

Wednesday Morning Guided Meditation

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Following up a bit from the talk yesterday, the Buddha has a teaching called—the name of the *sutta* is called—*The All*, A-L-L. The topic of the All was a very important metaphysical, religious concept in his time: the grand ideas of the essence of the universe, the true nature of things, the all. And so, the Buddha had a very radically different idea at the heart of his religion, of his message. So he went on to define the all as the six fields, the six realms, spheres of senses and sensations.

Outside of that, there's nothing that encompasses everything that you can directly know. So, the direct experience of yourself and the world is through seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and that inner sense door that knows what we're thinking and what's happening in the mind. Now, you might have thoughts about the past, and the past is huge. You might have thoughts about the future that are sophisticated and complex. But that's just one more thing that the mind can know at the senses: that's a thought. Without the thought being there, we would not know anything about it.

And it's kind of amazing how much of our world is made up of those thoughts in the mind. How much of the world is not hearing, seeing, tasting, touching? But it's possible to sit at the place where sense contact occurs, including where knowing, seeing a thought occurs. No matter how you are, no matter what your conditions, your situation, your circumstances are, no matter how much you're suffering, or how much you're spinning out in thought, or how calm you are, the mind can still know one thing: what's contacting the sense doors. And if you're spinning out in thought, the most basic thing about that: it's just a thought.

The thought is being registered, is being taken in, and then you produce its friend or its enemy with further thoughts. But that's just a thought. And then you pick up the thought, get

involved in the thought, participate, and start thinking. But if you know that that's happening, that's simply the knowing of it happening. And right there, in the knowing, that's always here, very specific in the moment.

The Buddha likened it to a person sitting at the only gate into a walled city: a gatekeeper that, whatever comes to go through the gate, either opens the gate or doesn't. Either allows it to continue or not. And to sit at the gate of our senses, and to be able to see the urge to get attached, to cling, to get involved. Physiologists of the mind say that the time distance between the initial impulse to get involved with something we know, something that we feel or hear or sense, is a kind of a long time for how quickly the mind works. Apparently, it's a quarter of a second, but that's long enough to see the desire to want to cling, to get involved, to move towards. And for the gatekeeper to say, "No need. Stay here."

So that's the teaching. Now, the meditation. Take some moments to relax the shoulders, relax around the shoulders, the shoulder blades. The front corners of your shoulders by the chest. Relax the front rib cage, down the ribs one after the other.

And soften the belly. And if the belly doesn't want to soften, say it's okay. But maybe you can soften around it, around the holding or the tension. A soft environment around what is tense. Perhaps there can be some softening of the face around the eyes.

Sometimes the eyes are working when we meditate, as if we're trying to look, see our meditation practice. Letting the eyes rest in their sockets, almost as if you're looking maybe backwards. In whatever way that's easy for you, feel the global body and the sense of the body as a whole. Whatever way that that's felt, does the body feel more solid and tight, or more soft, porous, loose? Either way is okay. Whether the body is hard and tight or soft and loose, can you, for a few moments, hold it all in a spacious awareness that surrounds it, a softness that surrounds you, your body?

And then there's the knowing. And what is it that comes to your awareness easily? That is a present-moment experience. And is the knowing of it simple, without contention, without wanting, without getting involved? Where do you use that quarter second to get involved, to react, to think stories, to move towards or move away?

If you allow what's easy to arise, how do you know it? How simply can you feel it? Might there be a quarter of a second where you leave it alone? It's just known, felt, experienced at the sense door. Whatever arises at the sense doors is simply a visitor passing through. Every thought, as a thought, is simply a visitor passing through.

Maybe knowing the softness associated with breathing, and knowing it softly. The idea is to

know the all, everything. Don't allow anything to not be included. Sometimes you have to turn the attention around 180 degrees to simply know your reaction, your attitude, the way that you're knowing. The idea is to sit in the middle of a 360-degree awareness. To know at the sense doors, to know simply at the sense doors—that is a location where we can be awake.

One more teaching for the day. As we've seen, the metaphor of water is used in many ways. One of them is used for knowing. The knowing that is an awakening. The knowing which is an opening to what is known, to this world. The simple, ordinary knowing that doesn't close, doesn't resist, and knowing which invites us to be open for the next knowing.

It's likened to a lotus flower. Not a lotus flower now that's floating in the water, but a lotus flower which has grown out of the water and opens above it: wide open, broad lotus. And this idea of being rooted in the water, but growing out of the water to the clear light of day, the clear open space of the air, and to open fully. To be rooted in the watery world of the body that is like a lake.

Sometimes the Buddha referred to a water image of a flood, when something outside of us washes over us, submerges us, drowns us. But even with the floods, the lotus can keep growing above it. Whether things are soft and watery and nice, or whether the water is swirling and whirlpools and floods, the knowing of everything can rise above it all and simply know. This is the value of the simplicity of knowing.

They say the lotus that opens above the water is untouched by water. Water drops roll right off a lotus leaf, a lotus petal. When knowing is a lotus, nothing sticks. Everything rolls off. So we're awake and ready for the next knowing.

Stay as close as you can to the All, that place, that door, through which we know everything. Immediately now, in the simplest ways, may your knowing, may your mindfulness, be a lotus blossom that flowers with each act of knowing. Thank you.