

Day 1 - Self-Inquiry Teaching

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome back, everyone. I'd like to take some time to dive into the topic of self-inquiry and the dyad technique we'll be using during this retreat. Some of you may already be familiar with this practice, but even for those who've experienced it before, the transformative potential of this technique remains profound.

The essence of self-inquiry lies in creating the optimal conditions for awakening. While we can't force awakening to happen, we can cultivate an environment that allows it to arise naturally. Today, I'll explain what self-inquiry is, the key elements of the dyad technique, and how we can make the most of this practice.

Understanding Self-Inquiry

At its core, self-inquiry is about exploring the truth of who and what we are beyond the conditioned mind and body. Saints and sages throughout history have pointed to this practice with phrases like "know thyself." This journey is not about intellectual understanding but a direct experience of awareness—unveiling what has always been present.

Awareness is the unchanging witness to all life stages, from childhood to now. Awakening involves recognizing this awareness and freeing ourselves from identification with the false self—the one that suffers. This realization marks the first step toward liberation.

The Dyad Technique

The dyad technique, developed in the 1970s by Charles Berner, is a powerful method for facilitating awakening. It involves two partners, one delivering an imperative such as "Tell me who you are," while the other reflects and reports their direct experience. This process fosters a deep clearing of the mind, creating space for the truth to emerge.

Key Elements of the Dyad Practice

1. ****Intentional Inquiry****: The one delivering the imperative does so with sincerity, genuinely wanting to know who the other person is. The inquirer then turns inward with the intention of directly experiencing their true nature.
2. ****Clearing the Mind****: As the inquiry unfolds, whatever arises in the mind and body—thoughts, emotions, sensations—is observed and expressed. This process allows unconscious patterns to surface and clear.
3. ****Nonjudgmental Witnessing****: The witness remains neutral, offering no feedback or evaluation. This creates a safe space for the inquirer to fully share their experience.

4. **The Role of Words**: Investigating the use of “I,” “me,” and “mine” helps discern whether these words point to the false self or the true self.

Challenges and Insights

It's common to encounter challenges during the practice:

- **Confusion and Resistance**: The mind may resist or try to figure things out. This is a natural part of the process and indicates the mind loosening its grip.
- **Subtle Phenomena**: Pay attention to subtle thoughts, sensations, or emotions. They may hold significant insights.
- **Clearing Samkaras**: Incomplete past experiences stored in the unconscious often surface during this practice. Fully communicating these experiences facilitates their integration.

The practice also encourages a beginner's mind—free of expectations and judgments. As the process unfolds, participants often feel a sense of unburdening and greater freedom.

Guidelines for Dyad Sessions

1. **Duration**: Each dyad session typically lasts 40 minutes, with partners alternating between inquirer and witness roles.
2. **Sharing**: Inquirers should report their experiences fully, without rushing or withholding.
3. **Facilitation**: Facilitators may observe or provide guidance if needed, ensuring the technique is followed correctly.

The Role of Awareness

Awareness doesn't need to seek itself; it simply is. Our practice involves shifting attention from the conditioned mind to this ever-present awareness. Awakening isn't something to achieve—it's about surrendering and allowing the truth to reveal itself.

Practical Tips for Dyad Practice

- Use clear, intentional language when delivering the imperative.
- As the inquirer, observe and share anything that arises without filtering.
- Avoid judgment or interpretation as the witness; simply hold space for your partner.

Closing Thoughts

This practice is about letting go of control, embracing a “don't know” mind, and allowing the natural process of awakening to unfold. The dyad technique offers a unique and powerful way to clear the mind and experience the truth of who you are.

We'll now take a short break before beginning the first session. Thank you for your openness and willingness to engage deeply with this process.