

Meditation versus *Karma Yoga*

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Hi Arlindo, Vedanta keeps presenting Karma yoga as a mean for the Jiva to develop the required qualifications for enlightenment, but I suspect that karma yoga alone is not enough and that one needs deep meditation in order to purify the mind. Can you express your thoughts, please?

Answer: In some cases that could be said Rod, but generally speaking, experiential meditation is nearly impossible if the mind is not, to a certain extent, purified by the assimilation and application of karma yoga and therefore fit for meditation. Many modern spiritual teachers suggest silent meditation for their entry level students and as a result their students often fall asleep during the meditation sessions. If a too rajasic mind tries to meditate, it will struggle for some time due to the excess of mental activity until those unexpressed rajas are converted into tamas to produce what is called sleep. One needs to have a balanced mind with some sort of predominance of sattva guna so that sitting silently can develop into deep silent states of mind.

But even when the mind develops enough sattva so that it almost effortlessly modifies itself into states of silence, peace and bliss, so what? Meditation without knowledge does not lead to freedom. In that sense, a purified mind when not engaged in self-inquiry and contemplation is but a waste of one's sattva guna. The real purpose of a sattvic mind is to provide a mirror-like subtle body so that Jiva can witness and apprehend the reflection of the self on its own mind and furthermore, understand the non-dual nature of existence.

The whole experiencing aspect of sattva guna becomes a problem, an addiction... an obstacle to self-knowledge because a sattvic mind, feels very good, calm, silent and peaceful. It is a very appealing object of experience for Jiva's subtle intellect (meditator) to enjoy. I used to say that it feels better than sex. It is very easy to develop a taste for it and to get attached and stuck with it until you get in contact with the scriptural knowledge which clearly distinguishes knowledge from experience. And I am talking from my own past experience as a mediator.

Peace, bliss, silence and whatsoever non-dual epiphanies one may encounter will not remove Jiva's self-ignorance. Unless the mind is properly exposed to the teachings on self-knowledge/Vedanta, Jiva's self-ignorance will remain intact, no matter how many spiritual experiences one may have had. Furthermore, a purified mind requires continuous maintenance, continuous sadhana. If one stops one's efforts and actions which polish the mind, the dust accumulates and chances are that the mind will direct itself towards worldly objects therefore regaining its required rajas and tamas.

Purification is only as good as it serves the purpose of creating the platform on which self-inquiry takes place. Otherwise, it is a sort of waste of one's efforts. It does create a sense of peace, but it is more like a drug. One becomes addicted and dependent on certain actions to achieve it. It is something far from being called freedom. Freedom is freedom from dependence on objects of experience. Silence, peace, love and all other subtle experiences are very deductive objects, but with maturity Jiva realizes their bounding and dependency effects. Some purification + knowledge is

the real goal, the real deal.

QUESTION: Thank you, I have been contemplating this subject because often times, with discrimination, there is peace and in-sight. When it goes, I remind myself that I am not the subtle body, but the witnesser of all the thoughts and emotions. Even the pleased subtle body can be a trap, yes?

Answer: Hi Rod. In deep meditation Jiva "becomes" what I often refer to as the subtle intellect, the observer of the thoughts, emotions, ego and physical body, as well of all possible gross and subtle objects. If I understood your question correctly, I would say, yes, the experience of the subtle-observer is still a trap in the sense that it has little to do with self-realization. It may feel detached, aware, pleased, expanded, peaceful etc. but it is still an experience, and every experience occurs in duality. All of Jiva's experiences are the Jiva plus a thought/object. They are always transient by nature, and constantly modifying.

Self-realization is very simple. It is the realization of the self, as yourself, the very ordinary "I" in you. It is the only factor which never modifies with experience. In other words, it is the ever-present impersonal witnessing principle, the back ground of all experiences and no-experiences. It is the Self, realizing itself thru the apprehension of its own reflection on a Jiva's subtle body, and that is only possible with the aid of a body of knowledge to facilitate the proper assimilation of self-knowledge. Almost invariably, the mere blissful experience of the reflection of the Self on a sattvic mind is not sufficient. As Ramana said; "By knowledge alone the Self can be realized".

Karma yoga, is a great purifier. It is the one yoga we mostly suggest in our Vedanta tradition as a mean to prepare the mind. Jnana yoga is pure knowledge-yoga, self-inquiry. And it works only if the student is already qualified, and in most cases, when under the guidance of a qualified Vedanta teacher. And by the way, it does not help much to ask; "Who am I" or "Who is it that seeks the pleased state?" What one needs are convincing answers, not more questions. That is not what we mean by self-inquiry in our tradition. Hope it helps, Rod. Love.

Question: Hi Arlindo, thank you for taking the time to answer as you did. When I feel off, I go back and re-immense myself in the teachings. This interaction is a teaching as well. It seems now that every time I have a new insight, I catch a glimpse of freedom. Sometimes it lasts for hours or days, sometimes not. But I have learned that experiences are false gods. I am listening to Vivekachodamani as delivered by Ramji a few years ago. Not to mention Essence, which is falling apart in my hands from being read over and over.

And our group is reading Swami Dayananda as well. I feel like the teaching is producing a firefly effect, as Ramji mentioned in Essence. And I want to trust those moments without being attached to them. So I keep going back to the teachings to make my knowledge firmer. Disassociating from thoughts, remembering that superimposition is at work, reminding myself of my true nature which is not a thinker -doer - achiever but the ever-present witness of all achieving, thinking, and doing.

So, I feel that with all of the media: books, audio, and even a little Facebook interaction, that I am being taught. The reason I mention the questions, such as "who is it that seeks this state or that" is because upon that questioning, the subtle body "holding the desire" to change its state seems to vanish and consciousness

alone remains.

Answer: Yes, Rod, by following the logic of Vedanta to inquire into the nature of any desired object, we will find that the desire vanishes on the spot. The same occurs when we inquire into the nature of the pseudo subject (the one desiring the object). But in both cases, we need a body of knowledge to support our inquiry.

The application of the knowledge of the limitless, full and complete nature of the subject will neutralize one's desires as they emerge in the conscious mind, since all ignorance-based desires are seen as a mean to achieve joy and happiness. On the other end, the application of the knowledge based on the analyses which proves that all objects are deprived of joy; "the joy is not in the object" will also neutralize one's desire.