

On Meditation: Early Suggestions

Meditation? Start by giving yourself time to observe the thoughts that come crowding up, and observing the motives behind them – as you observe the motives of other people. Sleepiness doesn't matter. All you have to break there is the instinctive equation: sleepiness = lie down and go to sleep. When you feel the futility of the motives, the thought streams springing from them usually falter and stop – with practice.

[A few months later:] Go on as you are doing, regularly. Older disciples can tell you all the tricks, but no tricks do the thing. Try. Try. Try. There is no other answer.

[And again a few months later:] There are 'aids' – tools. One can give a man a set of tools and hope that, by playing, he will become a carpenter. I prefer to give tools to people who know what it is they are trying to achieve – carpenters already, but for the tools.

[And again a few months later:] Morning meditation? Something has got muddled. Any time is suitable for meditation if it suits the meditator. Sometimes, of course, one may be pushed to meditate at times one has no liking for. This, if it happens, is because one has got stuck with the idea that 'this time suits me. I can't do it any other time.'

After all, the aim is to establish something which is present all the time. None the less, the first effort is to be able to go in any way one can. Experiment. Try the morning, try mid-day, try any bloody time. Even if later on you find you were trying the wrong way, it won't matter. The essential thing is to try.

I have not met the inversion of sides before. Presumably it has to do with the sort of dissociation of subtle and physical that accompanies meditation. But with all such things, the best

course is to ignore them. They are, as it were, bits of the scenery passed on the journey. If you stop to look, the journey stops. Your present concern must be ‘Who observes?’ What is it in you that is aware of the sensations, of left and right, aware of thoughts. Dull? No. When you find it, you will know what Ananda means.

Don’t overdo the ‘putting on pressure’ bit. Remember, for instance, that if you are doing a full day’s work and sitting up at night – i.e. taking less sleep — you may need more food to compensate for the spent energy (but if you eat too much, you will be too heavy to sit). Heroics aren’t called for. Steady, bloody-minded determined pressure gets one further than enthusiastic dashes followed by collapse.

[And again a few months later:] When you push yourself over sleeping time, you are clearly going to be faced with whatever it was you were avoiding by sleeping — strains, tensions, pains. Apart from the psychological part of it, which is of limited value, the effort necessary is, in some sense, to split your awareness of self from awareness of body. Body awareness will drag you down if it can. Don’t let the mind play with self-pity. Even if discomfort or just common sense makes you lay the body down, try not to collapse with it. Let the body relax, but you hold on to the same awakesness which you associate with sitting up. Bearable discomfort, such as a book under your head, can help to break the associated response: ‘Lying down means sleeping’.

[And much later:] That blessed state of blankness is the first ‘encouragement’. You went through, but just didn’t wake up on the other side. Now that I have said this, you will probably spoil it all by trying to repeat it. One doesn’t try. One sits – and IT comes.