

# Meditation and the Meditator

By

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Link to watch - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2XM7I2RhoQ&list=PL5vNI4hvD69oBvCqL-oYafolIPEScvuj\\_&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2XM7I2RhoQ&list=PL5vNI4hvD69oBvCqL-oYafolIPEScvuj_&index=2)



*“Watch your thoughts, they become your words. Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits, they become your character. Watch your character, they become your destiny.”*

This quote is the *bijam*, the seed for this entire tree that is our life. A lot has been done and said about how to manage our thoughts. The Vedic tradition has a very all-encompassing way to look at the mind, the thoughts, the nature of our thoughts, and with that, it points to the nature of the meditator. When we look at the view of the human being, there are three areas we will focus on to help us get to the nature of the meditator.

## **The Three Areas, The Garment**

The first area is *mala*, which means impurity, but not in a Christian sense. Here, impurity is a craving or aversion for something, what we call *raga* and *dvesha*. An

example of this would be collaborating on a work project with a colleague whom you do not like. You must work closely with this person throughout the project and you feel you just cannot stand them. What has happened is, an impurity (*dvesha*) is interfering with your normal functioning, and that disturbs you because now your mind is reacting negatively to it. Not only do you have difficulty dealing with this colleague, even the other colleagues on your team struggle with them! So, you might try meditation to feel more kind towards your colleague, but you are unable to find a sustaining way to handle this *dvesha*. To deal with these, an understanding of Karma Yoga is necessary, which will be addressed later in this article.

The second area we will discuss is ***vikshepa*** which means a distraction or a disturbance. Distractions, especially these days, are constantly interrupting us and causing our thoughts to go all over the place. Distractions are something we need to look at and develop focus so that we can have a certain steadiness.

The third area is called ***Avarana***, meaning a veil. Meditation is an activity, but who is it serving? Is it serving meditation? Is it meditation for meditation's sake? No, all types of meditation are to serve the meditator, but who is the meditator? Although I meditate, there is still a difference, a separation between me, the meditator, and what is meditated on. What is the nature of the meditator? There is a veil that hides it and that veil has to be removed by knowledge. We will look at the entire garment - impurities, distractions, and this veil of ignorance.

When we are looking at impurities and distractions, what we find is our minds are reactive. Suppose your mother said "*Nothing is going to come of you, I do not know what you are going to do in life.*" That statement was said, it was just an event in time that is now gone, but it is not gone. Wherever we go in life, we carry these events with us, especially those who have disturbed us. What shall you do about this?

### **The Order of Ishvara**

This is where we have to learn to appreciate what we will call the order of Ishvara, and what we experience here is deep intelligence. To explain this deep intelligence in a tangible way, we can look at the different bodies of knowledge. Each is intelligent in their own way. Take psychology for instance, a psychologist understands certain principles such as the way in which the mind works and how thoughts, emotions, and sensations work, and then he applies the knowledge to you in therapy and helps you apply it, too. The psychologist does not need to meet with the 7 billion people on the planet to apply these principles. The body of knowledge of psychology, and all other bodies of knowledge, are centered around certain principles, cause and effect. Looking at these principles working in psychology for example, give the psychologist the ability to confidently assume it is likely that if a person has felt abandoned, then they will be

seeking security. And this would apply to anyone, across cultures and across generations. Or, if the person has had some sense of security, the way they will approach tasks and projects will be with a certain degree of confidence.

Where there is intelligence, there is a conscious being called Ishvara. So really speaking, what I am doing is interacting with Ishvara all of the time. I use the word Ishvara and not the word God because God has Abrahamic connotations. If we have grown up with the idea of this stern and judgmental God, then we want nothing to do with God. Even for those who are in tune with the laws of nature must understand, this nature comes from a deep intelligence. All that we see and experience here is really a manifestation of different kinds of material, different kinds of intelligence, different bodies of knowledge, but it is all the way, Ishvara. What does this do for me?

We find ourselves in different situations where we must use certain laws to engage with people and situations. We cannot be talking about silence, and therefore no action. We are talking about silence in spite of action, in spite of thoughts. When working on a project from the point of conceptualization, to actually fleshing out the project, getting the people involved, working on the timelines and deliverables, etc. There is so much involved and this involves using the principles that we have been blessed with, that is Ishvara. How shall we know how to approach the different actions that I want to take for my many pursuits? The Bhagavad Gita steps in and says there are laws and principles operating all of the time. You approach the situation with what needs to be done, not what you need to do. We are talking about Dharma here, which in short is, *I don't want to be hurt, the other doesn't want to be hurt*. Even if the person has hurt us, and our reactive mind wants to punish them as a way to get rid of the sorrow that we face, I will instead act in a kind and supportive manner and I will do what needs to be done. Here is where you see that you have been deeply blessed with a lot of powers, a lot of *shakti*, and you can always respond very mindfully with what needs to be done in that given situation. What needs to be seen is, we generally think more about our convenience than what needs to be done.

The more we think about our convenience, the more impurities, or raga/dvesha, are building up within us. The more these build up, the more difficult it is to satisfy me. For example, I love to go for massages, and eventually, I develop a sense of refinement, even the way the person is pressing certain parts of the body, will cause me to react. All of my conveniences are for me to feel comfortable, but that **comfort becomes my conditioning**, and without it I cannot function. Without a yoga mat, I cannot do yoga. Without a deerskin, I cannot sit for meditation. What might have been only suggested at one time, now becomes a conditioning for me and these **conditions are now limiting the limitless that I really am**, which is to be discovered.

**In the name of convenience and comfort, I am conditioning myself and these are what take the form of raga and dvesha.** With these, I want certain things - I want this one to be like this, I want my partner to be like that, I have a long list, and I also have very supportive logic for it. You might have heard or said "*I am not being selfish, I am saying it for your own good.*" Really speaking, we want the person to change because we think that will make us happy. Finally, the person responds to say "*you know what, I have changed so much for your sake, but you are still complaining.*"

Having raga-s and dvesha –s for people is considered an impurity. It is an impurity because it prevents us from seeing reality the way it is. That is why it is an impurity, and for no other reason. These cause me to divide my world into desirable and undesirable, I reject certain aspects and accept certain aspects, I reject Ishvara and I accept Ishvara, that is the play that is going on. Thinking back to the earlier example about the colleague, I have rejected someone, and I am thinking, how do I deal with this? How can I meditate so I am free from reaction?

**The way we can be free from reaction is to appreciate that all that is here is given,** the situations that have come to me have been chosen by me, by my karma. I have actually asked to be with these people from my previous lifetimes. You may think you could have never asked to be with such an abusive person or nasty person. Actually, the truth is that you have. This is the whole model of karma, there is no escape. I deal with my karma, and the more and more I focus on what needs to be done, my reactions are minimized. Although you cannot stand that colleague you have to work with, you focus on the purpose of the project. Your discussions are focused on what the deliverable is on the project, and yes, she is annoying, but I keep it aside, and I focus on that. I am now bringing in an element of objectivity here - she annoys me but that is only my subjective reality.

We have one more step which is, we offer this to Bhagavan, to Ishvara. Why? Because really speaking, nothing is mine. These are the different abilities given to me, the intelligence has been given to me, my ability to reason, analyze, synthesize, all of that is given to me and I make an offering. Even If this is a little bit too much to swallow, that is ok, I will do my best in that given situation.

How will the project work out? In any action that we do, there are only 4 results possible.

One is the project goes as planned, the result is equal to what you expect.

The second is, the result is much more than what you expected, not only does the project go to plan you get another project from that consultant, this is fantastic.

The third possible result is, you fight with everyone on the team and now you are thinking you need to leave this place, it's not working for you, the project, the result is much less than what you expected.

The fourth result is the result is very different from what you expected. For instance, you get a promotion, you were not expecting it, and it is delightful that you have been considered good enough to get a promotion.

When we look at it, all of the results in our lives, whatever we are facing, whatever we are interacting with, these will be the permutations and combinations. Either **the result is equal to what you expect, more than what you expect, less than what you expect, or it is totally different from what you expect.**

How do I interact with the result? Do I resist it? Do I accept it? I have all of these choices available to me. We have a very beautiful cultural practice in India where something is offered at the altar, you get something back - you may get holy water, what we call *tirtha* or you may get something sweet, you may get ash, or you may get leaves - it is like a gift back, like a return gift from the Lord himself. The gift is received in the same way a gift from someone who has given you a lot gives you a gift, you extend your hand, and something is put in the hand and **you receive it with certain graciousness and complete acceptance and gratitude** that you received something you were not expecting. This is what changes our relationship with everything around us - this attitude of graceful acceptance. What is done in the temple, **the act of graciously receiving something, whatever comes from the altar, becomes an extension into my life.**

I extrapolate that action into my whole life, and I learn to open my arms and receive what life has to offer whether it be in the form of very annoying people, aches and pains in the body, anything we receive. Does this mean that acceptance means everything is ok? No. Acceptance means seeing things as is, that is what acceptance really is. Otherwise, it will be resignation. You do not have to accept it, you can resist it, you can fight it. But if you look at the moments in our lives which count as really memorable moments, they are where you have felt completely accepting, meaning you are fine as you are.

These impurities, *ragas* and *dveshas*, that we have, have to be approached. Our reactions to different people is approached from the perspective of seeing that all that is here, is deep intelligence. There is a conscious being which is called Ishvara, and I am receiving the love and grace of Ishvara in different ways. My own karma, the different will based actions that I have done in my current and past lifetimes, are all coming back to me. So, what I am really interacting with, is my karma, or the results of my actions. Knowing these facts, my reacting mind will learn to subside. It is also said in the

Bhagavad Gita that all of these people you are carrying around, one of the first things you have to do in meditation is *baahyaan sparshaan bahir krtva*, in other words, what is external please keep it external. Do not internalize it.

At the seat of meditation, all of the things that people have said to us, especially the things that have hurt us very deeply, or the humiliating instances in our lives, or things that we are ashamed of, you say to yourself that you will deal with these later, and this is important. Our sacred scripture called the Bhagavad Gita, and even in Patanjali yoga sutras, *Dhyanam*, loosely translated as meditation, comes much later.

**You never start with meditation because you need to learn to engage with life. Otherwise, meditation becomes an escape.** Instead of engaging with life, one chooses to go to their corner and meditate, and then, it might just become a habit. It might feel easier to just start avoiding everyone because it is too much to deal with. Meditation is for one who is competent in life. You have to have life competence and that comes by dealing with mala, impurities, by engaging with life, not running away from karma.

The technical definition of meditation in the shastra, is **Saguna Brahma Vishaya Maanasa Vyaapaara**. which means, mental activity related to **Saguna Brahma**, which is God. There is no intention to convert you, this definition comes to us directly from the scriptures, meditation is mental activity related to God. You cannot relate to God unless you understand what God is.

**We meditate on God only after we understand God.**

**Why should you meditate on God?**

**Because you feel separate.**

### **Relaxation Meditation**

Now that we have addressed some of the preparation for meditation and the reason why we should meditate, we will talk about the types of meditation. There is one type of meditation which is actually not meditation, but passes off as meditation, we call this relaxation meditation. **To relax is the most natural thing**, but the reason **I am not able to relax is because my reacting mind is reacting all of the time**. So, we have different types of meditation which I think all of us have been exposed to, where you use the breath to relax yourself, or you relax yourself by taking your attention to different parts of the body. Please watch the video below, I am going to take you through different types of meditation.

Guided Meditation : [34:13](#) - [39:02](#)

What we have just done are initial preparatory steps, it's not yet meditation. It is often misunderstood that magically when we close our eyes, it is meditation, but it is not, these are preparatory steps. This is not shastra meditation, but preparatory.

### Object Based Meditation

The second type of meditation is when you use an object to meditate. You need a support, an *aalambana*, and you direct your focus or attention to that object and that is where *trataka* comes in. It could be a flame, it could be your finger, it could be a part of a deity you are worshipping, a symbol, or it could even be your own heart - it could be any object. This is what we will call object based meditation.

The goal to any type of meditation is to have a quiet, relaxed, alert, and peaceful mind. The mind you discover at the seat of meditation is really your own mind, nobody came and transplanted a mind, it is yours. **This non-reactive mind that you discover in meditation is what you extend to the rest of your life.**

### Mantra Based Meditation

We have looked at relaxation based meditation and object based mediation, the third type we will look at, is mantra based meditation. Mantra comes to us from the Veda, which is knowledge that has been revealed to us by Ishvara. Mantras cannot be changed. They are all in Sanskrit, and cannot be directly translated, only the meaning can be explained. Mantra based meditation is very important for the second area we covered earlier, which was distractions. We want to achieve a certain *naischalyam*, steadiness in our minds. How does this work? The mind is reactive, and the mind focuses or goes by association everywhere. When you sit to meditate, do you find that your mind goes all over? That is the nature of the mind, and we have no problem with it. Because the mind has this tendency, the repetition of a mantra gives an occupation to the mind. It allows us to know what the next thought is going to be. An example of a mantra would be *Om Namah Shivaya*, this would be repeated over multiple times. Even when you repeat the mantra, it's very natural for the mind to go all over. Anyone who does not think they can meditate because of this is wrong.

What is said in the Gita is that *yato yato nischarati tato tato niyamyai...* which means, wherever the mind goes, just learn to bring it back, that is all. There is no need to be angry with the mind or judge ourselves because of this, there is no need to think your meditation was not good because your mind wandered. It's you, it's your mind, you need to have some compassion. When we do not have compassion for our mind, it means we are rejecting the way our mind functioned. And, remember, all that is here is deep intelligence, it is Ishvara. Another very beautiful line from the Upanishad says *yatra yatra mano yaati tatra tatra samaadhayah* or, wherever your mind goes, it is in

Ishvara, it is in *Samadhi*. Even if you are thinking the worst kind of thoughts, there is no need to worry, just bring it back. This is where your will is involved. In this mantra based meditation, we are practicing this, when we chant the mantra, if the mind goes here and there, we bring it back to the mantra. This is very important for steadiness of the mind.

What we find is, when we meditate, a lot of disturbances come up. This is why you should never sit for meditation unless you have dealt with these aspects of your life. Because when you sit to meditate, you will find your entire to-do list, all of the things that people have said to you, or have not said to you will come up in front of you. This will need to be learned to be dealt with, because it's only the residue that we will look at in meditation. When you prepare for meditation in this way, then your meditation will be very successful, meaning you are now discovering a very compassionate attitude to your mind. Your mind is not there to traumatize you, it is just an instrument that has been given to you. This *antahkarana*, inner instrument, is actually the sanskrit word for the mind. This is a very beautiful and very profound word, the mind is in my hands. This is the purpose of yoga, also, ***Chitta vritti nirodhah***, meaning mastery of the mind. In yoga, I learn to be comfortable in an uncomfortable posture

Earlier, my comfort zone was small. Now, by doing some asanas, dealing with people, and interacting with situations, my comfort zone has increased and will continue to increase until it will expand to the entire world.

**The whole world will be my comfort zone - no matter where I am, I am comfortable because I have trained my mind to now be steady, to be calm, to be quiet, to respond to situations, and to not be afraid of any situation.**

### Value Based Meditation

We have looked at relaxation meditation, object based meditation, mantra based meditation, and the last we will look at is value based meditation. Think of a quality you wish you had, whether it is love, compassion, kindness, whatever quality you wish. What is the color of what quality to you? Take this quality and the associated color into this guided meditation (51:20 - 1:00:32).

The Value based meditation we did is a very straightforward kind of meditation, because it is just claiming what is already ours. We needed to reclaim it because we have created a sense of separation between ourselves and the quality that we wanted. For example, when you are with a baby or a child, whether you know them or not, you will find yourself naturally speaking very kindly towards them. This kind voice you use towards them, is a voice that we all have to claim for ourselves, because we tend to be very critical of ourselves. This voice is actually the voice of being kind to your inner child, and claiming this voice will allow all of the things you want to hear, to be what you



will hear. Think of the nicest things you have heard about yourself, and the terms of endearments used towards you and start to address and speak to yourself in this way. Rather than criticizing yourself and thinking "damn I'm so stupid!", you will say "my dear, you may think you are being stupid, but actually you are not."

Another way in which we separate ourselves from these qualities, comes from hero worshipping someone, which leads to comparing ourselves to them. Comparing ourselves to others is a very effective way to creating insecurities in ourselves. This human insecurity that we have will not just go away, we need to learn to manage it. Through value based meditation, we learn to invoke the values we want using a visualization technique by coupling a sound, and a color so it was very multi sensory. You were able to see it spreading across your body.

### **Witnessing Meditation**

The fourth type of meditation we will discuss is called *Sakshi Bhaava* meditation, or witnessing meditation. In witnessing meditation, there is a very effective technique used in *vipassana*, which stops the chattering of our mind. To stop the chattering of the mind, you become aware of sensations and sounds. The majority of the time, we aren't quite aware of what is happening in the body. Yoga asanas help us to be aware without judgment about it. You are not labeling yourself on the basis of the thought you have, or the sensation you have. If you feel uncomfortable, you feel uncomfortable, and that's it.

### **Conceptual Meditation**

There is also another type of meditation called conceptual meditation. Here, you take a thought, and similar to zen meditation, you follow it with "this too shall pass". So, you sit in the meditation seat, and after the initial preparatory steps, you bring this again and again. For example: Thought: "My body is aching" Followed by: "This too shall pass", Thought: "why was that person so nasty to me?" Followed by: "this too shall pass", Thought: "I am remembering those wonderful times." Followed by: "this too shall pass." You take any idea, and in response to each thought you say it.

The idea you use could be that the intelligence that I see is Ishvara or it is Bhagavan, which is to be discovered. And this is where we see the real definition of God. In the Shastra, doing this type of meditation, is what we call meditating on Ishvara. Why would one meditate on Ishvara? Because we feel separate. One example of how you feel separation is when we rely on our partner so much to feel fine, that when they are away, we do not feel fine. A partner cannot be there at all times, how can we solve this feeling? This is where you discover the one relationship that you have had across all lifetimes, not just this lifetime, and that all you have been given, is really from Ishvara. To understand this, we may have to retrieve the understanding of Ishvara from the many

ideas and misconceptions we have about God such as that he is judgmental, watching over me and protecting me, out to get me, victimized me, traumatized me, etc. We need more exposure to the understanding of Ishvara. For now, it is enough to say that where there is intelligence, there is Ishvara.

It is important to understand that a mantra is generally chanted, not sung, because the melody becomes what is being absorbed instead of the mantra. The mind goes into a certain absorption with the melody, like trance music. Any activity that you really love, can take you into a deep state of absorption. But, what is our whole goal? Is it to go into absorption? We want a mind that is calm, relaxed, alert and can function in any and every situation. If we are just caught up with meditation as an activity, we are limiting ourselves.

#### Guided Witnessing Meditation [1:09:41](#) - [1:14:07](#)

Here, we want to try to bring it back to this direction, there is a need to direct. We are ready for this kind of meditation only after we have done the directing kinds of meditation. All of us live structured lives and we have a need to control. Unless we control, we do not feel we are in charge. The way we try to command the mind is like a whipping boy, telling it "*Behave! You better listen to what I have to say.*" The more you approach your mind in this way, the more it will rebel. Before you want to do this kind of meditation, allow your mind to go all over. And then when the mind is tired, you are available to witness what is here. That is why our attitude with our mind needs to be of compassion.

Think of when you bite your tongue, you just think to yourself "oh, I bit my tongue, I will be more careful." We do not build up a reaction. Here we are just being compassionate, which is our nature. In terms of our personality, this is how we are very naturally. We are very happy being that, we don't aspire to be anything more, it's an easy way of being. This is something we have to cultivate with our mind in meditation. The mind can go all over and that is fine because it's just an instrument for me. I learn to master it in time. First, I learn to have the right attitude to life, I learn to discover what is Ishvara, the various results, the prasada that comes in my life, the various gifts and grace that comes into my life, and I learn to accept that. I learn to perform at a very high level of life competence, and I am able to give it my best in different situations. Once that is taken care of, then I am ready to meditate. At this point, when I meditate with these different types of meditation, I can now command a mind that is relaxed and peaceful most of the time, Sometimes it is not and that's ok, the mind is growing up. I am still learning.

## Discovering the Meditator

All meditation is a mental activity related to Ishvara, the lord. In using a mantra or the breath, you are offering your gratitude for all you have been given. The last type of meditation is really to discover the meditator and this is not a conventional type of meditation. If one has been exposed to the teachings of non-duality, your true nature - that I am that *Satchidananda*, that I and Ishvara are one, that there was never a separation - then I will see the truth of that in meditation. Why is meditation important even when this truth is clear to you? Because there are habitual patterns which continue coming up.

There is a story of a man who once was a beggar, but suddenly won the lottery. As he is learning what it is to be a rich man, he decides to drive in his expensive car and show the world that he is no longer a beggar. He stops by where he used to beg for food with others and as he is there, when the other beggars extend their hand as people pass, out of habit, he finds himself extending his arm as well. He looks at his fingers adorned in rings and he says "oh my gosh, I'm not really a beggar!" He feels very sheepish and he withdraws his hands. He doesn't feel he is rich - why? Because the earlier pattern of feeling like a beggar, that he doesn't have enough and there is a lack in his life, is still very much there. It's a pattern of thinking, that has been there with him for years.

Similarly, thinking that "*I am this limited being and because of that, I feel confined and enclosed by this human body*", is a pattern of habitual thinking. The one japa we have done, is repeatedly telling ourselves that "I am a limited human being." You have repeated this to yourself so many times, for your entire life. "I can't do this" "I feel helpless" "I feel limited" - it's a very strong conditioning. This conditioning will only subside and leave us by repetition.

Will this repetition make the truth appear wonderful? The truth is the truth. I am not able to see the truth because of my old conditioning, all I see is that I am just a human helplessly struggling in this world. At the seat of meditation, we do what is called *nididhyasana*. This is only done by those who are exposed to the teachings, who have their doubts clarified about non-duality teachings, and are able to see the truth of who they really are. There is nothing new that is discovered in meditation.

One of the myths about meditation is that you will discover something new. What you will discover is a calmness and relaxation that is very natural to you. Because of the lives that we live in, and our many pursuits, we lose the sense of knowing how to relax. So, it can be discovered through the initial kinds of meditation discussed. Then, as we progress in our meditation practice, we begin to have a certain steadiness of mind. As we get exposed to non-duality teachings, then we are able to see on and off the seat of meditation, that wherever my mind goes, it is in Ishvara. Someone once asked a Swami

from Rishikesh *"Swamiji, how many hours do you meditate in a day?"* assuming it might be running into hours and hours. And he said *"Why do you put this disturbance called meditation in my head?"* Because that meditation has been so effortless for him his mind is always meditating. Even in the midst of the battlefield, that mind can be a meditative mind.

Meditation is not absence of thoughts. In the yoga paradigm, it may be presented as absence of thoughts, but in Vedanta, we see that you have thoughts, you don't have thoughts, and you are silence in spite of the thoughts. Thoughts are not your enemy. You welcome your thoughts, and you will find that after some time their momentum and intensity will die down. Really speaking, **you are the witness of all your thoughts and the content of that witness is pure consciousness.** The mind occurs in consciousness, your body is in consciousness, you are free and you accommodate your mind, you accommodate your body, you accommodate all of your thoughts.

There is no judging, there is no labeling, the mind needs to do what it needs to do given whatever pursuits we are involved in. Now, you have developed a very helpful and compassionate attitude to your own mind. Whatever is needed, your mind is available. It is now truly an instrument in your hands. Now, you have discovered the meditator, and that meditation served you to help you discover that you are beyond all meditation, really. The nature of the meditator is pure consciousness. Through the teachings you have received, you have seen the truth of the teachings, and wherever your mind goes, you accept it.