

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 *Who am I? Inquiry* practice we did on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. It's included below, and an audio version is posted on the Student Page. You can also do this as a partner practice, with one of you asking, "*Who are You?*" while the other person follows, either silently or speaking aloud what arises.

## Instructions for Who am I? Inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry is not to come to an intellectually centered conclusion but to deconstruct the layers of your identity until you are able to be present to the simple feeling of being, of being yourself, of being alive. As we said in class, this should be a somewhat familiar feeling; it's the experience of being relaxed and at ease with yourself, without thoughts or any assertion of identity as a body or personality. We cultivate it here as a way of activating this sense of being so that it can become a go-to resting place for you, a resting place that allows you to feel like yourself in the deepest sense. As you learn to identify your personal self with the feeling of presence in the heart, you experience what I call healthy *Ahamkara*: a neutral yet loving sense of personal existence.

- Bring your attention to the heart center, and take several full, relaxed breaths to help center your attention here.
- Centered in the heart, ask: "Who am I?" Let the usual answers arise and subside. "I'm a woman." "I'm tired." "I'm a father." "I'm a husband." "I'm an engineer."
- Keep asking the question until you begin to get a felt sense of simple being, simple existence. This is your primal personal ego-sense. You can take a rest here, or you can stay with the inquiry as it leads you deeper. Just do your very best not to default to intellectual knowledge but to stay with the wordless inner felt sense of being.

## Ongoing Practice or Which Meditations Should I be Doing?

In the weeks to come, I hope you will continue working with some of the *samyama* practices we've been doing over the weeks of the course. Each of them has a particular purpose and depth; each of them is psychoactive. My suggestion is that you pick one that you are attracted to or that you have had an interesting experience of and spend one session a day on that practice for at least a week. In this way, your depth of experience gradually increases, and the effects of it become clearer. Each of these practices is transformative, but obviously, you can't do them all! Once you are truly familiar with a practice, it becomes available for you to use it when you need it. These *samyama* practices are specifically targeted for accelerating transformation and the flow of insight from the higher self to your embodied self. So each of them is a kind of medicine that helps cure delusion and open you to your own subtlety.

One way to consider which practices to work with is to consider which center or part of your organism you want to bring into balance or use as the basis for inquiry. For instance, the Navel Chakra practice is very powerful for physical health, especially for your relationship with food. The Heart Chakra Samyama can be the basis for inquiry. For instance, the *Who am I?* inquiry, or specific inquiries concerning your emotions, and as a focal point for you to hold space for working with difficult emotions. The Heart Center is also the key to compassion and spiritual insights of all kinds. So when you are looking for insight about any subject, especially those connected to your life, centering in the heart is very skillful.

The higher centers, especially the Ajna and the Brahmarandhra, are natural resting places for meditation. Once you've become comfortable there, it's the easiest center from which to experience thought-free meditation. It's also, as we saw in Week 4 the natural center from which to practice Witness Inquiry and Awareness of Awareness. You might want to re-read the inquiry instructions for Week 4 to remind yourself of the practice for centering behind the head while doing the Witness practice. Not a necessity, but very helpful.

***Here are the samyamas I consider most important:***

- The Nabhi (Navel) Chakra Practice from Week 3.
- The Compassion Samyama from Week 2. (You can do this same meditation with other qualities, such as friendliness, sympathetic joy, equanimity, etc.)
- The Aharana Pranayama/Full Body Scan Breathing from Week 3.
- The Samyama on Brahmarandhra, invoking the presence of your teachers and guides from Week 3.
- Samyama on the Heart from Week 3.
- The Witness and Awareness Practices from Week 1, 2, and Week 5

*A couple of clues regarding the Witness and Awareness inquiries:* The words you use in these inquiries will, to some extent, determine your experience, at least in the early stages of the practice. All these inquiries aim at purifying Buddhi and detaching it from Ahamkara and Manas and their associated vrittis so that Buddhi can reflect Purusha. However, your psyche will respond differently to different ways of languageing the inquiry. For some, it is powerful to do the sequential practice of letting your attention flow from awareness of body sensations, breath, thoughts to awareness of awareness itself. For others, "What (or Where) is the Witness," or "What is it that knows I'm meditating" is more helpful in triggering awareness of the purified Buddhi and ultimately Purusha itself.

This week's "Who am I?" practice is aimed at turning Ahamkara backward, past its normal self-definitions, to experience itself as a pure sense of being, of existing, of aliveness, of simple Presence. I experience the "Who am I?" inquiry as resulting in a felt sense of inner presence, often based in the heart, rather than the relative detachment of Witness inquiry. I really suggest that you experiment with these

approaches. You can do it in a 10-minute session, perhaps in the evening. Or as a 2-minute practice of Self-remembering, which you can return to whenever you have time or when you need centering.

## **Walking Around Practices for This Week**

*Please feel free to work with any of the Open-Eyed Practices from previous weeks!*

From time to time, center your attention behind the body (behind the head or behind the heart). Become aware of your awareness, the faculty that holds all experience like the screen of a 3D movie. Look at the world you see with the thought, “All that I see, hear, smell, etc., is within my awareness.” Notice how this shifts your perspective.

Walk around with the feeling “I am in the presence of the divine, the sacred, the Goddess, the Supreme Awareness. That presence is everywhere. Everything within my experience is sacred.”