

## Your Mind is Your World: Meditating with the Yoga Vasistha

### Week 3: Meditation & Contemplations Homework

(including Journaling/Partner Questions for Discussion)

#### Daily Meditation

Meditate for at least 20 minutes a day, using one of the practices from the last few weeks, including a version of Awareness of Awareness at the beginning or end of the practice.

If you find it more natural to do the Awareness of Awareness practice from the heart center, using the area in the back of the heart center (and behind the body, for many of you), that's fine. You might find that in meditation, your center of focus naturally shifts.

#### Walking-Around Practice

Have the awareness “God (Consciousness) is that reality that exists between you and me.”

When you're with another person, walking in town or the city, or looking at a tree, have this thought. Remember the analogy of the paper and its corners—the paper is the basis of the corners. Or the analogy of the bracelet and ring made of gold.

Also, please work with some of the other *bhavanas* (enlightened thoughts) that we've held in the class:

“Who or what am I?”

“Remembering I AM and focusing on the space it leaves in the mind.”

“Without thoughts, ideas, memories, emotions, intentions, what am I?”

“All this is a dream....”

“All this is Consciousness in a form.”

Each of these *bhavanas* has a slightly different emotional effect. Use them as medicine for the different layers of delusion—when you're feeling confused or over-identified with a state, practice “Who am I really?” in one of its forms. Notice how each of these enlightened thoughts affects you. Change the wording slightly if it gets stale or move on to a different one.

Notice the tendency to think, “I already know this!” Instead, sink into the experience that arises when you hold one of these divine thoughts. At any moment, it can spark a revelation. But last night's revelation is a memory. It's not a bad idea to recall a moment when the experience was real for you, and often the memory will trigger your higher mind and bring it online. But the actual realization must be fresh in this moment!

## Contemplations

I suggest that you continue with the practices of *Santosha*, *Vichara*, *Sama*, and *Satsanga* whenever you can this week.

## Self-Inquiry Questions on Vasana

### What is Vasana?

*Vasana*-s are the subtle tendencies that determine your state of mind and life. Your *vasana* determines the quality of your individual self. One meaning of *vasana* is “fragrance.” This conveys the subtle quality of *vasana*, which is expressed through the body, as your energy, and of course, in your thoughts, speech, and the way you act.

“I am a human being” is the most basic *vasana* for humans. The feeling of gender is another basic one—even when your inner sense of gender is different than the body you were born into. The *vasanas* of “I need this to be happy,” “I have to be perfect,” “I want,” “I don’t want,” as well as the emotion-driven moods like fearfulness, sadness, irritability, and despair, all influence everything about your life. They also subtly influence your environment and the way others react to you.

There are two kinds of *vasanas*: the Sterile *Vasanas*, which determine the lives of those who are not awakened, and the Adorable *Vasanas*, through which enlightened beings and deities live for the sake of helping others and performing cosmic functions.

*Vasanas* can be changed. Mantra, holding high thoughts, practicing kindness, and tuning into positive mind states all help. However, the very deep ones require deep immersion in pure Awareness to shift.

### Exercise

- 1) Sit for a few minutes with the questions:
  - a. Which *vasanas* or tendencies most defined me when I was growing up? In my teen years? As a young adult?
  - b. Which *vasanas* are most influential in your life now?

Consider the positive ones as well as the binding ones. Then, list them on a piece of paper.

- 2) Which childhood *vasanas* might have a hidden influence on you now? Give yourself a few minutes to feel into this and see what comes up.
- 3) Choose one of these *vasanas*, which you probably experience as a gestalt or “complex” of beliefs/concepts/feelings/tendencies. Feel into the complex of thought/feeling/energy. How does it affect you? See if you can find the inner state

that each one conjures up in you. Feel into it. Where do you feel it in your body? What thoughts do you notice?

- 4) Then practice Awareness of Awareness, or simply have the feeling of being surrounded by space. Hold your *vasana*-induced state in the space or in Awareness. Let its edges dissolve into Awareness.

What do you feel?

You can practice this with your partner, your journal, or both!

## Reading Practice

*p. 234, Concise Yoga Vasishtha, On Dissolution*

Please read this and contemplate it. It's great to read it before meditation after you've seated yourself in the posture. But it's also very transformative to play with these ideas during your waking life!

Think of these words as the instructions of the guru, filled with the transmission of his enlightened consciousness!

“The Self, on account of its ignorant self-limitation as the mind, becomes as if tainted by the objects of the world. But the same self, when it is awakened to its true nature, abandons its ignorant delusion and regains its self-knowledge. Then the mind, recognizing the body as an aggregation of the elements, transcends body-consciousness and becomes enlightened...

{That person realizes that...}

All that is, is but the expansion of the relationship between pure experiencing (awarding) and its experience. That experience is truly the delight of self-bliss. It is pure experiencing itself. Hence it is known as Brahman, the Absolute. That delight which arises in the contact of this pure experiencing with experience is the highest: to the ignorant it is worldliness, and to the wise it is liberation. This pure experiencing is itself the infinite self: when it is bent towards objects it is bondage but when it is free it is liberation. When such experiencing is free from decay or curiosity, it is liberation. When such experiencing is freed from even this contact (the subject-object relationship) then the world-appearance ceases entirely...”

**Question:** What do you think he means by “pure experiencing itself?” Have you had that experience? How is it comparable to the meditations we have done in class?

Discuss this with your partner or journal about it.

“O Rama, by the following attitude, you will also gain divine insight and remain firmly established in self-knowledge:

I am space. I am the sun. I am the directions, above and below. I am the gods. I am the demons. I am all beings. I am darkness. I am the earth, the oceans, dust, wind, fire and all this world. I am omnipresent. How can there be anything other than me? By adopting this attitude, you will rise beyond joy or sorrow.

Both the following attitudes are conducive to liberation: one is “I am the extremely subtle and transcendent self” and the other is “I am all and everything.” There is another attitude with regard to the “I” and that is ‘I am this body’: this attitude is the source of sorrow.

{If you} abandon all these three attitudes, O Rama, {you} remain as pure consciousness.”

**Exercise:** Experiment with holding these attitudes. Notice the effect on your mind and body. Notice the feelings that come along with each and how they tend us towards liberation or the bondage experience.

### Partner Discussions:

- 1) Choose one of the exercises or inquiries above and do it together, then discuss it.
- 2) Discuss your overall experience during the class.
- 3) Discuss the story of Chudala and Shikidwaja. What do you identify with in Shikidwaja’s story? Discuss the notion that spiritual life has to be a struggle and how it affects us. Why might the struggle help prepare us for revelation? How might the struggle make it harder to experience Truth?

### Journaling

Please record your experience of each of these meditations in your journal. Questions to answer in journaling:

- What did you practice?
- What did you experience?
- What insights or questions arose?
- How do you feel now?