

Please continue with the Soft Palate-Ajna-Heart meditation protocol that is our chief meditation practice for this course.

Please spend a couple of sessions doing the Inquiry Practice below, which we did on Wednesday, February 3rd.

Self-Inquiry: Where is the Witness?

As we said last night, this practice is particularly targeted to disentangling Buddhi, the highest level of your personal Self, from ahamkara (ego), from the play of thoughts and identification with the physical body. This inquiry has the power to take you deeply into Purusha, the Atman. Normally, however, the state you contact through this inquiry is the pristine state of Buddhi (for more discussion of this, please listen to the lecture from Wednesday), reflecting the Atman as a mirror reflects a room or a lake reflects the sky. So When you use inquiry to turn Buddhi inward, it faces the Atman and begins to reflect it, and this is how most of us realize what the pure Self really is. This is an important part of your process, though it is not the ultimate experience. The more we learn to settle into the Witness, the more pure the reflection of the Self in Buddhi becomes, and eventually, the inquiry coaxes the Atman to reveal itself!

So, consider this an exploration of the layers of your consciousness. There's a good reason why *Atma-vichara*, an inquiry into the nature of the Self, is considered the most direct means of nestling into your true nature!

Witness Inquiry

Find a posture in which you can be comfortable and upright.

Spend a few minutes grounding yourself with the breath, inhaling from the crown to the perineum, and exhaling back up to the crown. Do this softly, focusing on the subtle flow of prana through the inner body.

Bring your attention to the crown and then to the area about two inches behind your head. This is slightly lower than the 8-inches-above and 2 inches below the crown meditation we were doing last week, but if your attention wants to rise to the higher point, that's fine.

With your attention in this space behind the head, begin to ask the question, "Where is the witness?" You can also ask, "What is the Witness" or "May I be shown the witness" or "What is aware of my experience now?" In other words, find the phrasing that feels authentic to you.

Ask the question, then focus on the felt sense that arises in its wake. If verbal answers are coming up, let them go, and ask, "What is witnessing these thoughts?" The response to your question should be non-verbal.

As you touch into this witnessing presence, you will become aware that there is another witness "behind" the first space of witness-presence. Focus backward, and if it seems

right, ask the question again. Continue focusing backward on each “layer” of witness presence. Rest in the deepest sense of witness-awareness that arises.

Journal about your experience.

Open-Eyed Practice (Meditation snacking during the day)

Set an alarm to ring at intervals—every hour or every couple of hours. When it does, stop and ask the question, “Where is the witness of my experience?” or “May I be shown the witness of my experience.” Settle backward into the awareness that arises, and then go on with your day.

Every few hours, take a couple of minutes to activate the heart center, either through the soft palate-Ajna-heart practice above or by breathing into the heart and feeling the heart energy activated by the caress of the breath. When you feel centered in the heart, hold this affirmation: “My heart is the divine heart” or “I am love” or simply inhale “ham” into the heart, and exhale “sa.” Notice the effect of these practices and journal about them.

One day this week, make a commitment to center your attention in the heart center, bringing attention back when you get distracted or forget. What effect does this have on your mood? What happens when you remain centered in the heart during conversations or while working? Notice the emotional experience you have in this center. There may be several—you could feel emotions arising, in which case consider that the buried emotional samskaras are being activated, and gently witness them, or (gently) coach yourself, “Let go” or “let it be.”