ourselves about what we want and need. Given that our culture is all about desire, anger, delusion, etc, it takes a lot of self-awareness to avoid this.

**Question:** Spend some time contemplating this point, and how it is true for you—both in the past and in the present. What are, in Narada’s sense, the most harmful associations in your life? Can you let them go? Can you stop identifying so tightly with mental and emotional aspects of yourself that cause you to forget the truth?

### Sutra 45

तरङ्गायिता अपीमे सङ्गात् समुद्रायन्ति ॥

**taraṅgāyitā apīme saṅgāt samudrāyanti**

**From small ripples of attachment swell [waves on a wild] sea.**

**Commentary:** You know how this is from dieting. If you really want to give up sugar, you have to remove it from your life, at least for a while. This is true with all physical addictions, and just as true with our deeper addictions. In my experience, attachments can be managed with vigilance, by monitoring your inner feelings and your inner dialogue, so that you can go on with them without great harm. But if you get into a situation where everyone around you is indulging themselves and believes that the pleasures of attachment are the source of true satisfaction, it’s very hard to keep them in check.

### Sutra 78

अहिंसासत्यशौचदयास्तिक्यादिचारित्र्याणि परिपालनीयानि ॥

**ahimsā-satya-śauca-dayāstikyādi-cāritryāṇi paripālaniyāni**

**Unwillingness to do harm, truthfulness, purity, generous compassion, the affirmation of Divinity and other such beneficial modes of conduct are to be fully protected.**

My suggestion for working with these qualities is that you choose one that you are particularly drawn to practice it consciously every day for a week, then move on. There is a lot of yogic literature about these qualities, not to mention literature in western traditions, and you might want to read about them in the *Bhagavad Gita* and other works which discuss them as part of your cultivation. Chapter 12 and 16 are especially helpful here, along with commentaries by such beings as Yogananda, Aurobindo, Eknath Easwaram, and others.