

Day 5 - Morning Teaching (Extended Content)

Introduction

Good morning, everyone. Today, we delve into meditative absorption, exploring its role in the journey toward awakening. Meditative absorption, known as **Dhyana** in the yogic tradition and **Jhana** in Buddhism, represents a profound state of surrender and stillness. These stages of absorption guide us toward the core of meditation, where the false self dissolves, and the timeless awareness emerges.

The Dual Nature of Meditative Absorption

Meditative absorption is both a process and not a process. On one hand, it unfolds over time, with identifiable stages. On the other, its essence transcends linear progression, existing beyond the confines of time.

- **A Paradoxical Journey**: While we may experience stages, the ultimate realization of absorption occurs in the timeless now, where mind and body are dropped.
- **A Universal Naming**: Words like “Zen” in Japanese and “Chan” in Chinese originate from Dhyana, emphasizing the centrality of absorption across traditions.

Embodied and Direct Path Approaches

A question from a participant asked about the importance of staying in the body when we are taught we are not the body. This highlights the two primary paths to realization: the **Embodied Approach** and the **Direct Path**.

- **Embodied Approach**: Practices like Vipassana and somatic descent focus on clearing samskaras (mental imprints) stored in the body. By making the unconscious conscious, we create optimal conditions for awakening.
- **Direct Path**: Choiceless awareness or simply being skips preparatory stages, pointing directly to awareness. However, this path risks spiritual bypassing if unconscious material is ignored.

Both paths lead to the same destination—samadhi and awakening. The choice of path depends on personal inclination.

Mountains and Rivers

The Zen teaching of mountains and rivers beautifully illustrates the stages of realization:

1. **Initial Perception**: Mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers. We conceptualize reality through labels and categories.
2. **Intermediate Insight**: Mountains are no longer mountains, and rivers are no longer rivers. As the conceptual veil drops, we experience the fluid, ever-changing nature of existence.

3. **Ultimate Realization**: Mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers. This marks the return to simplicity, where the world is seen as it truly is—alive and direct, without conceptual mediation.

Sticky Thoughts and Emotions

Another participant asked about handling sticky thoughts and emotions. These are often referred to as velcro thoughts, which derive their power from the unconscious mind.

- **Making the Unconscious Conscious**: Sticky thoughts persist because they operate in the shadows of the unconscious. Practices like journaling or inquiry help bring them to light, disarming their hold.
- **Byron Katie's The Work**: Questioning thoughts—"Is it true?"—reveals their emptiness, freeing us from attachment to the false self.

Observing Without Evaluating

Krishnamurti famously said, "**The ability to observe without evaluating is the highest intelligence.**" This teaching underscores the essence of meditation:

- **Dropping Analysis**: Observation without evaluation allows the universe to reveal itself energetically, beyond concepts and labels.
- **Be Still and Know**: Whether drawn from the Bible or mystics like Rudolf Steiner, the invitation is to be still and recognize the I Am as God, the essence of direct knowing.

Stages of Meditative Absorption

The journey through the Jhanas or stages of absorption represents the deepening of stillness and clarity:

1. **Overcoming Hindrances**: The mind settles as distractions and cravings subside. Tranquility and pleasant energy arise.
2. **Letting Go of Duality**: Suka (pleasantness) and dukkha (suffering) are transcended, leading to single-pointed awareness.
3. **Merging**: The boundary between self and the meditation object dissolves, revealing oneness.
4. **Dropping the Witness**: Beyond the material Jhanas, the immaterial stages lead to direct contact with consciousness itself.

Direct Experience Beyond Concepts

Mystics like Teresa of Ávila and teachings from all traditions emphasize direct experience over conceptual understanding:

- **The Interior Castle**: Teresa describes prayer leading to divine union, mirroring the progression of meditative absorption.
- **The Veil of Concepts**: As concepts dissolve, we return to childlike directness, seeing the world anew.

The Great Reality

The highest realization lies beyond all dualities, concepts, and states. Known as Turiya, or the groundless ground of being, this is the unchanging awareness that persists through waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.

- ****Shiva and Shakti****: These two aspects of existence—form and formlessness—unite in direct experience, where emptiness is form, and form is emptiness.

Conclusion

Meditative absorption invites us to burn through the layers of conditioning, revealing the timeless awareness that is our true nature. This process requires single-pointed attention and surrender. By staying with the practice, we dissolve the veils of separation, uncovering the great mystery of existence.