

Week 4: Meditation and Contemplation Homework

Please listen to this week's lecture at least twice. This makes it possible to catch the nuances that we not only miss, but also to listen to the transmission going on between the words.

Basic Meditation

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

And of course, feel free to practice the *Letting Go* and the *Kalagni Rudra Fire* meditations. As many of you have shared, these practices are powerful methods of creating the experience of melting (*Laya*) into your subtle self. I've also found these practices to be very helpful in situations where you need to shift your state, like when you are feeling stuck in an emotional loop, suffering from body aches, or over-attached to an outcome. The practice of using divine fire to melt your body (imaginatively of course!) is a powerful way of dissolving your identification with the physical body, it also melts aspects of your ego-identity, and can subtly dissolve many forms of subtle blockage.

Additional Meditations

Basic Ucchara

This is the practice we did in class. Essentially, it is the core *Anava Upaya* practice of meditating on the space at the beginning and end of each breath. For you *Vijnana Bhairava* fans, it's the first practice Shiva gives Parvati in Verse 24 of that text. Many of you are used to doing this practice with a horizontal breath. This version seems to be the original way of doing it, based on a vertical connection between the heart center (the "lower *dvadashanta*" or "inner heart") and the space above the crown (the "upper *dvadashanta*" or "outer heart"). If you feel experimental, you can add the mantra to the breath. Your main focus should be on the "gap", the tiny pause between the inhalation and exhalation and/or between the exhalation and inhalation.

1. Spend 3-4 minutes practicing *Nadi Shodhana* to clear and open your channels.
2. Begin to focus on the breath, feeling that the inhalation flows in from above into the heart, and the exhalation flows from the heart to the space 8 fingers above the crown. (Measure with your fingers if you need to!)
3. At the end of each phase of the breath, notice and linger in the "gap", the pause. Hold the breath for a couple of seconds to mark the pause, but don't let there be strain. Little by little, find the space at both ends of the breath, and make that your focus. You may find that your attention naturally wants to linger in one of these more than the other, and this is fine.

4. Your attention is on the pause, and as you linger there, feel into the felt sense of the space itself. Over time, you may start to feel the space deepening and even expanding. Don't force this; just let it happen naturally. Settle into the rhythm and the pause, as the breath flows on its own.
5. If you like, you may link the mantra *Om Shreem Hreem* to the breath. Or, if you've done this practice before, you may find yourself naturally gravitating to *Ham sa*, the natural breath mantra, (*ham* on the inhalation, *sa* on the exhalation). In both cases, sense the "dissolve" at the end of the mantra, which is the same as the "dissolve" of the breath.
6. From time to time, ask yourself, "What knows I'm doing this practice?" or "What is aware that I'm doing this practice?" ignore verbal answers and linger for a little while in the felt experience of the "knowing" that arises in the wake of the question.

Commentaries and Related Contemplations on Sutras 8-12

To be done alone with your journal, or in discussion/practice with your partner.

These sutras begin to describe the state and experience of an awakened (i.e., enlightened) yogi in the Trika tradition. Notice that it is very different—i.e., much more expansive—than the way "awakening" is defined in contemporary practice. In most contemporary Buddhist and neo-Vedantic circles, being "awake" means recognizing that your real self is not the personality or the body, but awareness. It's a genuine shift of vision. However, a Trika Yogi would say that this type of awakening is just a first step, highly significant, but not the endpoint of enlightenment practice. In Trika, being "awakened" or "enlightened" is, 1) the permanent open-eyed experience of yourself as pure awareness, containing all-that-is. It begins as an inner, meditative experience, but then expands until you feel and see your Self pervading everything, so that the whole field of experience is recognized as a part of your Self. This state, called *Aatma Vyaapti*, then expands until your all-pervading Awareness is recognized as not different from God's utterly free and radically powerful vast vision. Obviously, the Shaiva sages celebrated an extraordinary state of non-duality.

The following paragraphs introduce Sutras III, 8-12, and are followed by commentaries and exercises based on the individual sutras.

How does the Shiva Sutras define an enlightened being?

An enlightened Trika yogi is one who, because s/he possess true vidya (unforced, natural non-dual realization, not intellectual knowledge), is able to remain in God-Consciousness both in meditation and out of it.

An enlightened being (known as a siddha or accomplished one) experiences a state in meditation where s/he is lifted beyond the discursive mind and identifies completely with Awareness. This is known in Sanskrit as *Unmani*, the state beyond the mind. One lets go of any identification with the "stories" about one's individual identity, and instead identifies with

the Divine. This is not just an intellectual understanding, but an actual experience described by radically enlightened beings.

For instance, from *Shankaracharya*: “My mind, like a hailstone, melted into the ocean of supreme bliss.”

From the *Svacchanda* tantra: “Abandoning identification of Self with bonds (meaning, any ideas or emotions or perceptions that define your limited self, and any egoic identification with them), one views the essential nature of oneself as pure Consciousness. This state is known as *aatmavyaapti*—the experience of your Self pervading the whole field of experience.”

Atmavyapti, however, is not the final state. In the highest states of meditation, one can experience one’s own consciousness as omniscient, supremely blissful, and free of all limits. This state is one of total identification with Shiva, while seeing everything in your waking state experience as Shakti. This state is known as *Shivavyapti*—the experience of one’s own consciousness as the pervasion of Shiva.

Obviously, this is not something you achieve by striving—it requires grace and happens spontaneously. (Even though your cultivation is what allows you to hold that state!)

However, in the *Vijnana Bhairava* there is a practice for cultivating it: You begin by becoming aware of your Awareness by directing your attention towards the pure knower/witness. As you settle into identification with awareness, imagine that it is not limited, but filled with Shiva’s qualities of omniscience, omnipotence, and total freedom of will and action. This is, obviously, an act of imagination, but it is very effective in expanding your ability to at least intellectually conceive of your awareness as Shiva’s.

Exercise: Thought Experiment

Turn your attention to your own awareness, and with your attention there, consider the idea “My Awareness is identical with Shiva’s. Consciousness pervades everywhere with all its powers of omniscience, freedom of will and action and universal love. That consciousness is me. All my thoughts, perceptions and emotions are Shakti.”

Holding that understanding, be present in the awareness of Awareness and notice the felt sense that arises as you consider your awareness as Shiva’s. Imagine, for instance, being able to know anything, to transform any situation, to feel absolutely free even in the midst of suffering. What would that feel like? Enjoy this as an imaginative contemplation—yes, a fantasy. (Obviously, this is an exercise, not the real thing, but it can lead you to the experience over time. This is a *Shakta Upaya* practice, because it involves the imagination).

Sutras 8-12 describe the experience of such a being through several different perspectives. For us, as practitioners, they provide a visionary template through which we can view our moment to moment perspective, one that we can use to create an upward shift, one that lifts us above being stuck in identifying solely with our limited perspective. So, I like to approach these sutras as prompts for contemplative thought experiments.

I recommend that you go through them with the attached exercises, try them out, and journal about them and discuss them with your partner, if you're working with a partner.

Sutra 8

Jaagrat dviteeya karaha: One who is always awake, who lives in the state beyond the mind and in whom the world appears as the effulgence of his own light.

The key word here is “jaagrat”, which refers to the world we experience in the waking state. To such a yogi, the world you interact with is experienced as radiance, emanating from one's own consciousness, and pulsing with bliss. This is what is known as being awake in Trika Yoga.

“Whatever appears through the senses, consciousness alone is the substratum of that appearance. Realizing this, one is dissolved in pure consciousness (cit) and thus experiences the entire fullness of Being.”

Q: Have you ever had this experience? One way it happens is when we come out of meditation with a feeling of restfulness and joy, open your eyes and feel the world around you participating in that joy. This can happen after a deep meditation, or in nature, or just spontaneously, as it did for one of my friends in Ralph's Market in Palo Alto. The whole market suddenly appeared as light. Ramakrishna used to describe seeing the Goddess's light everywhere. Muktananda said that when he saw something, he would first see blue radiance and then the object.

Exercise: Practicing Shiva Vyapti

Again, this is an imaginative exercise, but can immediately uplift your state.

Regard your body, your mind, and the world you perceive as a play of shakti appearing in these forms. Imagine that everything is made of light, even though the light is hidden. According to quantum physics, this is actually true! How long can you walk around with the feeling that the inner and outer world is pervaded with light? Or just with the thought “All this is God”?

Sutra 9

Nartaka Aatma: The Self is the dancer.

“(Such a one who has realized his essential spiritual nature) is a Self that is only an actor (on the world stage).”

—From Jaideva Singh’s *Yoga of Supreme Identity* p 152.

There are two possible ways to read this sutra. One, pointing out that he enlightened being lives as though s/ he is an actor playing the roles s/he is called on to perform, without identifying with them. In another sense, this sutra points out that Shiva/Shakti—the supreme Self—is the one who performs all the roles of this world, acting through our body/mind. The realized being is one who fully gets that.

Q: Look at yourself—your thoughts, feelings, and the changing play of your life as a dance in which “you” participate without being identified with any of your thoughts and actions. What does it feel like to see your life in all its facets as a play?

Then, regard your moment to moment experience with the understanding that Shiva in the form of the vast intelligence of pure Consciousness is dancing it, disguised as you. What is the feeling?

Can you spend half an hour holding this understanding? You might begin by considering it during some activity in which you don’t have to think much, such as a walk, a swim or while doing housework, where there aren’t big consequences to any “mistakes.” **Notice the state that arises when you look at your thoughts and actions as a play that doesn’t involve you in any personal way.**

Journal about this, and/or discuss it with your partner.

Sutra 10

Rango’ntaraatmaa: The inner self (the subtle and causal aspects of your individuality; your individual self-consisting of prana, mind, ego, etc.) constitutes the stage on which the actor performs.

The Self—Shiva-Shakti—dances on the stage of the mind/ego/energy body of the individual. In short, your mental and emotional energy body is the platform on which the Self enacts the dance of your life. These aspects of your existence are not you—they are simply the space in which the true you enacts the play.

The *jiva*, individual soul, moves through different bodies in birth after birth. These bodies, subtle and physical, are simply the space within which the dance of your life is performed by Shiva/Shakti. Nothing that you think is “me” is actually who you are. The enlightened yogi knows this and lives accordingly.

Exercise: As a thought experiment, consider the space of your inner field of consciousness—the body/mind/dream world—as the platform or stage that provides the

frame of the play that Shiva is enacting through you. What is the experience of seeing your inner and outer world in this way?

Journal and/or discuss.

Sutra 11

Prekshakaani indriyaani: The senses of (the enlightened yogi) are the spectators (of his acting).

In our ordinary state, the senses turn outwards and experience the world and your own sensations as “real”. In the enlightened state, the senses are turned inward, towards the Self, so when you are active in the waking state, you are experiencing whatever happens as a play that is being performed by the radically free Self, Shakti. What you see, hear, etc. are experienced as episodes in a drama, not as your own.

Exercise: While walking, driving, eating, moving through the world, talking to a friend, observe your own body and the scenes around you with the thought that you are witnessing, through your senses, the play of the divine Actor/Actress. Try this in traffic. During an emotional crisis. While making love.

Sutra 12

Dheevashaat sattva-siddhihi: Through the higher, spiritual intelligence, there is the realization of the Light of the Self.

Self-realization does not occur through the ordinary intellect. The higher intelligence referred to here is an innate quality of your own awareness, which in this sutra refers to the subtlest aspect of your *chitta*. As the *chitta* is purified, the very substance of mind reveals itself as the vehicle of truthful insight, *rtambhara prajna*. *Rtambhara* means “truth bearing.” *Prajna* means “insight.”

Your own consciousness is the source of insight, whether in daily life or in spiritual work. As the mind becomes purified through practice, the obstructing ideas and beliefs and distractions are cleared. Then the field of the *chitta* begins to operate as pure insight, pure intelligence that guides you in life as well as in meditation. That means you don’t have to receive teachings from outside, or seek advice, because your own subtle intelligence guides you and naturally reveals deeper and deeper layers of the truth until you are intuitively recognizing what is real, what is important, what is good for you, and what is not. This same intuition is the faculty that reveals the Self. The point is, this intuition is INNATE! You have the natural ability to see and know truth, once you have purified the distracting thoughts and fears that hide this faculty.

Q: How do you understand this teaching? How does it apply in your practice?

Exercise: To get a feel for *prajna*, cast your mind over your life and remember those moments when you just “knew” what to do, what was the right thing to do, what was true

and what was false. How have you cultivated this intuition? How have you let your mind over-ride it? To what degree are you able to live by your intuitive *prajna*? To what degree have you applied that intuition to discerning the Self from the thoughts and ideas that disguise it or that mask it?

Journal about this and discuss it with your partner.

Meditations for Cultivating Spiritual Intelligence (Prajna)

- 1) The classic method is a version of the self-inquiry practice I suggested in last week's homework: asking, "What is it that knows I'm reading this? What is it that knows I'm thinking? What is it that knows I'm hungry?" The subtle knowingness or felt sense that arises in response, before words come, is *prajna*, and that is Consciousness itself. I think this is a big deal insight, every time you come back to it!
- 2) The meditation we did at the end of the call, based on the *Mahamudra* practice of Tibetan Buddhism. This is a contemplation for noticing the different layers of your *chitta* and discerning what the true nature of mind actually is, through observation.

Sit quietly, close your eyes, and literally look with your inner senses at the field of your own *chitta*. Noticing what appears. There will be visual movement—a sense of luminous particles moving, maybe colors or visions. There will be thoughts darting up and darting away (try to avoid getting caught in them!). There might be a part of the *chitta* that is still, maybe even dull. And there is a part of you that is aware of all that. That aware faculty of the mind-field is *prajna*, the subtle knower, the innate discriminatory intelligence.

It's very useful to practice this way of looking inside at least a couple of times a day. It will train your *chitta* to discern the difference between ideas, images and pure knowing. This is a *jnana* yoga or *Shakta Upaya* practice because it deals directly with the mind stuff. And as you practice it, you free that aspect of your subtle intelligence to start taking over—which is a deeply freeing state, and the basis of enlightened wisdom!

Journal about what you find and discuss it with your partner.