

Week 2: Meditation and Contemplation Homework

Please listen to this week's lecture at least twice altogether.

Basic Meditation

Please continue with the Daily Meditation Sequence that we began last week, starting with *Nadi Shodana pranayama* and continuing with the *Central Channel/Three Centers/Om Shreem Hreem* meditation.

You may continue working with the 'Drop It' meditation as you practice with thoughts. Or instead, have the understanding "This thought is shakti. This thought is shakti." and see the arising of thoughts as part of the dance of the mind. In this way, you use a *Shakta Upaya* technique as a way of taking a more subtle stance towards your mind.

Additional Meditations

Simple Letting Go (*Laya Bhavana*): Practice for opening the body and moving through obstructions

This practice can be done as an open-eyed or walking meditation as well as during a formal sitting session. In my experience, it's very valuable when you are "stuck" in meditation; that is, when you feel you can't open more deeply, or when a particular meditation feels shallow.

Begin by focusing lightly on the breath, inhaling and exhaling as though the breath is flowing in and out through your pores. Feel that you are being breathed by the universal *Prana Shakti*, and that you simply open to receive the inhalation, and to let go as the exhalation passes out of the body through the pores.

As you become more settled, focus specifically on the exhalation, gently lengthening it. As you gently exhale a long breath, softly coach yourself, "Let go." This is not necessarily directed at anything particular. It's an invitation to any obstructive structure in your consciousness to dissolve.

As the meditation deepens, you might find that your attention naturally goes to the space at the end of the exhalation. See if you can let your attention linger for a second or two in that space, perhaps with the soft thought, "Let go." Let your *citta* soften and expand with the spaciousness of a long exhalation. As you get into this sequence, you'll notice that the inhalation naturally begins when the breath is fully exhaled.

Let the whole process be easeful and have the feeling that as the breath dissolves at the end of the exhalation, that your body opens to the air around you.

Meditation on the Fire of Kalagni Rudra

This is a classic tantric *Laya bhavana* meditation, in which we use the imagination to dissolve the physical body into light, and then immerse yourself in meditation on the light.

Kalagni Rudra is a form of Shiva who manifests as a bright golden-orange flame that rises from the center of the earth at the time of cosmic dissolution and dissolves all forms into himself.

This meditation is fantastic for dissolving complicated emotional situations, physical pain, and for opening yourself to the recognition that your real body is made of light!

You might also consider using this imaginative practice of turning yourself into flames at times during the day. Maybe on a walk, or while you're doing household tasks, or working out. In my experience, it's both energizing and liberating.

1. Imagine that your right big toe is a blazing golden orange fiery light. The light is not hot, but it has the property of dissolving everything into itself.
2. Let that light dissolve your big toe. Little by little, imagine this fire flowing up your foot. It flows up your right calf and dissolves your whole lower leg, up to the knee.
3. You follow it up the thigh and feel it turning your hips and pelvis into light, then flowing down your left leg, from the hip joint down to the tips of the toes.
4. Now your entire lower body has dissolved in flame. The flames flow up through your abdomen and back. With each inhalation and exhalation, the sense of the light deepens, and you surrender yourself more and more deeply to being dissolved in the white radiance of *Kalagni Rudra*.
5. The flames move up through your neck and burst out the crown. For a moment you experience your body as a dancing undulating flame. And then it dissolves, and you are the space that remains.
6. Savor the emptiness of that space...and sit in it for as long as you can.

Commentaries and Related Contemplations

Sutra 4: *Sarire samharah kalanam*

Read through the simple commentary below on Sutra 4. Or, read the commentary in Lakshman Joo's *Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening* and do the contemplations

***Sarire samharah kalanam*: The dissolution of the various parts of the tattvas in the bodies should be practiced by bhavana.**

Sarire: Bodies. Here, it means the three bodies of a human being, including

- 1) *The Physical Body* made of the five basic elements (earthiness, fluidity, fieriness, air or wind, and space)
- 2) *The Subtle Body*, consisting of the three psychic instruments, manas, buddhi, and ahamkara, as well as the five subtle elements (*tanmatras*) that we experience inwardly during dreams, meditation, and imagination.
- 3) *The Causal Body*, which is where we are during deep sleep or deep dark meditation. This is the home of the *MayaGranthi*, the “knot of Maya” in the body, as well as of the samskaric template or deep patterning that determines our karmic situation in this lifetime.

Samharah: Dissolution.

Kalanam: Parts or levels of the manifest universe, from the gross to the very subtle. Here, the “parts” can mean your own bodies (Physical into Subtle into Causal into pure Consciousness) but it can also mean the ‘parts’ of the cosmos. So there is a highly esoteric practice where you use your imagination to dissolve the different spheres of consciousness, known as the *kalas* and the *bhuvanas*, of which there are over a hundred listed in the Indian mythological books. These are the various subtle worlds that Indian cosmology considers to exist at different levels of non-duality, ranged along a spectrum from the densely physical to realms of such subtlety that they can be seen only in deep meditation.

Basic Significance of the Sutra

The gist of Sutra 4 is its description of the fundamental ‘gesture’ of Anava Upaya sadhana, which is *Laya Bhavana*, or the practice of dissolving, an imaginative contemplative practice in which you contemplate melting the denser aspects of yourself and the universe into the subtlest. This is a foundational sutra for sadhana, because it gives a template that can be applied to any situation but is especially important for meditation practice. *Laya Bhavana* could be done by melting thoughts into awareness, by “melting” the body boundaries with the breath, or by melting the energy in each chakra into the higher one.

Laya Contemplation 1

Ask yourself: How have I experienced or practiced *Laya*—the melting of structures or barriers in meditation?

How have you experienced *Laya* as a dissolution of fears, anger, or anxiety over the course of a meditation or a period of *sadhana*? How have you experienced *Laya* as the dissolution of life-patterns, or structures that you might have taken for granted? Have you had the experience of freedom when something is taken away or let go of?

It's important to remember that true *Laya* can be gentle, soft, and often almost imperceptible. For instance, breath has an external flow, but in deep meditation its external movement can dissolve so that it becomes so subtle that it seems not to move. A thought, if you look directly into the substance of it, can evanesce back into the mind stuff without you making any effort. These are spontaneous examples of *Laya*.

Journal about your experience of what it feels like to have structures and patterns dissolve.

Laya Contemplation 2

Create a meditation practice for melting some of your own inner barriers. It might be offering obstructions into a fire, breathing through your pores with the intention of dissolving your feeling of being limited by the body, or imagining yourself as light or space and sensing the light evanescing and joining the space around you.

Journal about it.

For Partners: If you are working with a partner, take turns teaching the meditation you come up with, and discussing the results.

Laya Contemplation 3

Consider a situation in your life that feels stuck. How can you use *Laya Bhavana* to ease out of the feeling of stuckness—without rejecting or aggressively trying to change the situation?

Journal about this, and then try using your imagination to dissolve the stuck situation. What will it take? What might you have to let go of?

If you're working with a partner, discuss this together.

Walking-Around Laya Practice

As you go through the day, keep withdrawing your awareness into the heart center, or into the center of the body (through vertical breathing)

The Mega-Esoteric Practices associated with Sutra 4

One meditation that the commentator describes is done by imagining the physical universe dissolving into its subtle form and then into light. Another version would be to imagine that the entire universe is in your body and imagine your body dissolving into light. An adept of the traditional structure of the 36 *Tattvas* might use their imagination to 'roll up' the levels of consciousness (*tattvas*), dissolving the entire physical world into the inner organs of perception, then dissolving these into the witness-consciousness, then dissolving the witness into the all-pervading Awareness, until you imagine everything dissolving into Shiva or pure consciousness.

If you understand the basic principle of *Laya Bhavana*, you can use it as the basis of many types of meditation.

A Brief Discussion of *Samavesha*, the Goal of *Trika Sadhana*

In non-dual Shaivism, the ultimate experience of enlightened awareness is called *samavesha*. *Samavesha* is the state of immersion in the Divine, or the full experience of your Self as being the same as the Divine Reality. Because one divine Presence has become everything, to be truly liberated means to fully experience yourself and the world as divine Presence. To be immersed in the Divine is to have dissolved your sense of smallness and separation, and it is the state that is described in other eastern traditions as liberation (moksha) or Self-realization (*jivanmukta* or *atma vidya*). However, in Shaivism, there is a subtle personal and devotional component to this definition of enlightenment, because Shaivism does usually include a recognition that the Ultimate reality can and does take the form of personal divinity. For someone devotional, or someone who does deity practice, *samavesha* can be a recognition that the deity you invoke is within you, and that your real nature is one with the deity, as well as an immersion in a formless impersonal Awareness.

Samavesha* through the *Upayas

At the level of *Shambhava Upaya* and Book I, *samavesha* is the realization of your complete non-difference from Shiva, as Pure Awareness/Bliss. It includes the experience of Shiva Vyapti—the realization that only God exists anywhere and that you are that pervading divinity.

At the level of *Shakta Upaya*, *samavesha* begins with the recognition that *citta* (your own mind-field) and your process of perception are expressions of *Chit* (supreme consciousness, also known as the primordial Shakti), who is acting your mind, and that what you believe are your thoughts and perceptions are actually appearances of the supreme creative intelligence who actually manifests thoughts out of the stuff of her own being, consciousness itself.

At the level of *Anava Upaya*, *samavesha* is immersion in your own inner radiance, a clear identification of your true nature with the state known as *turiya*, the witnessing-consciousness that remains present throughout all your states. Through *Anava Upaya* practice you learn to see through and dissolve your identification with the content of thoughts and the movements of ego and become inwardly centered in the Self. In the *Anava Upaya samavesha*, you may not yet have realized that your Self pervades everywhere. But you know that you are the Self, not the mind. And this gives you a stable and unshakable confidence in your true self, and an ability to navigate your life from the wisdom and love of the inner Presence that is your core.

Contemplation

Q: What does *samavesha* mean to me? Have I experienced it? Do I believe it is a possibility for me?

Find a way to contemplate yourself as fully immersed in divine reality. Imagine that every part of your body and mind is made of light and bliss. Or imagine that the world you see is pouring out of your own heart with every exhalation, and pouring into your heart with the

inhalation. Imagine yourself moving through the world in this state, with the feeling that everything inside and outside is part of the divine fabric. How does this change the way you feel about yourself and others? About your problems and desires and fears?

Walking Around Practice for Cultivating Samavesha

My body is made of light, my heart is made of light, my bones are light. I am light.

Sutra 5: Nadisamhara bhutajaya bhutakaivalya bhutaprithaktvani

This sutra expands on methods for *Laya Bhavana*. It introduces us to a series of esoteric tantric meditation techniques. We'll be working with these and other tantric meditation practices in class next week, so here I'll just give an explanation the meaning of the words in Sutra 5, and instructions for one of the practices in case you'd like to experiment with it.

There is a good commentary on this verse in Lakshman Joo's *Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening* (he's clearly done these practices himself!) and also in Jaideva Singh's *Shiva Sutras* translation.

Nadisamhara bhutajaya bhutakaivalya bhutaprithaktvani: Dissolving the prana in the nadis, control over the elements in the body, withdrawing awareness from the external, should all be done by steady contemplation.

Naadeesamhara means dissolving the prana flowing in the two external channels (*ida* and *pingala*, associated with the left and right nostrils) into the Central Channel (*sushumna nadi*). This is essentially describing our own basic practice for this course.

The way we're doing it combines breath with mantra, and also activates the central channel through the three main chakras. There are several other versions of this practice, which we'll explore in the course of the class.

We begin by deliberately breathing with the feeling that the breath is flowing through the center of the body. Gradually, the prana begins to flow spontaneously without leaving the nostrils. So, in the fruition of this meditation, you are no longer breathing in and out of the nostrils but are being breathed by the prana shakti herself. This is the spontaneous breathing of deep meditation, which occurs in samadhi. Many of you will have found this natural internal breath happening during your meditation.

Bhootajaya means "control over the elements" of the body. This is a yogic skill that you practice by stationing your attention in different points of the body and by meditating on these points, you actually control the way certain elements behave in your body. These are similar practices to those given in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, which can be practiced for acquiring paranormal abilities, or siddhis.

Protocol and Promised Effect of Bhootajaya: In this practice, you would meditate on the right big toe in order to control the air or wind element in the body, which according to Ayurveda, creates gas and joint pains if not mastered. If you needed to gain weight, you would meditate on the pit of the throat to activate the earth element. By meditating on the navel, you activate the heat element in the body, which gives you the power to stay warm in conditions of extreme cold. By meditating on the dangling piece of flesh at the top of the

larynx, you activate moisture in the body. By meditating on the area above the crown you access all the powers of the higher realms.

Contemplation

Spend five or ten minutes focusing on these parts of the body. See what you notice as you do! Then journal about it or discuss it with your partner.

Some of you might notice that the principle behind this meditation is similar to the principles of acupuncture, where you activate energy (chi) flow within the subtle body by stimulating points on the surface of the body.

Obviously, it would take a considerable amount of time and concentration to actually acquire the mastery of this practice, but it is a method for developing yogic powers of control over the physical elements.

Bhuta kaivalya is a form of *pratyahara*, or inward focus, where you withdraw awareness from the external physical body, by deliberately entering into an out of body state. A practiced yogi can remove his consciousness from physical pain—Ramana Maharshi had a tumor removed from his arm without anesthetic, by using this yogic power. Yogis in India would practice extreme austerities during which they would practice removing their consciousness from the body, going into meditation while standing on one leg, or having the arm pierced with needles. This is obviously a good trick to know if you should ever find yourself in great physical pain! In modern life, many of us learned this skill inadvertently, when we would for long periods in cross-legged meditation postures, as Zen students do. In a very long sit, in order to deal with your aching knees and hips, at some point you learn this skill of turning your attention inward, beyond the body. That said, such practices will eventually cause injury to the physical body, no matter how high the state of your consciousness!

Bhuta prithakt vaani means raising your awareness to the region above the crown, where you are no longer sensing the physical elements in your body and the world, so that your consciousness can fully merge in the Absolute.

Partner Discussion

Some of you might like to discuss these practices with your partner, describing your experience of them, or ways that you have seen them being used.