



Beginning Meditation:

Theory and Practice

What is “Gnostic” meditation?

The practice of receiving information directly by the consciousness.

Direct information is that which is acquired without constraints of the body, intellect, or emotions.



The Objective

The stillness and silence of the mind has a single objective: To liberate the from the mind, so that when fused with the Monad or Inner Self, it (the Essence) can experience that which we call the Truth.

- Samael Aun Weor, The Technique of Meditation



Three Trainings

Ethical Conduct

Mental Discipline

Profound Wisdom

Ethical Conduct

Requirements

Adopt beneficial behaviors.
Cease harmful behaviors.

Results

Liberty to have spiritual practice.
Basic psychological stability.

Ethics is not a list of things to do in order to be “good”, but rather the harmonious management of physical, vital, emotional, mental, etc., energies.

Ethics includes all of our behaviors between meditation sessions: basic mindfulness, self-observation, transformation of impressions, sexual transmutation, etc.

Mental Discipline

Requirements

Safe environment, healthy body.
Right efforts of mindfulness and introspection (and others...).

Results

Perfect concentration.

Perfect concentration is also known as samatha (Skt.), shyiné (Tib.), tranquility, one pointedness, mental equipoise, meditative quiescence, calm abiding.

It is liberated, wakeful consciousness in its natural state.

Profound Wisdom

Requirements

Some degree of liberated consciousness.
Employment of natural capacities of consciousness to perceive and discern.

Results

Insight, gnosis, profound wisdom.
Direct Experience of the Illuminated Void, the Truth, the Tao.

Shamata suspends the processes of the ego and activates the innate qualities of consciousness. Only insight (Skt: vipassana) can produce the causes needed to destroy the ego.

Concentration and Insight (Shamata and Vipassana)

1. The greater the concentration, the greater the probability of insight.
2. Imagination and insight are closely related qualities of the consciousness. Visualization catalyzes insight, which can then inspirationally feed back into deeper concentration.
3. Complete shamata is not needed to gain beginner's wisdom and comprehension.
4. Shamata without vipassana produces temporary liberation and blissful experiences which are misunderstood.
 - The pinnacle of concentrative absorption falsely appears to achieve the annihilation of self and karma, but self and karma have merely been put at relative rest. The bliss of concentration, without wisdom, is a source of false Masters, false Gurus, false Prophets...
5. Complete shamata with vipassana can produce complete liberation.

Different Types of Practice

1. Shamata primary practices
 1. Concentrating upon external sensory object.
 2. Concentrating upon internal visualized / conceptualized object.
 3. Resting in the natural state without discernment of the nature of mental processes.
2. Vipassana primary practices
 1. Discerning the nature of internal conceptualized / visualized object.
 - Retrospection of memories and dreams, qualities of visualized Deity, qualities of consciousness, etc.
 2. Discernment of the nature of mental processes (thoughts and emotions) as they appear.
 3. Discernment of that which is beyond the mind.

Combining Concentration and Insight

- Beginners should focus on concentration primary practices. The meditator can switch to a insight primary practice once 'relative' concentration has been reached.
- With practice the meditator knows when to transition the focus of practice from concentration to insight, and back to concentration when needed.
- The meditator who reaches perfect concentration does not need to make any efforts to stay in concentration.

Basis of Concentration

1. Concentration is not an effort like lifting a heavy object.
2. The unafflicted, natural state of mind is serene.
3. Inherent qualities of consciousness are blissful continuity, clear perception, and nonconceptual understanding.
4. The states of our mind and emotions can “trap” or obscure the inherent qualities of consciousness. This trapped state is “ego”.
5. The skillful use of free consciousness can extract the consciousness which is trapped, increasing concentration.
6. When all of the consciousness is free, and the mind is perfectly at rest, this is perfect concentration.

Steps to Concentration

1. Supportive Lifestyle (Ethics)
2. Supportive Posture
3. Relaxation: Putting the Body and Its Energy to Rest
4. Going Inside: Pratyahara or Withdrawal of Senses
5. Concentration: Skillful application of mindfulness and vigilant introspection.

Posture

- Stability within restfulness.
- Spine straight with head balanced.
- Many Options:
 - Sitting on cushion / zafu.
 - Knees lower than hips, such as half or full lotus positions.
 - Western style chair.
 - Kneeling position, with or without a bench.
 - Lying down supine (face up) / shavasana.
 - Lying down with legs upwards on wall (viparita karani mudra).

Putting the Body and Its Energy to Rest

- Drop attachments to perfect physical comfort.
 - Respect, love, and treat the body as you would a stubborn mule that must do its work.
 - Relative comfort is enough to begin.
- The nervous system and vital body are often agitated.
 - Produces random itches, twitches, impulses to move, and many aches and pains
- Skillful use of attention allows the student to neutralize or simply bypass the body and its energy and move directly to attending to the object.
- Unskillful use of attention will stir up more agitation and identification of the body and its energy.

Going Inside: Pratyahara or Withdrawal of Senses

- Concentration can begin on an external object...
 - Candle flame, object on an altar, flower, stone, stick, etc.
 - The process of breathing, or, process of performing pranayama (Ham Sah)
- ... but concentration without the five external senses is the goal.
- This leaves the sixth sense only, related to consciousness, which remains active, upon the internal object of concentration.

How to Deepen Concentration

The foundational skills of deepening concentration are:

1. Mindfulness (smṛti): the remembrance of the practice of meditation. To not forget that one is, moment to moment, *attending to* something.
2. Introspection / vigilance (samprajanya): noticing the qualities of the mental space which threaten the practice of meditation.

Mindfulness is primary, introspection is secondary.
Mindfulness sets up meditation, introspection prevents the falling out of meditation.

A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life by Santideva

“Those who wish to protect their practice should zealously guard the mind. The practice cannot be protected without guarding the unsteady mind. Untamed, mad elephants do not inflict as much harm in this world as does the unleashed elephant of the mind in the Avici hell and the like. But if the elephant of the mind is completely restrained by the rope of mindfulness, then all perils vanish and complete well-being is obtained.”

– Ch 5, v 1 - 3

“When mindfulness stands guard at the gate of the mind, introspection arrives, and once it has come, it does not depart again.”

– Ch 5, v 33

“In brief, this alone is the definition of introspection: the repeated examination of the state of one’s body and mind.”

– Chp 5, v 108



Tips to Deepen Concentration: Using An Object

1. Attend to the object of concentration.
 - Use Mindfulness: Do not forget you are meditating.
 - Use Introspection / Vigilance: Notice the qualities of excitement or dullness, and notice if you are starting to lose the practice.
2. Simply notice the qualities of the object as they already are.
3. Do not project qualities, discover them.
4. Do not 'wait' for anything. Instead, drop all expectations, increase relaxation, and effortlessly focus in an unwavering manner.
5. If the mind is distracted, notice that it is distracted, and return to the object of concentration without adding additional energy of thought and emotion.

Discernment of Mental Processes

1. Restfully notice the state of the mind's appearance, as it changes moment to moment.
2. To discern to the state of the mind, one must be able to recognize (by use of the wakeful consciousness) the thoughts and emotions as fluctuations of mind (non-identification of the mind).
3. Perception increases while mind movement becomes more and more subtle.
4. Real discernment is not the practice of labeling thoughts as "thought" and emotions as "emotion". Discernment is to apprehend something, to see it, without conceptualization or mental-emotional fluctuations.

Tips to Deepen Concentration: Discernment of Mental Processes

1. Attend to the process of the mind, as it appears, moment by moment.
 - Use Mindfulness: Do not forget you are meditating.
 - Use Introspection / Vigilance: Notice the qualities of excitement or dullness, and notice if you are starting to lose the practice.
2. If mindfulness was lost, use momentary retrospection: Recall the process which has produced the loss of the practice.
3. Example: In a spontaneous moment of introspection, one realizes they are actually thinking about the future. Therefore, mindfully retrospect within that meditation the process of emotions, desires, fears, thoughts, etc., that produced the falling out of meditation. Attend closely to that which caused the fascination, to discover it's actual, factual, observable nature.

Foundational Concentration Practice

Concentration upon an object: the breath (anapanasati)

- While the breath is short, notice that it is short.
- When the breath is long, notice that it is long.
- Different practices:
 1. Counting the breath
 2. Physical sensations of breathing (nostrils, lungs, stomach, etc.)
 3. Transferring the pattern of physical breath sensations towards the subtle inner flow of prana

Foundational Concentration Practice

Concentration upon an object: mantra

- Mantras can be started out loud, but should be transitioned to inner recitation for deeper relaxation and concentration.
- Examples:
- Seven vowels: I, E, O, U, A, M, S
 - Sounds like (in English): ee, eh, oh, uu, ah, mm, ss
- Om Manipadme Hum
 - <http://gnosticteachings.org/courses/gnosis-of-buddha-dharma/1719-the-mantra-of-christ-om-manipadme-hum.html>

Foundational Concentration Practice

Concentration upon an object: mantra

- “Heart Sutra”, Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, Prajnaparamitahrdaya
- Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha
 - “Go, go, go beyond, go totally beyond, be rooted in the ground of enlightenment.”
 - <http://gnosticteachings.org/scriptures/buddhist/783-the-heart-of-wisdom-sutra.html>

Foundational Concentration Practice

Concentration upon an object: heart pulse

1. Close your eyes
2. Pay attention to your heart beat, starting at your heart
3. Circle your body, noticing the pulse, spending as much time needed at each point until the pulse is felt.
 1. Right ear
 2. Right palm
 3. Right foot, big toe
 4. Left foot, big toe
 5. Left palm
 6. Left ear
 7. Nose
 8. Repeat if needed, or, notice your pulse with full body awareness

Insight Practice: Retrospection of Memories

1. Use a foundational concentration practice to achieve a relative state of concentration.
2. Visualize your day (or a part of the day) in reverse.
3. Or, visualize any particular memory forwards or reverse.
4. Observe the arrival of thoughts and emotions in connection with the visualization.
5. Use “Discernment of Mental Processes” to develop insight.

Practice: Visualization of a Deity

1. Achieve some relative level of mental equipoise.
2. Visualize an inspirational image of a Deity / God / Inner Being.
3. Combine with prayer and deep spiritual longing.

Use an image which is personally inspiring.

Use an image which elicits the qualities you need comprehension in.



Practice: Melting Into the Light of Awareness

1. Imagine a seven branched menorah or candelabra.
2. In an increasingly relaxed manner, count each breath, up to 7.
3. Upon reaching 7, imagine one candle being light.
4. Repeat 7 breaths for each candle without losing your concentration or imagination.
5. Let the visualization become more profound and forget the body, emotions, and mind.
6. Melt into the light of awareness, like the candles visualized.



The Conquest of the Illuminating Void

Many esotericists think that Meditation in no way should be combined with the drowsiness of the body, but those who think that way are wrong, because Meditation without drowsiness ruins the brain.

Always use sleep in combination with the technique of Meditation, but a controlled sleep, a voluntary sleep — not a sleep without control, not an absurd sleep, but Meditation and sleep combined intelligently.

We must "ride" on sleep, and not let the sleep ride on us. If we learn how to "ride" on sleep, we will triumph; yet, if sleep "rides" upon us, we will fail. But, let us use drowsiness!

Again, Meditation combined with sleep and a technique take our students to Samadhi, to the experience of the Illuminating Void.

One must practice daily. At what time? At the moment when we feel the intention of doing so, especially when we feel sleepy; take advantage of it and meditate.

If the disciples follow these instructions, they may one day receive the Tao; they may experience the truth.

<http://gnosticteachings.org/lectures-by-samael-aun-weor/3692-the-conquest-of-the-illuminating-void.html>

Beginner's Goals of Developing Concentration

1. You must do the practice.
 - Overcome procrastination, self-defeatism, and busyness in useless/harmful activities.
2. You must not forget the instructions of the practice, and actually follow the instructions of the practice.
3. When doing the practice, you must not forget that you are doing the practice.
4. Start with 2 – 3 short sessions (5 to 15 minutes each).

If you are unable to accomplish these, you must clarify the teachings (study), and reflect on what you really want in life.

Meditation is the Daily Bread of the Gnostics

Question: Definitively, Master, one who does not meditate cannot dissolve the ego?

Samael Aun Weor: No, he cannot, because he cannot comprehend it. How could someone dissolve the ego if there is no comprehension of it? First of all, it is necessary to acquire cognizance of the ego on which one meditates so that one can soon dissolve it.

Question: Since this is a fact, do you think the Gnostic student should meditate daily?

Samael Aun Weor: Gnostics should practice Meditation at least four or six hours daily, practicing in the morning, in the afternoon, and almost all night, until dawn. This should become our habit during our entire life. Thus, if they proceed that way, they will live a profound life and will Self-realize themselves. Otherwise, they will live a superficial, hollow life, a chronicle life, something—we would say—like a shallow puddle. We know very well that any puddle at the edge of a road is soon dried under the rays of the sun, and thereafter only rottenness is left. Nevertheless, the lakes are very different; they are profound, full of fish and life. We must, therefore, learn how to live profoundly, and this is obtained by means of Meditation.

Question: Master Samael, we asked an instructor once how long Meditation should last and he answered, "Ten minutes." What is your opinion regarding this answer?

Samael Aun Weor: Any meditation must last hours: three, four, six hours. Once in the "illuminating void," there is no time. The aspirant's lack of profundity is what harms the younger brothers.

Additional Resources

Meditation Essentials:

<http://gnosticteachings.org/courses/meditation-essentials.html>

Meditation without Exertion:

<http://gnosticteachings.org/courses/meditation-without-exertion.html>

