Guided Meditation: Beyond the Question

Gil Fronsdal

November 27, 2026

Keywords: Buddhist practice, questions, thinking, awareness, heart's freedom, mindfulness meditation, embodied awareness, goodwill, kindness, present moment

---

Hello, everyone. Welcome. And for many of us here in the United States, for many of you, it's the day after Thanksgiving. And for my family, actually, we celebrate today for family reasons. And so I'm looking forward to going home and having our wonderful dinner lunch. We have lunch usually. So, and thank you for being here.

So the topic for this week is questions. And the deepest form of questions, for the purpose of Buddhist practice, is the questions that awaken not to an answer, but to the end of questions. It's related to the idea that thinking is not considered bad in Buddhism. Being on a thinking train, where the thinking is reactive and a long train of associations or reactivity or preoccupation, can be quite painful and quite difficult. And we need to know the downside of thinking, but we should also know the upside of it. And one of the upsides in Buddhism is to know how to think that leads beyond thinking.

To have thinking be a pointer for us to a deep quiet of the mind, in which we see and maybe understand without thoughts, without thinking about it. We see so clearly because there's no filter of thinking over them. And so, thinking that quiets thinking, and the questions that quiet thinking. And so, one of the questions that can quiet is: Who are you? When you don't use thoughts to answer the question, so what does that point to? Who are you when thoughts don't answer the question?

Or maybe getting closer to Buddhism itself, because the question "Who are you?" is supposed to point beyond self, in a sense. But maybe a more Buddhist question is: What is the heart's freedom when you don't use thoughts to explain it, to express it? What is the heart's freedom? That's not an answer. Where do you? And then the question back to where, the question where also from Monday, points to something that's beyond thought, not part of thinking. It's a location that we can feel and sense.

Creative Commons License: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

As I said, the question what is meant to be one that points beyond thinking and answering with words, but rather to move forward and openly just to experience and feel what's here. So we're entering into a very different, almost paradigm, very different orientation, way of living in meditation than how we usually try to negotiate everything through thinking. And some people who practice mindfulness meditation are really practicing thinking meditation. It could be useful for them, but there's something more deep, deeper. There is the awareness of the present. That needs no answers.

That needs not do anything or accomplish anything. It's not there for a purpose to fix something. It's there to allow the beingness of awareness, the freedom of awareness, the freedom of the heart, which is always there, and maybe, just maybe, can be found. Beyond the edges of thinking, or below the surface of thinking, there's a whole world waiting for us. That's not being dictated by what we can think; it's what we can directly experience. Thinking not needed.

What is the freedom of heart when we don't use thoughts to explain it, or describe it, or even to find it? So, to gently close your eyes, and I'll offer you one last question, and then we'll sit quietly. What is it to be aware of the present moment? When awareness is not mediated by thinking, not mediated by ideas, not mediated by any purpose besides letting awareness be itself. What is awareness like? When there's no thinking involved in being aware.

Oh. What is it like to be aware? If awareness has nothing to do with thinking, what is it to be present with an embodied way—an embodied awareness that's fuller or deeper than thinking? And this might be related to the question: What is it like to feel calm if you don't use thinking to explain it or to find it? Thinking sometimes takes us away from the direct experience of awareness, of embodiment, of where our freedom can be lived.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, what is it like to be friendly without needing to think about it? Is there a place? Is there a where that being friendly or kind flows from you? Where's the source of kindness, friendliness? If it has nothing to do with thinking. Without needing to calculate or think about, or come up with stories or ideas, to have a simple goodwill, a simple tenderness or gentleness that, in and of itself, contains the desire, the motivation to care and love and be kind. That may be without words.

> Expresses these words that I will say: May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free, and may we contribute to this by staying close to our own tender, gentle care for ourselves and the world.

Thank you.

Creative Commons License: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International