

Week 5: 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. You can also substitute the Basic Ucchara practice that we offered last week.

Additional Meditations (from Our December 10th Class)

Meditation on the Space at the End of the Exhalation

Sit quietly, allowing the breath to flow. Follow the exhalation to the point where it merges in the air outside the body. Focus in that space for a few seconds without strain. Let the inhalation arise on its own. Continue following the exhalation, allowing the breath to rise and fall in a relaxed fashion, and focusing for a few seconds on the space at the end of the exhalation, until that space becomes the place your mind takes rest, even while the breath flows. Recognize that space as the gateway to the Madhya, and allow it to open if it wants to. No effort, just attention.

Meditation on Pure Sensation

You can do this practice either sitting or lying down.

- 1) Focus gently on the sensation of your hand against your thigh, or of the clothes against your skin, or of your body against the seat or the floor.
- 2) Let go of the categories “hand”, “thigh”, “body”, “floor” and focus on the sensations themselves. Sensation is apprehended through the feeling sense; it might be a tingling, a softness, a tickling, a sense of vibrancy. No thought is involved. This is a practice entirely based on subtle touch.
- 3) As you linger in the sensation of your body meeting the air, focus on the sensation and notice the edges of it. Is there a border between the sensation “inside” your body and the air or the floor? See if you can sink your attention into the sensation itself, and recognize that it “floats” in an edgeless space. Inhale and exhale, feeling that the breath comes in and out through the pores. As you allow the breath to flow like this, gently follow the sensations as they are felt. Feel that the breath gently pours in and out through your pores. Let go of any attempts to describe, categorize or think about what is happening.
- 4) Meditate on expanding sensation and the breeze of the breath flowing through the pores.

Coming Out of Meditation with an Empowered Exhalation

(based on Sutra III.22, which is described at the end of the Commentaries Section)

The way you come out of meditation is as crucial as the way you enter it. When you come out slowly, you make a bridge between the meditative state and the waking state. We need to do this even if we don't think our meditation has gone deep, because it often has been deeper than we think. So, rather than immediately getting up when your timer rings, spend five minutes with the breath, creating a sense of intimacy with the space around you. And from there, I suggest that you might take a few minutes to write in your journal. Your writing will have some of the "fragrance" of your meditation, and many beautiful insights can arise.

Exercise: The Shiva Sutras (in Sutra III-22) suggest a method that allows us to segue into the waking state while staying present to the inner experience of deep meditation. The sutra itself describes the experience of an actual realized being, but I find it very helpful as a way of using the breath to make the segue between meditating and : You gently focus on the exhalation, feeling that the inbreath arises from within the Self, while the outbreath "extends" the connection with the light/peace/bliss of the Self outward into the space around you. You sense the softness and vibrancy of the prana, which will have been activated in your meditation, and allow the breath to touch and mingle with your own body, breathing gently through your body as it comes fully back into your awareness. Then let the breath expand slowly outward from the body, feeling it as an invisible current that meets the air and also infuses the objects around you.

Commentaries and Related Contemplations on Sutras 14-16, 20, and 22¹

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

Sutra 14

Yatra Tatra Tatraanyatra: This {absolute freedom, or Svaatantriya Shakti, which is a synonym for God-consciousness} is the same in the external world as it was in samadhi.

This sutra describes the tantric state of total Self-realization, in which with your eyes open you see God everywhere. I particularly love this sutra because it serves us practitioners as a prompt for practicing the open-eyed meditation of looking at whatever appears as a form of the divine. However, the enlightened yogi experiences this naturally, not as an act of

¹ I've chosen a selection of the sutras in this section to comment on, so we aren't looking at each one. This is partly because of time, but mainly because I wanted to choose sutras that we can use as meditation jumping off points. Some of you might want to study the other sutras in this segment as they appear in Lakshman Joo's translation/commentary. If you are using the Mark Dyczkowski translation/commentary in *The Aphorisms of Shiva*, you'll find that the numbering is slightly different, because it includes an extra sutra. Dyczkowski has included the commentary by Bhaskara, which is a generation earlier than Kshemeraja's. Bhaskara had not been influenced by the Recognition teachings that are so much a part of our understanding of Shaivism, so he didn't teach, as Kshemeraja does, that your consciousness is a microcosm of Shiva's pure I-consciousness.

imagination. Lakshman Joo points out in his commentary that there is a huge difference between the “real” state of seeing God everywhere, and the practice of thinking “I am Shiva” or “Everything is my Self.” Nonetheless, us practitioners benefit a lot from doing a deliberate imaginative practice, which is an enlightened form of “Fake it till you make it.”

The commentary points out that even someone who has had this experience can’t just lay back and stop doing yoga. You go on practicing Self-awareness, meditation, and whatever other practices help you keep this state alive.

Sutra 15

Beejaavadhaanam: Maintain breakless awareness on that supreme energy which is the seed of the universe

Beejaa means “seed” and “vadhaanam” means full attention.

The “seed” is Shakti. So the sutra—which is one I follow intensely—asks us to stay constantly in touch with our felt experience of Shakti.

And it tells us to continue to do this even after we have awakened. Because Shakti is the cause of our spiritual progress (as well as of our experience of bondage!) our attention to her presence in our inner and outer worlds is profoundly important and is one of the essential practices for tantrikas.

The commentator points out that to do this powerfully, we have to have had the experience. Once Shakti begins to reveal Her presence in your meditation, you can keep your connection to Presence alive by remembering it, by touching into it again and again

Question: How do you pay constant attention to the seed of Shakti?

Here are some hints:

At the highest, subtlest level, She is the inner throb of our inner field of consciousness. When you are deep in meditation, you begin to notice this subtle dynamism, a pulsation that is always present in your consciousness. Over time, if you stay present to it, you begin to have a near-constant experience of that throb. In our ordinary states, we can kindle awareness of the subtle pulsation by being present to the more gross pulsations, such as feelings of energy or even the heartbeat.

So, here are some practices for being aware of the presence of Shakti:

- When you are thinking, notice the pulsation at the end of thought, and see if you can sense the pulsation within the *chitta* that is making thoughts arise. This is a powerful form of meditation on Shakti.
- With your attention in the heart, feel the throb of the heartbeat as shakti, and then focus on that throb until you begin to sense the subtler pulsation behind the heartbeat.
- Feel the vibratory quality of the breath.
- Notice where you feel pulsation in your body at any moment.

- When practicing the *Central Channel* breath, tune into the pulsing, rising quality of the breath in the inner channel.

Exercise: Ask yourself, and discuss with your partner, how you customarily find the direct throb of shakti in yourself and in different situations. (Meaning, how to you tune into her in conversations, in the natural world, etc.) Practice some of the above prompts and notice the effect, then journal and discuss it.

Sutra 16

Aasanasthah sukham hrade nimajjati: Seated in the true posture, he easily becomes immersed in the ocean of nectar.

As we said in class, the asana referred to here is not a physical posture, but the internal posture of immersion in the Self. This sutra is speaking of the stable state of meditation that occurs when the mind has entered the *Madhya*, the inner space of pure awareness/peace/blissfulness and is at rest there. This state can arise through any of the practices we are doing, or by meditation on consciousness itself, as in *Shambhava Upaya* or *Shakta Upaya* practices that we worked with in the first Shiva Sutras class. In *Anava Upaya*, remember, we approach this state through practices that engage the breath and the inner centers, rather than directly meditating on consciousness.

Signs that you are in this state:

- The breath is moving on its own, without effort, or has become very subtle or even stopped.
- The mind has taken rest in a felt sense of the open central channel or inner body, or in the spaciousness between the breaths.
- The inner sense of pure Awareness has come forward so that your sense of I-ness is a sense of yourself as pure awareness.
- Thoughts may be coming and going, but you are seeing them without being caught by them; you are in the space where you can experience thoughts as “not me” or “just passing through”.
- There is a feeling of relaxation and ease. You may feel your inner body expanding as the prana expands.
- There may be a sense of radiance or joy.
- There is inner quiet.

At its core, this state is distinctly different from waking consciousness, and it is not dreamy nor unconscious like deep sleep. You are experiencing an opening into *Turiya*, the fourth state, which is the true state of meditation. *Turiya* is the direct experience of awareness itself, a state of inwardness that can have different qualities (i.e., light, bliss, heightened awareness, intuitive knowing). There may be a feeling of being connected to the deepest aspect of yourself, the part of yourself where you are most naturally present and “real”.

Turiya is beyond the personality, and often the personality is seen as a superfluous crust on the true self.

Practice of Finding the Inner Posture

Cultivate *Turiya* by sitting in meditation for long enough to feel the shift out of the ordinary discursive, effortful state into the natural unfolding of inwardness, notice and be present in these moments of indrawn meditation. For most of us, 30-45 minutes is the optimum time for feeling the rising of your connection to the Self that we call *Turiya*.

Other ways of taking a posture that can open the *Turiya* state:

- Center yourself in the heart.
- Breathe in the central channel until you feel yourself relax into the inner space and feel the inner space open and release.
- Exhale and focus again and again on the space at the end of the exhalation until your awareness becomes stable there.
- After practicing the *Kalagni Rudra* meditation, rest in the space that is left when the body dissolves.
- After practicing *Ucchara* for a while, rest in the felt sense of the space above the crown.
- Cultivate awareness of awareness by taking seat in the back body, and simply noticing what is aware of your experience. Then let yourself just be present with your experience as it is, letting go of thoughts as they arise.
- Take rest in your pure sense of I, the deepest feeling of being yourself. Your attention is turned inward to the feeling of being, and the thoughts and doubts are noticed and let go of.

Practice for Letting Everything Be as It IS

This is a practice that is most powerful when you have spent some time in meditation cultivating the sense of awareness and connection with the Self, and the opening has arisen. In other words, this is an instruction for resting in a meditative space!

This is similar to the advice given by Ramana Maharshi: “Just be as you are” or the practice of *Shikantazi* (just sitting) in Zen. It’s all about letting yourself be in the space that comes forth in meditation, but without pushing it, doing anything to enhance it, or following thoughts.

Here is the teaching we read last night from the commentary on Sutra 16. It is based on a passage from the *Netra Tantra—The Tantra of Shiva’s Third Eye*, in Lakshman Joo’s translation:

“You do not have to concentrate above on sahasrara chakra or below on Muladhara chakra. You do not have to concentrate on the tip of the nose, on the backside, or on the nostrils—breathing and exercising prana and Apana.

You do not have to close your eyes. You do not have to open your eyes and keep your eyes wide open. You do not have to take any support in meditation, nor do you have to have absence of support.

You do not have to concentrate on your organic field, or on the universal elements or on sensations of the five senses. You have to put all this aside and enter into that universal being of awareness.”

Exercise: Follow this prompt and let yourself be as you are:

“That state, which is the real nature of Shiva, is not revealed. That state is the revealer...this state of the revealer is not separate from subjective consciousness.”

With your partner, you could take turns reading this passage aloud, sitting with it together, then discussing it.

Question: After practicing, ask each other “How do I understand the last two sentences above?” What does it mean to recognize that the state of Shiva, (the revealer) is not different from subjective consciousness? Can you let that statement take root in you? By subjective consciousness, Lakshman Joo apparently refers to the sense of being the subject, the I—not the ego-I, but the true felt-sense of I-ness.

Further in his commentary (on p 171 of his book), Lakshman Joo points out that this state naturally arises when your central channel has opened, meaning when you are able to meditate for some time within the open, expanded space of the Central Channel.

Our basic meditation practice is intended to cultivate the opening of the Channel, and several of you have had this opening in meditation. (For instance, the experience Desi shared when she was meditating on the plane.)

I can tell you from my experience that if you stay in seated meditation with the Central Channel/Mantra/Three Centers practice for a while, the opening will come. When it does, follow the pointing out instructions above, and let yourself be there.

Sutra 22

Praanasamaachaare samadarshanam: When his breath starts to slowly move out towards the external state, then he also experiences the pervasion of God-consciousness there.

This sutra points to the experience that begins to occur as one’s immersion in the Self deepens. We begin to be able to find the Self, with its light awareness and bliss, not only internally, but irradiating the physical world we meet with our eyes open. This is the start of the next phase of self-realization in Tantra: the phase that is sometimes described as the experience of “iti iti”—“All this, all this”, meaning, “This too is God, this too is my Self.” Now, when you open your eyes and return to your ordinary state of waking consciousness,

you see with open eyes that what you experienced in meditation as your inner Self is actually omnipresent. Remember, a core tenet of Shaiva philosophy is that the so-called inner world is a projection of the Self, (not your limited self, but the Self that is not different from Shiva/Shakti) and that when you have once discovered your reality as Self, it becomes apparent to you that whatever appears in your external reality is a part of you. and not separate from you.

Here is Lakshman Joo's commentary:

“Filled with the fragrance of the supreme glittering of God consciousness, that yogi, slowly coming out from samadhi, feels his breath is filled with a supreme fragrance. And although his breath is moving out, he feels his breath is not moving out. he feels his breath is established in his Supreme Being. Then, after exhaling very slowly, he experiences that the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep are filled with the dense nectar of God consciousness and he comes out of the waking state with this fragrance. He is the king of yogis. He never loses the fragrance of God consciousness. This means that his God consciousness endures in each and every state of his life, whether it be waking, dreaming or deep sleep.”

By “dense nectar” Lakshman Joo is referring to an experience that you may have had, as I have, that the physical world is made of a kind of dense liquid energy, which he calls “nectar” because it feels so luscious. The world seen in this way feels delicious, more than beautiful, but radiant and irradiated with love.

Practice for Letting the Breath Bring You Slowly Out of Meditation

Based on this Sutra 22. We did this practice at the end of class last night. I recommend it HIGHLY as a daily practice.

Extra Reading: Yesterday, I came across a good piece of writing on the state of *Turiya* in a book of Ken Wilber's called *One Taste*. He's a Buddhist, and his practice and realization of this state was done while at a Tibetan Buddhist retreat in the Dzogchen tradition, which essentially is a method that starts from the *Shakta Upaya* approach of meditating on the energy of *Chitta* itself, and gradually allowing the limited *Chitta* to dissolve into pure Awareness (which in the language of non-dual Shaivism, is a *Shambhava Upaya* experience).

Here's how Ken describes his own experience of *Atma Vyapti*, the pervasion of the Self:

“I became extremely serious about meditation practice when I read the following line from the illustrious Sri Ramana Maharshi: ‘That which is not present in deep dreamless sleep is not real.’

That is a shocking statement because basically, there is nothing—literally nothing—in the deep dreamless sleep state. That was his point. Ultimate reality—spirit—Ramana said, cannot be something that pops into consciousness and then pops out again. It must be something that is constant, permanent, or more technically, something that, being timeless, is fully present at every point in time. Therefore ultimate reality must be present

in deep dreamless sleep, and anything that is not present in deep dreamless sleep is not ultimate reality.

This profoundly disturbed me, because I had had several satori-like experiences, but they were all generally confined to the waking state. and yet, the waking state is clearly not permanent....and yet, according to the great sages, there is something in us that is always conscious, that is literally conscious or aware at all times and through all states, waking, dreaming, sleeping. And that ever present consciousness is Spirit in us. That underlying current of constant consciousness, or non-dual awareness, is a direct and unbroken ray of pure Spirit itself. It is our connection with the Goddess, our pipeline straight to God.

Thus, if we want to realize our supreme identity with Spirit, we will have to plug ourselves into this current of constant consciousness, and follow it through all changes of state—waking, dreaming and sleeping—which will 1)strip us of exclusive identification with any of these states (such as the body, the mind, the ego, or the soul); and 2)allow us to recognize and identify with that which is constant, or timeless, through all those states, namely, Consciousness as Such, by any other name, timeless spirit.”

He goes on to describe an experience he has during a retreat when he stayed awake for 11 days, during which time, as he says, consciousness remained throughout all states, and he experienced no personal sense of “I”, but only “unwavering empty consciousness, the witness that is one with everything witnessed.” He says that it has never left.

“The moment this constant nondual consciousness is obvious in your case, a new destiny will awaken in the midst of the manifest world. You will have discovered your own Buddha mind, your own Godhead, your own Atman that is Brahman...and thus you are released from the terror and the torment that necessarily arise when you identify with a little subject in a world of little objects.

...once you find your formless identity as Buddha-mind, as Atman, as pure Spirit, you will take that constant, nondual, ever-present consciousness and reenter the lesser states, and re-animate them with radiance....

And then all things, including your own little mind and body and feelings and thoughts, will arise in the vast Emptiness that you are, and they will self-liberate into their own true nature just as they arise, precisely because you no longer identify with any one of them, but rather let them play, let them all arise, in the Emptiness and Openness that you now are. You will then awaken as radical freedom...You will look at the moon as part of your body and own to the sun as part of your heart...But you will not have found this Freedom or in any way attained it. it is in fact the same Freedom that has lived in the house of the pure Witness from the very start”

Sutra 20

***Trishu chaturtham tailacadaasecyam:* The fourth state (turya) must be expanded like oil so that it pervades the other three: waking, dream, and deep sleep.**

This instruction is the basic tantric prescription for entering into the second stage of Self-Realization. In the first stage, you experience immersion in the Self while formally sitting in meditation. In the second stage, you cultivate that awareness in the waking state. The culmination of your practice is those moments when the awakened awareness is felt while dreaming and in advanced stages, in deep sleep.

This has to happen spontaneously, though it usually occurs during meditation, and for some of you it may have occurred during this course. Many people have these experiences during long meditation retreats, when you are doing a lot of meditation, basically meditating all day long. Then this state can start to penetrate your dreams and even arise as a kind of wakefulness in deep sleep.

Some of the lucid dreaming practices done in Tibetan Buddhism help cultivate that state of being “awake” in dream. One method, which any of us can try out, is to remember ask yourself “Am I dreaming?” at intervals during the day and set an intention that you will remember to ask yourself that question while you are dreaming. Eventually, you may find yourself remembering the question in the middle of a dream—and that is what makes it possible to “wake up” during a dream.

To wake up (be conscious) during deep sleep is something that seems to occur on its own, as I said earlier, though usually during a meditative situation.