

Meditation Is a Must

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Steve: Hi, Ted. I am reading and taking notes on your *Introduction to Vedanta*. For whatever reason, the specific remedy for each of the three obstacles is coming through very clearly this time through.

Upon discovery of Vedanta a short time back, I dropped my morning meditation and spent that time reading James' books.

After getting a clearer picture of the role of *karma yoga* and the role of meditation, I am thinking it might be good to resume meditating in the morning, if I am able to stay focused as I continue to pursue the readings that you recommended.

I wonder if we could discuss this, along with your recommendation on how to meditate, unless that is to simply follow James' method as presented in *How to Attain Enlightenment*.

If you think I should do more reading first, I am fine with that as well.

~ Looking forward to hearing your thoughts, Steve

Ted: Hi, Steve. Definitely resume your meditation practice.

Meditation is one of the most effective means of cultivating a *sattvic* mind. Though Vedanta is not about an experience of the self, which is often what people are expecting to gain through meditation, self-inquiry does require a *sattvic* (i.e. clear, calm and concentrated) mind.

There are three main reasons for this.

First, only a *sattvic* mind will be sufficiently free of distracting like, dislikes, desires and fears to enable one to engage in an objective analysis of one's experience.

Second, only a *sattvic* mind will be sufficiently subtle to discriminate between the self (i.e. the knowing principle, or knowledge-as-such, the "light" of awareness that illumines the mind and enables it to know the objects appearing within it) and the "not self" (i.e. the two aspects of relative knowledge, which are the relative knowing subject, the apparent individual person, and the known object, the experienced phenomenon).

Third, only a *sattvic* mind will be clean and smooth enough to serve as a "mirror" in which can register an accurate "reflection" of the unconditioned nature of limitless conscious existence.

The self is not an object that can be experienced, but only a *sattvic* mind can recognize the limitless conscious existence that is the substrate of all experiential phenomena, both subtle (i.e. sensations, emotions and cognitions) and gross (i.e. tangible items, including the body with which the self is associated). By analogy, only when the mind is sufficiently free of its fascination with the forms of the waves is it able to recognize that all are essentially nothing other than water.

Many people think that because the heart of Vedanta is self-inquiry, the practice of meditation is unimportant and optional. This is not the case. Without meditation the teachings of Vedanta remain mere intellectual concepts and self-inquiry, a mere academic endeavor. It is through meditation that the teachings are recognized as revelations of one's true nature. Meditation is the platform from which I am able to recognize that the consciousness that is the fundamental reality of everything is the same consciousness that is the fundamental reality of me.

Having said that, the meditation technique I recommend is the one James describes in *How to Attain Enlightenment*. It provides a systematic progression from the gross to the subtle and thereby facilitates the eventual recognition of that which lies beyond both.

My advice is to keep reading and inquiring. Engage the mind in the process of *shravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*. But complement this "open-eyed" inquiry with daily "closed-eye" meditation. This twofold practice is the means by which you will recognize the "I" that is altogether beyond the eye.

That "I" is the true you.

~ All the best, Ted