

Meditation Is Not Necessary for *Moksa*

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2017-09-15

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3412>

Narada: Hello, I am Narada, and I read the autobiography *Mystic by Default*. After reading the book I had one question on my mind. I wanted to know how much time James was meditating during his two years of discipleship with Swami Chinmayananda. I'm impressed by his meditational achievements.

Sundari: If that is what you are impressed by, you missed the whole point of the story. Meditation is a tool to aid self-inquiry, it never equals self-inquiry and it will never deliver *moksa*. Ram was set free by the teachings of Vedanta, not by meditation.

Narada: Sorry, don't get me wrong; by saying that I'm impressed I simply meant that quick progress needs good dedication. However, I'm totally aware that yes, without self-knowledge it's just a concentration exercise which helps only while you are doing it, once you get all the effects it reverts. But out of curiosity I wanted to know the amount of meditation he was doing.

Sundari: No, you have it wrong. What does it matter how long Ram was meditating? It was not meditation that set him free. *Moksa* had nothing to do with *yoga* - except indirectly. Meditation only works when the meditator, the one "doing" the meditation, has been negated. That is the problem with meditation. It does not negate the doer, and so the meditator must keep meditating to find relief from the mind.

Self-knowledge reveals that it is not the mind that is the problem. It is the identification with the mind that is the problem. You could have never meditated in your life and have a better chance of *moksa* obtaining than a meditator who has been meditating for 30 years. In fact we often come across this scenario. Many *yogis* are so stuck because they are convinced that they have to "do" something to attain enlightenment. *Moksa* cannot obtain through doing, only through knowledge. NO action (like *yoga*/meditation) taken by a limited entity (the ego/doer/meditator/*yogi*) can lead to a limitless result, like *moksa*. While self-inquiry is a kind of doing, it negates the doer and leads to self-knowledge, which is limitless.

You have the wrong idea of meditation, and clearly do not understand what self-inquiry, *karma yoga* and what *moksa* is. There is a vast difference between *yoga* and self-inquiry.

Meditation is not a valid means of knowledge, which Vedanta is. Unless one has realized that one is not the meditator but the one who knows the meditator, meditation can keep one stuck for years trying to have an experience of the self, which many meditators do have, but the problem is: the identification with the experiencer/meditator is still there. Unless the knowledge that meditation is designed to impart is fully assimilated - i.e. "I am whole and complete, non-dual awareness" and not the meditator - the experience ends because it was just that, an experience. All experiences happen in time, and so they are subject to change and

will end. Only self-knowledge will permanently set one free of the meditator/experiencer because you – awareness/consciousness – are already free.

The experience of the self usually does not lead to freedom, *moksa*, which is why there are so many frustrated meditators around, trying to get the experience back. Even if they succeed, they will most likely “lose” the self-realization once again when the meditation ends because the knowledge that they are that which makes all experience possible, i.e. awareness, is not assimilated from the experience. Meditation is no different from any other activity done to achieve a specific result – unless it is practised with *karma yoga*.

The knowledge that the meditation points to is that you are the knower of the one who meditates, the one who thinks it is the doer/meditator. Meditation is just another object appearing in you, allowing the reflection of the self to appear in a still mind. However, seeing as no experience can take place without you, awareness, and because as awareness you are actionless, no special experience is required to experience the self. You are always experiencing the self, whether you are meditating or not. You just don't know this.

The self, awareness – YOU – is not an object of perception and cannot be known by the mind, because the mind is too gross and the self too subtle. The object or the effect cannot know the subject, the cause. The self is “beyond” the mind and the only means of knowledge the mind must know anything are perception and inference, which are suitable for knowing objects but not suitable means of knowledge to know awareness. Only Vedanta offers a complete and valid means of knowledge for awareness.

Although we can have an experience of the reflection of the self in a pure, *sattvic* mind in meditation, this is not enough to set us free of the doer. For this we need to expose the mind to self-inquiry and allow self-knowledge to remove our ignorance (*avidya*).

Self-inquiry is the application of knowledge to your life. It does not depend on action, the doer. If the doer is not negated, *moksa* cannot obtain. Self-Inquiry states that awareness is our true nature and both knowledge and ignorance are objects appearing in you, awareness. Keeping this knowledge in mind and continually contemplating on it is self-inquiry, which is why self-inquiry is different from meditation because the knowledge is maintained by an act of will, whereas in meditation the knowledge appears during a particular action/experience and ends when the experience ends.

Self-inquiry is superior to meditation because the doer does not need to maintain a particular state and wait for the knowledge. He or she has the knowledge already and applies it continually. Meditators do not know the value of knowledge, whereas inquirers do, which is why the meditators are meditating. Knowledge may arise in meditation or it may not. If it does, we say meditation is a “leading error.” But even if meditation does lead to knowledge of the “unbroken I-thought” (*akandakara vritti*), the knowledge does not always stick, as I point out above.

~ Om, Sundari