

## The Witness Attitude in Meditation

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When the mind fully attains the state of *a-bhavana* and comes to drop its perceptions of sense-objects, at that stage in meditation, mind is really a "no-mind". When thoughts are rushing out in their mad fury to hug objects of pleasure they constitute *chittam*, a fact we have already explained, and to quieten the *chittam* is the sacred function of the Yoga of Meditation. Where these outgoing thoughts (*chittam*) are eliminated is known as the "no-thought" (*a-chitta*) state, and that condition of the mind (*mana*) is recognized as "no-mind" (*a-mana*) state, highest in meditation.

Thoughts are gushing in to flood our bosom and to make our mind an angry gush of self-ruinous compulsions, mainly from two sources. Thoughts stem out from the past, dragging along with them the memories of the good and bad done in the days gone by. These confuse the individuals, with their regrets and sorrows, joys and pleasures from the stinking tombs of the past, forcing them to re-live the dead-past right in the fragrant present moments.

Often, we are flown upon the wings of our mind's fancy and imagination, to dreams, where we are made to shudder at the future possibilities of failures and tremble in hopes of successes and swoon in the expectation of total losses or large profits.

The past really is made up of dead moments and to unearth the buried moments is to live with the dead. We do so when we waste our energies in unproductive and wasteful regrets, for things we had already committed. The more we remember them, the more are those very *vasanas* getting, alas, deeper and deeper fixed into our personality structure.

When we are not engaging ourselves with the negative pre-occupations of entertaining the regrets of the past, we are wandering in the fairy-castles of our fancied future, peopled with ugly fears, horrid dreams, unnerving hopes, and perhaps thousands of impossible expectations.

In short, when our minds are not rattled by the perceptions-of-objects (*chittam*) let us not thereby conclude that we have quietened our thoughts. Often, it is not so. Mind, when it is not engaged in the worldly objects that are right in front of it, can choose its own private fields of agitations, subjectively in itself, by dragging up the buried corpses of a diseased past, or it can bring up vivid or throbbing pictures of a tragic hopelessness as the sure possibility of the immediate future! In either case the mind of the individual at meditation can get sadly disturbed.

Therefore, the *rishis* advise us: Moment to moment engage the out-going mind (*chittam*) to live in the present. Reject completely the past. Renounce totally the future. Then in such a bosom, 'agitated mind' (*chittam*) shall reach the state of "mindlessness" (*a-chittam*). This state of mind is called the "no-mind".

The content of the present moment, divorced from all relationship with the past and the future, is the absolute fullness of the Infinite. Eternity is experienced at the sacred depth, of the present moment. To live the present, independent of the past and the future, is to experience *samadhi*, the revealing culmination of meditation. Seek it yourself. Nobody can give it to anyone else. Each will have to reach there all by himself, in himself, with no other vehicle than himself.

The sum total of the memories that we retain in ourselves, of our own experiences in the past, together gives us a false notion of ourselves as an "individual entity". This is the personality of our ego. It is this ego—a mere bundle of memories of dead moments—that is meeting the present, and interpreting it constantly in terms of its diseased past. Never can the ego ever see the present *truly* as it is.

Again, when the past, the "ego", meets the present it always strives to weave, out of the present, a future pattern, a web, spun by the very fancy of the "ego" out of its own imaginations. Hence life is a confusing jumble of meaningless sorrows, purposeless tensions, unproductive strains, pitiless sorrows, depthless joys.....all together a mad roar of an inconsistent destiny, dashing against the unyielding actualities of life. On the bosom of this frothy confusion the individual feels helpless, a mere raft dancing to the whim of the surge around him.

Not to identify ourselves with our rising tides of thoughts (*sankalpa*), but to remain as a witness of them all, is a definite stage in the efforts of meditation. In an atmosphere of your own "unconcernedness" your thoughts will get suffocated and will die by themselves. So the *rishis* advise the seekers on the path of meditation: Moment to moment dis-associate yourself from continuing any thought that consciously rises in the mind. This practice sweeps the mind clean of all rising thoughts, leads you to the state of thoughtlessness (*a-chitta-ttwam*) and you arrive at the holy of Holies.

This non-association with the rising thought disturbances is achieved by training ourselves to remain as a "witness" to the flood of happenings in ourselves. To be a mere "on-looker" of the lusty parade of thoughts in revelry is to withdraw from thoughts their ability to continue longer their inner carnival.

As a "witness" we remain in the present, without being conditioned by the past associations or being enchanted away by future expectations. This state, called the "neutral condition" of personality, is that which will grow, in its sweep and depth, to bring ultimately the experience of the "thoughtless" condition. This "no-mind" state is the very divine substratum upon which the present exists, and serves as the threshold of time, where the future becomes the past.

At this state is the experience of pure Awareness, with no distracting objects, the Infinite Self, the Changeless and the Unique. This is the goal to be reached, the Truth to be realized, the "experience divine" to be lived as the meditator's own essential Self. It is not a thing to be objectively recognised, or even intellectually to be comprehended. This is a state that is to be spiritually apprehended, in an immediate personal inner experience. This is where meditation gets fulfilled—and the meditator becomes the one Self, where the triple factors, meditator-meditated-meditation coalesce to be a vital experience of a total transcendental awakening: the Self-realization.

The goal is no doubt, extremely covetable, supremely enchanting. But to attain it the meditator must have the necessary equipments fully prepared. In our times we find failures are more often reported than successes in meditation. This is because the *sadhakas*, in the spirit of our hurried times, dash into the "act of meditation" without procuring at first the required pre-flight perfect attunement of their machines of flight. The take-off never happens!

As the most conducive scheme of life, which can help meditators to grow into meditative attunement, the *Acharyas* advise us in the most general terms, thus: "Stop remembering and craving for things bygone; entertain no joy or sorrow as they reach you in the present; remaining thus you shall grow into the greater glory of your own Self." Therefore, let us learn to surrender our past unto His feet in love, and let us learn to remain in those sublime heights of divine awareness, where the worries and joys of the present cannot reach to cloud our vision and upset our equipoise.

Be patient. Be steady. Be striving continuously, cultivating these qualities. Success is sure as the Upanishad *rishis* assure for us the experience of the Self. Towards this acme of life hurry without haste: hasten slowly.