



Questions and Answers – Part 1

from ‘Wisdom of the Masters’ YouTube channel –
Samaneri Jayasara

This is a compilation of questions that have been asked on my YouTube channel over a period of about 18 months (2020-2021) with my responses. I will continue to collect and compile a selection of them over time as a resource for people in their practice.

(Please keep in mind that these are brief answers offered in a moment of time and are not intended to be comprehensive responses to all the questions at hand).

Questions on General Practice

Q: How does merely thinking wise thoughts awaken prajna/wisdom? A thought is a thought, whether enlightened or not. So, clinging to any thought is bondage, isn't it?

A: Wise thoughts are a reflection of our inner prajna or wisdom, and are skillful means in our practice to awakening. Yes, clinging to any thoughts, or any "thing" for that matter, is indeed bondage. But in order to arrive fully at the station and to disembark from the train, one must ride and hold on to the vehicle. The Buddha spoke about the raft we use to cross the river of samsara. Once we have reached the 'other shore', we leave the raft behind, we don't carry it with us. It's the same with reflecting on and using wisdom in the form of thoughts - it can help awaken prajna/wisdom in us. When we are fully awake, we don't rely on them anymore.

Q: Teachers speak of the need to stabilize in awareness. Does one living as a householder require a specific teacher or is the teaching sufficient?

A: If you can recognize your inherent Awareness and stabilize in it through practice - that is the teaching and the teacher. If you have access to a genuine spiritual teacher in the flesh that is a bonus; but the teachings are all offered freely as your teacher and have been left to us as gifts by the Masters.

Q: I turned 66 yesterday. About 35 years ago, absolutely without any intention on my part, my mind suddenly stopped. I fell out of all this. It was overwhelming, new, and strange. I had not meditated or read widely about spirituality, religion and all the other stuff. It came and went several times and culminated in a sort of "I am everywhere, everything " state. I knew for sure it was neither a dream nor hallucination. It was a more solid, tangible state of existence than the present bodily one I seem to experience now. Having no knowledge about this, I started searching in books for something that would prove to me that this has happened to others too. I soon realised that I was immensely fortunate to have unwantingly, unknowingly, fallen out of the prison of my body. At this point, I sometimes wish that I could undo what had transpired. The strange ecstasy has never returned and I pine for the state, knowing full well that it cannot be somehow "brought about" by some effort of some kind. My quandary now is that I do not believe any of the beautiful stuff that you put out. I don't believe all this to be true. I know it to be true. I find all the videos extremely pleasant but they only increase my pining. I can't go back to my former ignorant state because I have already jumped over the wall. I know that dying to one's self is the ultimate wish of every seeker, but I for one have found it a honey sweet cocktail laced with acid. I know the Zen saying " Before enlightenment, eat rice, wash bowl, after enlightenment, eat rice, wash bowl, but it is really hard for this organic human form. Please help me with a few words if you can.

A: All I can say in response to this, is to look closely at this desiring mind that wants something to be other than it is right NOW. This is the root issue to be weeded out - the entrenched belief and perception (despite your inherent wisdom knowing otherwise) that there is somebody here to get something, or to get *back* to something, or some other State. You have had a profound taste of

freedom and as you understand it is not something that 'you' or your ego can repeat at will or through desire for it. In fact, it is the desire that is taking you further away from it.

It is this grasping, wanting mind that needs to be examined and let go of in your current experience (based on what you have written above). Even the desire for enlightenment, however noble, has to be let go of as it is still based on a delusion that there is a somebody here to attain something.

Here are some words of inspiration and wisdom from the Buddha for you that might be of help in your reflections: "Seclusion is happiness for one who is content; who has heard the Dhamma and clearly sees. Freedom from ill-will is happiness in the world, for one harmless towards living beings. Dispassion is happiness in regard to the world, for one transcending all sense desires. But the dispelling of the conceit 'I am' ~ this is truly the highest happiness."

Q: How to remove ignorance? How to remove the false sense of I? I ask because I am in deep suffering and seek ...

A: I would just encourage you to continue listening to these teachings - especially if those of Ramana Maharshi are speaking to you. His words are very healing and clarifying for how to remove suffering. In essence, the encouragement is to continue to enquire and to investigate: "Who is this me that is suffering?"

When we look closely and with a quiet and still mind, we start to see and realise that this sense of self that I walk around with is a false construct. When we start to see with insight how this 'ego' is built and sustained through persistent and false thoughts we will understand the cause of suffering. However, we have to start to practice stillness and inner quietude in order to see this clearly, and with this inner seeing the suffering will dissolve. Keep listening, keep practicing - set aside time every day to go within and there, and only there, will you find the path to the end of all suffering. I wish you well and send all blessings for your liberation.

Q: In last few days I came into my natural state two or three times but it only stayed for few seconds and then the interpreter and chooser came back - what should I do? There is this contraction in my head area and it is like something is pulling the awareness and keeping me in separation. I know I just have to let go which I am not able to do.

A: All we can do friend is keep going, keep reminding yourself to come back to this place of Natural knowing, natural abiding. Do it with gentleness and love. With ongoing determination and practice you will find that you rest more and more into your natural state - but you can't force this. By simply noticing when the 'doer' or ego self comes to the fore, this very noticing means you are not lost to it - so this is a good sign for you in terms of your mindfulness.

Q: Is my mind or maya creating these thoughts, or are they random?

A: There is no "my mind" - it is karmic tendencies playing themselves out in the realm of the pristine Awareness - the Source itself. Like clouds floating in the empty sky, they have no substance, no 'owner', and in Absolute truth, no inherent Reality. They arise from nowhere, form, and then dissolve - nowhere. If we approach thoughts in this way then they lose their power and potency.

Q: It seems even the most enlightened minds don't agree on what liberation is, how to avoid karma, and how not to die. If we sat Jesus, Maharshi Maharaj, Buddha and many more around a table they would probably all have different beliefs and knowings of what seems the unknowable.

A: Not so friend. If you listen closely and understand deeply you will come to realise they are ultimately saying the same things. The words are different though. There are many paths up the mountain but the view from the top is the same.

Q: He says "...the outward-leaning mind must be turned inward... There, it is not provided any ground on which to land, nothing onto which it can affix itself." Is this the opposite of what is called "Mindfulness", in which we are taught to pay attention to each thought / feeling / perception we notice?

A: Not really. It is Mindfulness he is encouraging us to cultivate here. But it is not the type of mindfulness that fixates on an object or sensation and analyses them and the like. Rather, it is an all-encompassing mindfulness or awareness that is aware of phenomena arising and ceasing but clings to none of it. If we turn our attention more inward (with wisdom) to notice our inner processes, we see that there is nothing that we can hold onto or grasp. Everything is arising and ceasing at an incredible speed - the cells are dying and being reborn each second. What is there to hold on to? What of this is me or mine? This is what Wu Hsin is calling us to notice and if we notice with wisdom, we see the empty and ephemeral nature of everything in conditioned existence. This letting go of grasping foolishly to things frees us.

Q: I've visited a 10 days silent retreat at Goenka's school of Vipassana back in October. Though challenging, it was a very powerful experience I must say. And I could never reach the same level of insights and healing from my meditation practice at home, when I meditated for 1 hour every morning. Seems like meditation could work only when it's practice that intensely. Or maybe I'm just doing something wrong, if you have any advice, please share?

A: The core of the practice is to let go of all wanting, all craving, and all grasping for any experiences for this 'me'. If you investigate that very desire for even intense meditation experiences, whether that be bliss, peace, or insights - you see it is rooted in a sense of a self who is always wanting something or wanting things to be other than they actually are. True wisdom arises when one can be fully with the way things are - that is the Dhamma. As Ajahn Chah says in this teaching, look honestly at what is happening in the mind in terms of love/ wanting/ grasping and hating/aversion. Stay with the quality of knowing, penetrate until you are able to transcend these extremes - this constant pull and push which is the cause of suffering. Then the heart and mind are released and at ease.

Q: I don't understand this: If everything is God, is not the horror, tragedy, wars, rapists, murderers, animal slaughterhouses, torture, cruelty etc. also God? It's my biggest dilemma, I'm sure due to misunderstanding and lack of personal guidance. Why all the horrific suffering? Some say "it's all just god experiencing itself" so relax, there is no you anyway. You are God watching it all and or God is using your body mind to see. I'm lost on this for years. What is the reason for the incredible suffering and horrific and disgusting things of the world?

A: Those examples are simply the phenomena of ignorance which is playing itself out in this delusory samsaric drama due to karmic appearances. The suffering you speak of is due to ignorance of the True Nature, whether you call it God, Reality, or Absolute Truth. People inflict suffering on others due to their own suffering in ignorance of the Truth of Reality. In waking up, this suffering will dissolve. Or in simpler terms, people are asleep to the God within themselves. We must wake up to realise fully what's going on here.

Q: Could you please enlighten me on this saying in this video "when one sees oneself as neither the doer nor the reaper of the consequences then all mind waves come to an end." I don't get it. Aren't we all the doers and the reapers of our actions? Thanks so much in advance, Samaneri!

A: At a relative level you can speak of a 'person' who reaps the consequences of their actions, but he is talking here of an Ultimate Truth. When we only have this relative view, we see ourselves as a person or the doer and are thus caught in the delusion of samsara. When we finally wake up fully and recognise (not just intellectually understand it) that there is no person or doer, we are free from all the machinations of karma and rebirth.

Q: Thank you so much for such profound truths.....I just don't know what to do with it....or how to be....I do know how to be loving....and inclusive....it's who I is....but I know many extremely loving, compassionate people who gave and shared their entire life and never had anything other than the human roller coaster life....meaning ups & downs....why it is such a struggle & so difficult to reach enlightenment and become a deliberate manifesting piece of God is disturbing! Our seeking and asking alone should get us there but it does not!

A: Ah, this human roller coaster ride - the highs and lows and deep, deep dark nights of the soul. Jesus wept - the cross he bared - the scars he showed - the infinite Love and Forgiveness radiating from the purest of hearts. Speaking tenderly and wisely to his beloved Julian (of Norwich): "It was necessary that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Without all this there would not be the chance to wake up - to realise our unchanging Divine nature that is laughing, playing and dancing behind all these dreams and appearances. How can God know God? How can you know yourself and the ALL as you are - a brilliant, radiating life and light of love and Truth? Go back, go back dear one - You are There already.

Q: I seem to work backwards. I first find myself in an emotional state and then use my thoughts to try and identify the source of it and discover why that emotional state is there. I don't believe it's any more beneficial to do this and don't understand it. Sometimes I can't find the mind source of the emotional state as it presents itself. Sometimes the emotional states are just general. The discomfort of this world.

A: Yes, that's the problem with intense emotional states and thoughts. We often believe we can think our way out of them but we just keep going around and around in circles or dig a deeper pit to fall into. Here the encouragement is to let them go (especially from that sort of analytical response) and to trust in the Awareness as Source and as the healing power. Truly it is - but it does take some trust and patience - and practice of course.

Q: I am not sure what to do. I am listening and I hear your words. But I do not understand. How does this process work?

A: Just listen with your heart - there is understanding that happens at an intuitive level that is beyond the mind. Relax, settle, and just allow the words to penetrate to the depth of your being.

Q: Can you please explain the difference between "consciousness" and "Awareness"? Thank you

A: These two terms are often difficult for people to get their heads around and create confusion as teachers use them differently and have different ideas in mind in order to explain them.

Nisargadatta, for instance, explains consciousness as that which is changeful and impermanent (discursive intellect or mentation) and Awareness as the Absolute - unchanging, unborn Reality. However, Ramana Maharshi and other teachers refer to the Absolute as Consciousness, albeit Pure Consciousness, different from the personal consciousness.

The way I tend to relate to it for ease of understanding, and which is congruent with the Buddhist teachings, is that consciousness is part of the conditioned realm - it is that which thinks, cognizes, analyses, reasons, and so on. There are different levels of consciousness too of course, from higher, refined levels to lower levels of consciousness and are experienced as an individual, separate states.

Awareness, on the other hand, transcends all states of consciousness and is impersonal, unconditioned, unformed, unborn - the classic notion of the Deathless. It does not belong to you or me as an object, personal attainment or possession but is our natural state and not separative or dualistic. For Nisargadatta, Awareness equates with the Absolute Reality and is unmanifest. Consciousness (in his framework) is the manifest aspect of Awareness and when we purify this consciousness through staying in the "I am" or presence, or simple Being, it is the portal to the Absolute Awareness. I hope this helps clarify.

Q: So, I guess awareness cannot not be, which means it is God since only He/She cannot not be. So, the part of me which is aware (as opposed to conscious) is my divine part. Is that right? Now I need to grasp how I can be aware without being conscious...

A: You can't see what is looking, you can only Be it. In the same way that one's eyes cannot see themselves, Awareness can only be That. If we always try to understand or grasp this with the conceptual mind we remain in the dualistic world. This type of understanding is the very thing that prevents or holds back true understanding or realisation.

Q: Which paths and concepts do you see to be the most useful in spiritual succession and progress? That is, being teachings of the Self of Advaita, bhakti, Theravada Buddhist teachings on suffering and attachment, Mahayana, Abrahamic religions, etc.

A: I find them all useful and insightful. They are all different paths up the mountain using different concepts as you know and it all depends on the capacity, understanding, and direct experience of each individual. It also depends on whether you have direct access to a genuine spiritual teacher. However, personally I have found the Dzogchen teachings of Longchenpa and Padmasambhava speak directly to my heart like no other and provide incredible clarity and depth. Listen to your heart in terms of what teaching works best for you.

Q: Isn't it better to meditate in silence rather than through these videos?

A: If you listen with your heart rather than your head, you can go beyond the words. Your heart/mind can be still and silent even in the midst of words and music. This is different from the type of absorption samadhi where one is relying on shutting everything of the world out. The natural state (sahaja samadhi) is required here. As you may know, many, many people awakened by listening to the words/teachings of the Buddha or by contemplating a teaching when alone. If the mind is receptive and the heart is open and still, these deep awakenings can happen naturally. Having said all that, it's lovely and beneficial just to sit in silence too - no need to always listen to teachings/readings. They are here just to help people understand the deep Dharma and can be helpful as a tool when the mind is scattered.

But can you rest in that state of stillness and inner silence even when there are sounds or words and voices? It is possible and it is the natural state. No need to block out or shut out the words. Of course, the Ultimate Truth is beyond all words, but these Masters have offered us and left us the gift of their impeccable pointings and words for a reason - to help us awaken. Otherwise, they would have said nothing whatsoever.

Q: I am hoping you can help clear up something. After many years, I still do not get things like the line, "Whatever arises in the mind, just watch it." I am not a visual person (aphantasia) and cannot visualize thoughts. I am an auditory thinker. Does he mean you have to have visual ability to visualize thoughts in order to watch them? If not that, what does he mean? How does one do what he is stating? He says it is very simple. For some, maybe. Is it impossible for some?

A: I understand your confusion here, as I am also not a very visual person so I certainly don't really experience thoughts as a visual image. My experience is more of a "felt" sense (and also auditory) when thoughts arise - perhaps because I am more a kinesthetic type. It does make you wonder how people experience their own little world inside their head, doesn't it! And that everyone must see and perceive "their world" in such different ways. But we can all agree that we recognise thoughts arising and ceasing, so you do not need to be concerned with the way in which they manifest and present themselves. Whatever your experience is, it's just the way it is and that is fine and valid. No need to change that, and essentially you can't anyway.

So Ajahn Chah is simply asking us to be "aware" when thoughts, emotions, moods, etc. arise in the mind/heart and to allow them to dissolve naturally. When he says "watch" the thoughts, he does not want us to get involved in them or analyse them however. It is more a process of being aware and awake to our inner processes and moods and not getting hooked in to them. It's hard to not get drawn into thoughts and moods if we remain unaware. So, we wake up to the arising of habitual thoughts, reactive mental processes and see them for what they are - e.g.: desire, aversion, anxiety, happiness, excitement, boredom, dullness, or simply mundane habitual thought patterns - recognise them for what they are and mindfully let them go.

The recognition and wakefulness are the very process that will allow them to dissolve naturally of their own accord. And your job is to stay centred in the Awareness itself. Not Awareness as an object or thing, but rather as your own natural state of wakefulness, clarity and emptiness. You can see this more clearly once the muddy water of endless thoughts settles down. Then there remains a natural clarity, purity, and emptiness - free of the proliferation of mindless thought patterns. Just keep practicing in a gentle, relaxed and calm way and things will become clearer from time to time. At

other times, the water may be stirred up, but that is okay too. Rest into and be aware of whatever presents itself without picking and choosing. That is the way of Dhamma.

Q: How do I not “want”?

A: Observe the wanting with full awareness and without judging and it will dissolve by itself. Challenge and inquire into this idea of an "I", or a 'me who wants' and it too will eventually dissolve of its own accord.

Q: What I really want to know is, what is beyond the nothing?

A: Who wants to know? The only question to ask really. There is no other question worth asking or investigating... truly. Unless 'you' dissolve and disappear and give up the belief that 'you' can know in the way you are trying to 'know', the Truth can never be known.

Q: Often I play these meditations along with nature sounds; trickling water or birds or Buddha flute music. Should I be just listening to the meditation by itself?

A: There are no 'shoulds' here - do whatever allows peace and wisdom to arise. For me too, nature is a wonderful support for this.

Q: Why does it hurt if I stay as the source as myself? Like something is opening up within my body it feels like something is dying is this normal? Really, it's scary sometimes.

A: Sure, it's a dying process alright! The ego and false illusions are crumbling and melting away and it can feel like one is dying. Nothing to fear - just don't believe your thoughts. Relax and let go into emptiness and see the beauty and freedom in that!

Q: I have been listening to the teachings for maybe 2 years now and I am only just beginning to realise this consciousness. For me when I negate myself from thoughts, perceptions, feelings, identity, I feel a sudden wave of fear as I sense my 'I Ness' disappearing. Only once have I managed to achieve being free from mind two months ago on the other side of my fear and letting go. I'm now practicing reaching this state of consciousness without fear by dissolving myself. Just a question to see if I'm on the right path really, is it normal to be scared in that moment when I feel my I is fading?

A: Of course, the ego is a coward! But the thing is to recognise that this sense of 'self' or ego is merely an illusion - a substanceless, mind-created delusion. So, when those fear thoughts or emotions arise, look into them carefully with wisdom. Look to see if they have any lasting solidity - can you hold this ego or sense of self? No - it merely appears and passes away. It only seems real and solid when we feed it with our thoughts or attempt to push things away out of aversion or fear, or grasp things with attachment.

Once you recognise the true, unborn, uncreated State you can flow with life and allow all things in the phenomenal world to arise and cease as is their nature to do. Hope this helps to alleviate the phantom 'fearer'.

However, this idea that you assert that *"I'm now practicing reaching this state of consciousness without fear by dissolving myself"* or *"I managed to achieve being free from mind"* are oxymorons. How can the ego dissolve itself? If there is a doer, or a sense that "I" am achieving all this and making it all happen, it is simply the ego playing tricks and perpetuating itself. We are on the wrong path then.

Egolessness is not 'achieved' by an ego. We have to see through these delusions and with wisdom they dissolve. It is wisdom that allows Truth to emerge, not a person or self. The ego must perish and die in the fire of your insight where it is finally revealed that it is a mere shadow puppet without any real substance to it.

Q: Isn't the idea of gradually letting go of thoughts until we find peace itself also a delusion of becoming?

A: Ultimately yes. But until the mind is purified enough to realize this fully, the practice entails a certain letting go. However, letting go happens naturally and automatically anyway when one sees through the delusion of thoughts and their empty, substanceless nature.

Q: I do have a question about awareness please: does it feel joy? If it is neutral and is love, love is not neutral, is it? What role does awareness play in emotions of love, joy, appreciation, bliss, gratitude etc. (emotions that are high up the scale of happiness)? Is that not who I am?

A: There are so many different ideas of what love is and it depends what you mean by the concept. As an emotion it is time bound and transient and often dependent on subject and object relations. However, pure Awareness is the essence of pure Love. But this type of love is not really something one can explain or talk about - it transcends all concepts and must be realised directly. I like Nisargadatta's explanation of this. He says: "Awareness is dynamic, love is being. Awareness is love in action."

In Longchenpa's paradigm, it would be the manifestation of the nirmanakaya - the pure compassionate/love response for the liberation of sentient beings - the dynamic responsiveness and manifested energy that is inseparable from the Dharmakaya or the unmanifest Absolute nature.

Q: I do not understand. On one hand, all things are impermanent, the psycho-physical self and life are impermanent. On the other hand, there is only the absolute, dharmakaya, God, the One, "Awareness", that is all. There is no individual identity left within the absolute. The absolute of the absolute is "empty" (though it emanates everything). Therefore, what is the spiritual goal? What entity is left outside the body to realise anything at all? How can one presume, that at death identity remains, because all hardcore teachings say there is no fundamental identity at all? So, what is the goal? Ultimate death so that only the absolute is left with no identity to realise it? Isn't that annihilation, what's the point? If not, if the spiritual truth is something else, then something remains after death and into eternity, what is that? Something that exists? Isn't that a contradiction with impermanence and fundamental emptiness? Buddha seems to be denying both

the existence of the psycho-physical self (I don't disagree) and the fundamental annihilation of a person's "being" (yet that being is really just the absolute manifesting). This is the mysterium of the middle way. There can't be any point to all of these teachings fundamentally (beyond living a "good" life) other than an acceptance of some form of awareness after death. Yet if you dig into it enough, you'll find that reincarnation is not a teaching of the Buddha and many mystical faiths state that in the end, there is only God and its energies.

A: That's right - there is only That. But no words can resolve it for us or take us there - it can only be through direct realisation - which is more an intuitive awakening than an intellectual grasp. After that, all questions will cease. Trying to figure this out through logic and reason will only lead to frustration, insanity, or delusion. It does take a leap of faith and trust in being willing to do what all the Masters are encouraging us to do and that is to let go and die to all that is 'known', and all that we think we know. We need to be willing to surrender and be silent and abide in full awareness and right mindfulness - trusting that the wisdom (and understanding to all your questions) will arise only when the fruit is ripe - you cannot make it happen - because there is no 'you' to make any of this realisation happen, or resolve your understanding about the questions of life and death.

However, I do love Ajahn Chah's pointing in relation to all this. He said: "Those who talk about birth and death are speaking the language of ignorant children." The only goal is to realise for ourselves the profundity of what he is pointing to here. Then we are totally free! Hope some of this helps to ease the confusion.

Q: What is meant by "the more you keep it to yourself the stronger it will get, if you share it with others, it will get less." I don't understand that statement, what would that be?

A: She is referring to those people or that tendency within us all to talk about our "realisations" and attainments in meditation or spiritual practice. Some people may have powerful insights or experiences and then hold onto them and get a lot of ego satisfaction bragging about them. All the time they are deluded and not realising the deeper truth of what they are doing. Ma is encouraging us to see through the ego delusions and fixations when we attach to any spiritual experiences, however sublime and profound, as an "attainment" or "me" or "mine". Of course, someone who has fully, truly and genuinely awakened and completed their work would not/could not be deluded into telling others about it for the sake of ego gratification.

Q: Wow! What an experience - scary, lol. I fell deep and fell into a pit. This was my first time and I was scared. Has anyone experienced this before? Please advise and why?

A: All sorts of strange things can and do happen in meditation. Don't be too concerned - just watch without judging and notice it's passing nature. You didn't really fall into a pit - you just felt you did - it was just your mind creating these sensations. It's a good sign! But here you are now, right? No pit now? Relax, no need to fear - the mind is empty and pure once you see this with clarity.

Q: In this video, the word Awareness is used to refer to permanent, unchanging knowing. However, the word Consciousness is used to refer to temporary, changing sensory experiences such as thoughts, feelings, sensations, and perceptions. This definition is at odds with my general

understanding of Consciousness as similar to Awareness, unchanging permanent knowing. Any thoughts?

A: Pure Consciousness devoid of any sensory impingement or defiling influences is often equated with Awareness in some teachings. Some talk about the differences between sensory consciousness and Pure Unconditional Consciousness to distinguish between the two. These words are two of the most problematical when pointing to Ultimate Reality and result in many arguments and debates - unfortunately and unnecessarily. We need only abide in Awareness itself and allow the deeper understanding and wisdom to unfold naturally.

Q: My current struggle with self-inquiry and such is how to make decisions in life, with conviction, but without identity. How do you pack a punch or do anything with conviction without the fuel of identity behind it? I've read about impersonal anger, but I don't get it. Life and death are just words, not really real, and without the charge between good and evil, where's the fight, where's the worthwhile to struggle through hell? Perhaps I desire the rewards of making "correct" decisions, and such seems ruled out in devotion to self-realization, as there are no absolutely correct nor incorrect decisions...outside finite games or the many blood sports of life that aren't described as such but should be.

A: It all just happens without any one being there. Even if we are deluded into believing in an identity, in Reality there isn't one, so this is simply a false belief. Try to remind yourself, this is all just a dream. Dance and play lightly dearest one.

Q: I Am conscious of all things when I look or focus on 'I Am' or just Being. At some point, sometimes it seems 'I' disappears. Is there no I, or is what disappears ego? I, the experience, just is. Is that pure?

A: Ultimately, any *self-conscious* 'experiencing' is still within the realm of duality where there is an 'experiencer' and an 'experience'. To have the egoless experience without the ego takes us into another dimension beyond words and analysis. Therefore, these sorts of questions and ponderings cannot be explained or understood through words, or analysed through rational inquiry post the 'event'.

Ultimate Reality is only understood through one's direct experience, beyond all conceptual limitations, and all notions of 'I'. Even if someone tries to explain it, it won't be the truth - only a set of cleverly constructed words and paradigms. That is why the wise ones keep silent on this issue. The Buddha said that the Ultimate Truth is: "*Sanditthiko, akaliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattam, vedittabbo, vinnuhiti [Pali]*". Which translates as: "*Apparent here and now, timeless, encouraging investigation, leading inwards, to be realised individually by the Wise.*" - That last point is key!

Q: It's my day off at work. I am at a local park enjoying a little sunshine on a winter day. I lay on the green grass looking at the vast pale blue sky while listening to the timeless wisdom that the Upanishads hold. I do not know what bliss feels like, but I sure am more than happy right now! Thank you Samaneri:)

A: Sounds like bliss to me! Bliss is one of those words that are misunderstood and misconceived - like God and Love. And perhaps it is a poor English translation of the original. True lasting bliss is not limited to ecstasy or some Divine orgasmic experience - those things are nice but they are part of the conditioned realm and come and go. Bliss is your true Nature and does not come and go but only appears to when ignorance veils it. Bliss is cool, calm, steady, equanimous, abiding deep peace, joy and love. It is manifest with the realisation of true emptiness, in the relinquishing of all desires, in the freedom from the delusion of 'me' and 'other'. It is purity incarnate, without an active, grasping, identifying mind. The next time you meet a new born baby - look deeply into its eyes - there you will see bliss and a reflection of yourself in its mirror.

Q (Part A): Hi Samaneri! I noticed you have quite the wide range of teachings posted on your channel and I love that about you. Not to mention your hypnotic voice. But as a consequence, you will ultimately end up with teachings that somewhat clash with each other. For example, this teaching which puts such an emphasis on the importance of virtue, and Zen, which explicitly denies and even discourages the importance of adhering to specific virtues/dharmas/practices and gaining merits in order to realize Buddha-nature/become enlightened. I'd love to hear your thoughts and know if there's a side to this that you personally lean more towards and why.

A: Yes, the teachings of the Masters can "appear" to vary widely. Basically, if there is clinging, there are various skillful means for releasing the clinging. When there is no clinging, there's no need for skillful means. We have to look honestly. Sometime certain teachings might deeply prod or disturb, but this is worth looking into to see what is going on. Also, you need to understand that this is a personal meditation - i.e.: he was talking to and motivating himself.

Q (Part B): It seems that they more than just "appear" different though. The examples I gave are very clearly completely opposite. There are teachings that say you must collect merit and meditate to reach enlightenment, and then Huang-Po comes along and straight up says that collecting merits and doing practices in an attempt to become a Buddha is a waste of time and harmful.

A: Whenever we are considering "words" and the world of appearances we will always be faced with contradictions. This is an irrefutable fact of the conditioned world - samsara. These teachings are considering the "situation" from two different angles. One could say they classically represent the "development stage" and the "completion stage" of practice. You have to consider the context that any of these teachings are originally given in. Huang-Po was teaching to advanced practitioners - monks. Shantideva's full text (The Way of the Bodhisattva) goes through all the stages, from development to completion. He is always aware of the Ultimate Reality of Emptiness, but understands the place of various skillful means for uprooting delusion. Many Masters do this. For example, if you listen to this Padmasambhava teaching on "Instructions for attaining Enlightenment" you will hear how he teaches the women from both of these angles (ultimate and relative) in order to shake and wake them up. You can also hear the cultural sense of humour in it!

Q: I keep asking questions, and they may seem tedious to answer. My apologies. What does it mean to "run after thoughts" and, conversely, to let thoughts naturally arise and settle? If I let my thoughts naturally arise, I will be somewhere else entirely with them in seconds. That is, if I don't

stop them. I'm not chasing after them; they just go. Does letting them end up where they end up mean I'm chasing after them, or does it mean I'm letting them settle naturally? Letting them go where they are apt to seems like monkey mind to me. So just what does it really mean to not chase after them? Or what does it mean to let them naturally arise and settle? I can't for the life of me figure out what advice like this is supposed to be like in actual practice. My continued thanks.

A: You mention above in your reflections: "I'm not chasing after them; they just go." That's exactly the answer to your questions about how to deal with thoughts. To let thoughts naturally arise and settle means to allow the natural flow of mental processes but not to indulge in or repress them. One's attitude and understanding has to radically change towards thoughts themselves, and you should investigate deeply to see exactly what thoughts are. If you do this and see this for yourself, then thoughts will no longer be a problem or hold any sway over you.

Firstly, you need to recognise that thoughts are just a natural process as a result of conditioning which arise from the 'Ground of Being'. In and of themselves they are NOT a problem - they are a natural display and if we make a problem out of them, they only getting bigger and stronger. So, allow them to arise, but be AWAKE and mindful - don't get pulled in to them, don't run away with them, and don't get tricked into believing any of them, especially the negative self-talk but even the good ones. But also, don't try to repress or control them - that will only make you tight and tense. Learn to be light about them, laugh at them and take them all with a grain of salt. If you adopt that attitude they will quickly settle and subside and with time and practice become less and less.

Secondly, when the mind becomes calmer and more settled in meditation, you can actually investigate thoughts clearly and see for yourself what they are in Reality. What are they? Nothing....they are merely fleeting, ephemeral dream impressions that float in the mind-sky. They are not really different from night time dreams. They cannot harm you; they cannot hurt you - they are complete fairy floss. They only cause harm when we believe them and take them as 'me' or 'my thoughts' and then all sorts of harm can arise from them. I hope some of this helps you to find your inner peace which is there all the time really, and only clouded by these passing thoughts.

Q: Hi Samaneri, I have been a frequent listener of your channel, especially the videos series of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. I love your videos since they are so calm and meditative. Anyway, I just have a question for you since you are a Buddhist nun and have been reading various spiritual teachings of different masters. My question is, what is the one same thing that all spiritual teachings share in your opinion? Because the Truth can only be One. For instance, Ramana Maharshi talked about the Self, the Buddha said that everything is not self (Anatta) etc., but still if both are the Truth then there must be one same meaning just spoken in different ways. I'd just love to know about your opinion since I myself am also on the path seeking for the Truth.

A: Yes, you are correct in understanding that the words used by the different Masters of each tradition may be different but they are pointing to the same Truth. There are so many parallels in the teachings from all corners of the earth it would take a large book to point them all out. For example, I just happened upon a quote from the prophet Muhammed in my reading/research that I have never read before. He said: "To overcome evil with good is good, to resist evil by evil is evil." Compare this to the Buddha's saying from the Dhammapada: "Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule."

These principles of Truth are eternal and immutable, so how can the great Truth seers not end up pointing to the same thing - perhaps just using different words at the time to describe it.

The one key, fundamental Truth that they all point to time and time again is that words or language can never properly describe or take one to Ultimate Truth. Ultimate Truth is beyond language, beyond time, beyond boundaries, transcendent and formless. And the pointers to the Ultimate Truth have always been the most problematic in terms of different words used as people so love and desire certainty and consistency. So, we can and should never rely on words to take us there, nor should we expect consistency in language as that is impossible. Truth is just Truth and one needs to know this for oneself in the Heart, not the head. This is what all the great Masters remind us of too. They just say it a bit differently! Hope some of these rambling words help to point you back towards yourself and to within your Heart where words fail to enter.

Q: These Treasures are my link to sanity, rest, reprieve. Remembering the Truths and abiding in Understanding are so difficult for me. Your reply to A helped me. Please advise whether I should view my mind as an enemy or a friend. Thank you so much

A: Good reflection, but it all depends on how we work with this so-called mind. As the Buddha said: "I don't envision a single thing that, when undeveloped, leads to such great harm as the mind. The mind, when undeveloped leads to great harm. I don't envision a single thing that, when developed, leads to such great benefit as the mind. The mind, when developed leads to great benefit." (AN 1.21-30).

So, it all depends on how we cultivate, develop, and purify the mind. In and of itself, and in Ultimate Reality, there is no mind that is a self-existing entity. However, we do experience the karmic formations that arise in our consciousness and it is this that we refer to as 'mind'. If we can harness this energy for wholesomeness and skillfulness that is grounded in right view and action, it will be our greatest friend. If we remain ignorant and refuse to investigate and purify the mind, it will be the greatest enemy. Meditation and self-awareness are the tools to help make the mind a great friend and support. You are on the right path my friend so your 'mind' should no doubt be your ally. With all good wishes.

Q: I'm curious how one can be the Witness of what is by focusing on the Witness yet "remain cheerful" when bad things happen. Because to replace sadness with cheerfulness would be attempting to alter rather than Witness. Is he saying both work?

A: I think the encouragement is more to see and allow the sadness as it arises but not get fooled by it or stuck in it. If we really investigate the phenomenon of "sadness" as it arises in the present moment, there is so much to understand. As an emotion it is empty and ephemeral, so we can allow it to arise and cease without getting overwhelmed or believing it will last forever. See it like passing clouds. Secondly, we really need to investigate and understand "who" this person is that believes (1) they are a person, (2) that this sadness belongs to 'me'. With deepening practice one can come to understand the teachings of Emptiness here, and in really understanding that in the heart, not just intellectually, that naturally gives rise to happiness and cheerfulness and one realises that it is all a dream and a projection of our own empty minds - concepts, ideas and beliefs, etc. Being free from all of those delusions makes one naturally happy! Hope this helps a bit

Q: Can you guide me further as to how to remain in the state of awareness in the present. Because I am trying to live [it] but I forget in tiny things. I know now that this samsara is a dream like the nightmares but then I forget and live like it is real and it affects me and my all. How can I remain in the present and overcome the forgetfulness of my true self? During the day while I am involved with my duties how can I retain my light of wisdom that it's a dream-like reality and it's just a dream like the dream at night?

A: Simply Be Aware when you are not present to the light of Awareness. When you notice you are not present, then you are immediately present. Also, investigate this imaginary 'person' who wants "to be aware" or wants to hold on to something - they are the imposter. You are Awareness itself in Reality - fundamentally you can never move away from or out of this - it's only your thoughts and perceptions that cloud and veil it from time to time, and fool you into believing you have lost something. Don't believe those thoughts, perceptions, mental states, or moods - they are fleeting mind states - they are not the Truth of your real Nature and if clung to and believed in they will disempower you. Let them go and recognize, as Black Elk says, that only with and through the power of the Great Spirit within you (Awareness itself) can we face the winds. With all good wishes.

Q: Can you share with us your experience of how to abide in emptiness and liberate oneself from individuality?

A: As the Buddha himself declared as the core of the practice: "Don't cling". Simply disidentify yourself from all phenomena, especially your thoughts and mental processes - look on with watchful observation and mindfulness, and keep letting go where you see yourself clinging and identifying. Recognise your unchanging and natural state of Awareness and Presence and abide in that. Whenever you notice yourself wandering and suffering, come back, come back again and again to simply relaxing in Awareness itself. This is your true refuge and the boat that will take you to the 'other shore'. Although it is Here and Now, so there really is no 'other' shore.

Q: Which practice/meditation is the best preparation for this experience of death and enlightenment please.

A: Any meditation practice which helps you let go of the identity and belief of yourself as the body/mind will be helpful at the moment of death. However, there are specific 'death contemplation' practices that the Buddha taught, such as contemplating the 32 parts of the body and the meditation practice that focuses on the repulsive aspects of the body - good for those who have a lot of lust and think this body is 'beautiful' and desirable. However, depending on how you relate to your body or another's body, it might be sufficient to just consistently contemplate the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death and the fact that death could arrive at any moment. This has the effect of waking us up and shaking us from our complacency. As long as it is done with right view and wisdom it is the best preparation for our impending death.

Q: I am so confused. When we in the West talk about the mind we think about the function of brain cortex that makes pictures and words, we call this intuitive (in the right hemisphere) and rational mind (in the left hemisphere of the brain cortex). But in India, not just Buddhist, they translate the mind as something else, something much bigger, entire consciousness. They even say

The Mind is Buddha. Yet it seems to me that no one is talking about this, like we are lost in translation.

When Krishnamurti for example talks with western interviewers about the mind it seems to me there is a misunderstanding because of this. So, when we die, our brain dies, and therefore our mind dies.... So does it mean that after death there is no individual self at all and we merge with everything and nothing. I mean let's say after death we are without "bad karma" and without any need for reincarnation, what are we then? Are we the entire cosmos, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna at the same time, only One consciousness? Do we dissipate totally in one consciousness after death?

A: This is the realization that we can only 'know' for ourselves beyond the brain/mind. If you try to understand this intellectually you will only go 'round and round' in circles, your head will start spinning and then your head will explode [metaphorically speaking]! People can try and explain all of this to you metaphysically and philosophically but it will not really be the Truth and it will just confuse you further.

As Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche says in my recent posting: 'Transcendent knowledge is beyond thought, word, or description.'

YOU must die to know the Ultimate Truth, and by this, I mean you must die to all your ideas about 'yourself' as a person; you must die to your clinging to the belief that you can figure this all out with your intellect, and relinquish all your concepts, ideas, views, beliefs and opinions. If you can't do this, or are unwilling to, then your practice will become stuck. Can you just abide in not-knowing and take refuge in naked Awareness? If you are willing to commit to this, then the Truth will be revealed to you and all the answers will come from within. However, the answers come from the heart/mind or intuitive wisdom, not the rational mind or brain - we are talking different levels of understanding here and they are vastly different. This is not to devalue the intellect completely - it has its usefulness and is a key reason you even have the ability to grapple with and ponder these questions. However, it is not the King and should be relegated to its rightful place. Take your seat on the Royal Throne of unfabricated, uncontrived naked and empty Awareness and relax and stay there. It is your natural state of Being and within it all brilliance is contained. Sorry for the cop out!

Q: I understand that some texts are thought of as spiritual/energetic transmissions and not just words on paper. What have you heard about that, and what have your personal experiences with transmission documents been, if any?

A: I can't really answer this question scientifically or with any amount of authority or expertise, but can only comment on my own experiences and anecdotal evidence that others have shared with me. The books and words of the Ancient Sages and spiritual Masters of the past have always been considered as Holy or Sacred books and I don't think there is any reason to doubt that. The problems emerge when people become fundamentalist and extreme about them and start to assert that theirs is the 'only real truth' or that these books are beyond critique and debate, or that you can't question their legitimacy or authority in any way. They are certainly not beyond or above that. The thing we have to consider is the distortions that occur when less enlightened people get their hands on them through translation or in creating Councils that decide what is to be included or excluded. These sorts of fabrications and corruptions have happened throughout history to most of the major religious texts and discourses I am certain to some degree or another. So then, what you are left

with is people tampering with the words of the Masters to suit their own cultural, political, or social worldview.

Having said all that, my own experience in reading the words of the Masters reveals the potency and purity that is definitely generated through these words. I have had experiences when I read something I am unfamiliar with that I might not "get it" and then I realise I am trying to understand it intellectually which prevents the transmission happening within the heart. So then I just allow myself to read it with presence and empty out, and then when listening to it I have been blown away by its power and wisdom and this takes me completely by surprise. This has happened on too many occasions to mention so it tells me that there is indeed some power in these 'words on paper'. If we consider that everything in the universe is simply energy and vibration, then words are part of that too so give out a particular quality or charge. These are words of wisdom, purity, and transcendence and I think most people can feel some of that in listening or reading these texts/teachings.

Yet, at another level they are just words on paper and much of what I read has also gone through a translation process, so I can't imagine the clarity and power that must come through in the original, undiluted texts [or words spoken directly to you from a living master]. Monk friends of mine who read the original Pali Canon tell me it is incredible and they feel the rawness and directness of the words as if hearing the Buddha speak. However, you must remember the Buddha never wrote anything down (all of his teachings are part of an oral tradition) so we are receiving these teachings that have gone through some sort of distillation process. Still, they are powerful without any doubt and that is why I enjoy this process of reading and sharing them on YouTube so much. They have a profound effect on one's practice and understanding of the Dharma at a deep level, and it is why I ask people on my Community Page blurb to treat them all with reverence and respect. Not stupid blind faith or fear, but a recognition that what we have been gifted and left by these benevolent Beings of the past is a priceless and incommensurable gift and we should generate much gratitude for this. I hope some of these reflections are helpful. With all good wishes

Q: I am fearful that I am too much of a thinker to ever taste real freedom in this lifetime. I hate my thinking; it is all negative in fact I don't like myself. In your reading I get a taste of freedom every time. When will it last? Sometimes I know the One mind and feel free. Next day all is gone. Suffering starts again. What to do?

A: The thought that you 'hate' your thoughts is just another thought. What to do - indeed? Well, for one, you can and should investigate the nature of thought itself. Instead of going into battle with them or hating them, you need to outwit them! They are fraudsters, there is nothing to them in Reality, but we empower them and feed them, and they love that. A bit like a leech that grows fatter on our blood and if we try to force them off, they get stronger and fatter and attach themselves even more. So, we need to outsmart them and they will simply drop off if we don't feed them. The other essential thing we all need is Patience. Big time! They will lessen and become less of an issue over time if we practice sincerely and correctly, but it does require the virtue of patience. I would recommend that you dedicate at least 30 minutes every day sitting quietly somewhere simply watching and noticing the machinations of thought (without getting sucked in to them). You need to learn more about their nature, process, origin and cessation - not their content and message though! There's a big difference here. In your quiet time you can listen to meditations that might help guide you to stillness and insight as an aid to this understanding. This guided meditation that I compiled earlier this year addresses the nature of thought directly so you might find this one helpful

too. Here's the direct link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q22fwf1wD-Y&list=PLWzYrEdlV4O6Ehopg9JfOZeaAJaiuXE80&index=5&t=1907s&ab_channel=SamaneriJayasara

With all good wishes and simply keep going with courage and determination. We have been spinning around in the dark in samsara for thousands or millions of lifetimes. Now you have found the Light - what's another birth or so before Liberation. Just don't give up or give in, and keep it light - Grace will work it out. With all blessings

Q: What's the value of virtual sangha

A: There's a certain power and charge that can happen for people's practice in coming together as a sangha. Sangha means to "bring together" into a group and is the general word for "community" in both Pali and Sanskrit. However, it has a deeper meaning than this when applied to one's inner Being or Heart. It means bringing it all together in Union and recognising the non-separation of Reality in all of us - who are Reality. In this particular recognition there is a complete power in that.

Q: Can people with long term unresolved grief grow into spiritual beings

A: Of course, so long as you remember to remind yourself that you are not a "person with long term unresolved grief". You are already a spiritual Being - that is what you are in your essential nature and what you have and will always be. You cannot escape this fundamental fact! Your experience of grief and trauma (as painful as that can be) is just the surface level of life and phenomenon playing itself out. Don't believe it, don't get stuck on the story of 'you' as this person. Hold whatever grief you have in your heart of compassion and allow it to guide and heal you - and to take you to that deeper place of Reality and Truth.

Q: Hello to all and blessings to all. I'm just now recently studying these teachings and I'm feeling kind of nerve wracked. I'm getting stomach aches and nearly panic attacks and I'm wondering how can I overcome this? Thank you and peace be with you. I hope I get a response.

A: It's actually quite normal for these things to arise at times when one begins on the path of practice with sincerity and focus. All sorts of strange experiences, feelings, emotions, etc. which are often buried and remain repressed by busyness or distraction can emerge when we provide the space and stillness which these practices encourage. The main thing is not to be discouraged or fearful about them - just see them as part of the manifestation of the dream phenomena of samsara. Although they might be unpleasant and frightening at this time for you, they will not last - and this is the key insight to bring to your practice here. All conditioned things are impermanent.

There are a few other ways to maintain your stability and calm so as to not freak out or give up the practice. Firstly, start to see these phenomena (any feeling, emotion, etc..) as not your self - they are simply a passing show. Try to recognise the unchanging, immovable witness and Awareness within you - the part of the mind that watches them all, and become more stabilised in that. That Awareness might be overwhelmed at times by the manic thoughts and feelings but the practice is to start to take refuge in your own Awareness which is ultimately your true Nature and this Awareness is completely unperturbed and unaffected by any of the changing conditions.

Q: What do you make of traditions, Buddhist etc., after being exposed to so much nondual truth? Is the path a formality at this point?

A: Traditions and lineages can provide powerful containers for transmission of the Truth and many are beautiful and ancient like the Buddhist one I am aligned with which dates back to Gotama Buddha, or Shakyamuni. They are potent when headed by an authentically realised One. I remember my teacher asking us to reflect on the abundance and generosity of support we receive as monastics and he said that this is all a result of the continuing parami (blessings and resultant good karma) of the Buddha.

Now, that stopped my mind completely and is most humbling. I feel in my heart it is true. Having said all that, if one clings to a view of one's tradition as being the best or the only harbinger of Truth and attaches to ancient rights and rituals or cultural practices, or ways of doing or seeing the world as being essentially right and true, then it is wrong view. Traditions provide a powerful refuge and can be a raft for reaching Liberation but they themselves are still part of the relative world. Many have reached Liberation without belonging to any formal tradition - the Buddha himself! In truth though, we all belong to the same One Divine tradition of the Heart.

Q: Please answer a question that has troubled me for a few years now, I know of no one else to ask. Am I to simply accept those negative aspects of my own character which I have battled for years? Are those seemingly inherited faults my dharma? I do not act on them but those thoughts still arise. What is their origin? Are there any truly original thoughts? Are they my own? I listen to your words daily and I am thankful for your wisdom, your efforts and your beautiful voice which delivers a message in such a calm yet wise manner.

A: In regards to your question, the challenge that faces you is to really investigate the nature and so called 'reality' of this character or personality that you think you are. The personality and character traits are merely conditioned phenomena - we all have aspects of this 'person' which we like or do not like. However, we must see through its illusory nature if we are to be free and transcend suffering. As the Buddha taught, all conditions, including and especially this personality, is impermanent and not-self. What a relief huh when you realise this deeply in your heart?

You have to stop taking yourself and this personality personally. It will always be faulty and imperfect - it can be no other way. We are a conglomeration of conditioning processes that we have inherited over innumerable lifetimes, not just this one. So, challenge this view you hold of yourself. It is not truly you. What you are in Reality is none of these conditioned phenomena - thoughts, feelings, emotions, views, character traits, etc... We must practice to let go of the falsity of them and to rest in our true Nature of the Unconditioned Awareness - the pure mindfulness. This is the portal to the Deathless (our true nature); our ticket to freedom, and the pathway to the end of all suffering. This particular teaching from Tilopa offers one of the most direct and clear pointers to that path to freedom. I wish you much peace.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wVcxfeFZgQ&t=530s&ab_channel=SameneriJayas%C4%81ra-WisdomoftheMasters

Q: So, you don't label anything when you meditate? I was told to label things so now I'm feeling confused. Some say I should note rising and falling and note thinking, sound, etc. when I get

caught up with something else than focusing on the breathing. What's your point of view on that? Thanks so much for sharing all of this with us.

A: There are many paths up the mountain, but the path is not the goal. Practice whatever technique works best for you and brings you peace of mind and helps develop insight. But don't get lost on the path by attaching to "technique". These are just fingers pointing to the moon, not the moon itself.

The simplest technique (which is not really a technique) is to just BE. Be present, be here now. If you find that difficult to do, grounding yourself in a gentle, relaxed mindfulness of the breathing can help, or labelling things as a way of staying alert and not drowning in things is another useful tool in the beginning. You don't need to hold any of these approaches in a tense, or obsessive way – just note each in breath and out breath - maybe just for a while at the start - but then just be with it, the natural flow. The trick is not to let any meditation technique become mechanical and routine, or obsessive, otherwise your meditation practice will become dull and unpleasant. Being present and quiet within is beautiful and enjoyable and is your natural state, so allow yourself to arrive there naturally and easefully.

Q: I resonate with this and most of your reading selections. Yet I have a few lingering confusions perhaps you can help me with. The idea of those thoughts and phenomenal actions being meaningless., coming and going with no meaning. I have witnessed one thought turned to action multiply and ripple to others, showering, in my perceptions, love and peace, oneness. I am trying to reconcile this phenomenal experience with meaningless and nonexistence. With humble gratitude, please help.

A: Thanks for your question and I'm sorry if this meditation guidance left you with the overall impression or feeling that ALL thoughts and actions are meaningless. It is not what I was meaning to convey (as they are definitely not), but perhaps it came across in my somewhat casual or careless phrasing. Apologies for that.

I think I was trying to highlight that a LOT of our habitual and neurotic thought patterns and mental processes are a waste of energy and time and get us trapped into very destructive corners and patterns of thinking. For example, those thoughts that just mull over the story lines of "he said/she said" and continue the painful memories and the processes of blame, guilt, shame, remorse and so on. These were the thought patterns I was trying to highlight here to let go of, as well as those thoughts that are clearly just pointless and a waste of time too. One has to discern for oneself what thoughts are wholesome, worthwhile, skillful and lead to good outcomes. You have clearly discerned those in your life and inner being so continue with those.

The general rule of thumb that works for me is: does this thought or action lead to suffering? If so, let go of it.... If it results in peace, love, understanding and connection, then it is worth pursuing. However, that does not mean that all actions and thoughts are 'pollyanna-ish' - some may be very direct and require a lot of courage and assertiveness. Again, one has to discern for oneself.

However, it is necessary to let go of even positive thoughts in deep meditation so that the mind can rest in tranquility and peace and then use that as a springboard into insight/investigation beyond the conceptual processes. In the deepest practice of meditation, ALL thoughts and concepts must be let go of if one is to see Reality. As Ultimate Reality is beyond all thoughts, actions, ideas, concepts and karmic formations, the full realisation takes place beyond the mind. However, for now, let us

cultivate pure and wholesome thoughts and this peace of mind can and will lead us to the deeper reality. I hope some of these reflections help to clarify any confusion for you. With all good wishes

Q: All of these readings are so relaxing to listen to, and you choose such lovely music to set them to. But doesn't it confuse you to be jumping about between all these many different religions?

A: Personally, not at all. I only hear the Truth expressed in different ways with different concepts, frameworks, and paradigms. However, you are right - if you are only beginning on the path or want to keep it simple, it might be better to stick to one tradition, otherwise you could get confused. It depends on your capacity. As I studied comparative religion and spirituality for a long, long time at University I have trained my mind to be flexible and find the confluences. Personal insights and experiences also help the understanding. The other reason there are so many different traditions on offer here is to ensure there's something for everyone. Not everybody is going to listen and meditate to another tradition, and that's fine, so I am endeavouring to upload a variety. For myself, I enjoy it and benefit immensely. And the key point to stress in listening to these masterful Dharma teachings is to listen with your heart, not your head/intellect. It makes a huge difference. It's amazing what the heart understands - in fact much more, and deeper, than the head. No knowledge required!

Q: So, we're really focusing on the observer part of your consciousness constantly observing all things that arise in the mind?

A: To some extent that is true in the early stages of the practice when there is still a dualistic notion of an observer and the thing observed. However, even though we are aware of what arises in the mind it is important NOT to focus or pick things up and start analysing them. To develop deep peace and samadhi, you learn to just let things recede in the background - neither suppressing or repressing things, but neither accepting or indulging thoughts, emotions, etc. Imagine it's like an old man watching young children playing. He watches with a disinterested awareness, hopefully with a heart full of love, but he is not entranced or drawn into their antics. Try to have the same attitude towards your own distracted and reactive mind. Eventually you will come upon that stable centre or Awareness within yourself that is immovable and unshakeable and this will then be your refuge and "focus" - although it's not really a "thing" to be focused upon, nor does it have a centre - but it is essentially your true nature and your only true refuge.

Q: I've dabbled in different forms of Buddhism and some Hinduism like non duality and was just wondering about your view on whether it is wiser to stick to one school or use what's useful from different traditions? Thanks again for the great channel.

A: I think when one is starting out it's much better to focus on one tradition/practice in order to gain in strength and traction. If you have your mind in too many things it may get confusing and one just hears the contradictions rather than the unity. But it all depends on the development of the practitioner. Once one is stable and has a deeper understanding it's easier to make the connections and not be thrown by the apparent contradictions in words, frameworks, perspectives, etc., as words will always be contradictory. Glad you are enjoying the offerings here. With all good wishes

Q: What are "objects of the senses" and why are they to be avoided like poison? What do objects of the senses do to a person?

A: Here they are referring to the objects of the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching... Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body... The teaching is urging us to not be fooled by the objects nor to be attached and desirous of them as most people in this world are. They keep us bound and trapped and deluded by samsara as we believe ourselves to be the body and dependent on them for our happiness. And in the ultimate truth, that is not what we are so we need to start to investigate and to lose the fascination and clinging to these objects of the senses. I would encourage you not to develop aversion or hatred for them but to merely start to see them for what they are... Magical illusions! Most of the teachings on this channel will fill in the gaps a lot more for you as you continue to listen. With all good wishes

Q: I am so grateful to you raining down these blessings. I want to humbly ask you how you reconcile views of God with your view as a Buddhist Nun. Is it possible to have a deep faith and practice in the Dharma as well as faith in God as pervasive conscious energy in which we are in constant communication with? In your view do all these teachings point to the same non-conceptual, empty but alive consciousness and can you interact with all of these faiths and concepts interchangeably without tangling yourself up? I understand there may be no real answer to this question but am just curious of your perspective. Thank you *Bow*.

A: Thanks for your question. Not so easy to answer on a comments thread but I'll give it a go...In terms of the idea or concept of "God", it really depends on how one defines or relates to it. As a child raised in the Catholic tradition, it was embedded in me that "God" was some anthropomorphic "man" in the sky with a white beard who was up there in heaven judging all my naughty and nice behaviours. Clearly once maturity hit, this didn't gel with me as didn't much of the behaviour and limits of the Church. Hence my interest to delve into the Buddhist practice to really understand my mind, heart, and Reality. Reading the words of some of the highly evolved Christian mystics (St John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, St Teresa of Avila) it is clear that their direct experience and understanding of this concept of "God" is very profound and not like most people relate to it or "him". The teachings of these mystics do not in any real way contradict the deepest wisdom that is found in all other religious and spiritual traditions, nor the direct insights of those rare ones who have penetrated Reality.

"God" is just another word and has become such a loaded and problematic one. If people really experienced "God" in the fullness, depth, and emptiness of what the mystics were pointing to, they would all shut up and stop arguing. If only that could be so.... I like your expression of God "as pervasive conscious energy in which we are in constant communication with". Yes, indeed, how can it not be so, and how can we not take faith and refuge in That. We are living, breathing, miraculous expressions flowing from That energy. How come we all miss it so much?

For as Meister Eckhart says: "You should love God non-mentally, that is to say the soul should become non-mental and stripped of her mental images. For as long as your soul is mental, she will possess images. As long as she has images, she will possess intermediaries, and as long as she has intermediaries, she will not have unity or simplicity. As long as she lacks simplicity, she does not truly love God, for true love depends upon simplicity . . . Indeed, you must love him as he is One, pure, simple and transparent, far from all duality. And we should eternally sink into this One, thus passing from something into nothing."

Q: Should we not desire an appropriate home 🏠 to live in? I'm sharing currently and people are sweet but they drink and take drugs sometimes all day long and it's winter now; doors are open and it's so cold. 🥶 I don't know if it's better to stay or go

A: I think this is a case where your so-called "desire" is really wisdom and discernment - not just slavish desires to fulfill sensual pleasures. Follow your heart and wisdom here - it knows what to do and what is the right way. Not all desires are bad. Desire for peace, happiness, liberation, truth, good health and wellbeing are wholesome desires. The trick is not to get devastated if they don't all manifest exactly as we want, when we want, etc... Then they are desires with bondage and attachment. All the very best with your current situation - may the right conditions manifest for you soon to support your practice, health and well being

~ Questions on Buddha-Dhamma ~

Q: What does the word khandhas mean? Is it thoughts? Or desires?

A: The Pali term is Khandha, meaning "aggregate". There are 5 khandhas that we experience. These are:

1. Form (the body, or materiality) '*Rupa*'- this is matter that is tangible (i.e. can be touched). This Khandha is linked to our five senses (smell, touch, taste, sight and hearing).
2. Sensation (feeling-tone) *Vedana* - these are feelings (pleasant, painful or neutral feeling-tones) experienced from sense contact. They can be physical or mental feeling-tones.
3. Perception (the process of recognizing/perceiving what things are) *Sanna* - this allows people to recognise things in the world because they have learnt about, seen or experienced those things before.
4. Mental formations (thoughts/ideation) *Sankhara* – these are the different thoughts, ideas, opinions and various kammic or habitual formations people experience.
5. Sense consciousness (the mental knowing of things, or of sense-objects) *Vinnana* - This is the knowing of sense objects as they arise with sensory contact.

Q: Please give a more concise and detailed explanation of actual emptiness, what it is, and how it ends one's personal conflict and suffering?

A: Emptiness is the actual Reality of all and everything in phenomenal existence. This is a scientific fact. The problem is that we are deluded in not knowing or recognizing this fact so we cling to things - objects, self, other people - as being concrete, separate discrete entities, and unchanging. However, when we see deeply with insight and intuitive wisdom (not just through an intellectual understanding) the substanceless nature of all phenomena, it is a liberating and blissful awakening. We are released from ego clinging, fixation, dualistic perception, and suffering. However, this has to

be experienced for oneself - me telling you this is not going to end your suffering. Keep looking on within with wisdom and ease and allow your true nature to shine through, as and when it will. As Nagarjuna says: Emptiness liberates one from all conceptual views. But those who conceptualize emptiness will fail to realize liberation.

Q: You mentioned that Buddha said we are not our fate and don't need to give in to misfortune, but can that be interpreted or misinterpreted as being "successful" in life, fulfilling dreams, worldly goals, etc., paradigms that seem dualistic and take one further away from awakening if not mitigated?

A: I don't see being "successful in life, fulfilling dreams and goals" as something lay people necessarily need to reject or shun. If these things are "achieved" or attained with wisdom and generosity there is nothing wrong with being successful in one's field or even wealthy necessarily. It is when wealth and ambition become stupid and people are ignorant of the key principles of life or the Dharma that they become toxic and harmful. Wealth can be a wonderful opportunity to practice generosity, to be philanthropic and to make great/positive changes to the world if that wealth is used skillfully. Besides if one has wealth in this life, it is due to past generosity according to the Buddha's teaching on karma. If one becomes deceitful or stingy with it, then it is unlikely to appear again in the future, so one should develop a sense of gratitude and humility around this gift of Grace.

Also, excellence in one's field is something that can be so admirable and helpful for the world. All of this entirely depends on how one relates to it. If they are achieved with ego, arrogance and stupidity, then yes, they become like the rich man in Jesus' teaching that cannot enter the gates of heaven. You remember that teaching? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. I guess Jesus was pointing to the delusory power of things like fame, power, and wealth to deceive us and make us think we are superior to others and to feed the ego. However, there are rich and successful people who are humble and wise (I can't tell you who as I don't know any personally - but I'm sure there are! LOL). Actually, my brother is one like this. He's pretty rich and successful but incredibly generous, kind and is not attached to his money at all. He is also very humble about his worldly achievements in the business world, never brags, and takes it all with a grain of salt. And best of all, he just enjoys himself lightly with his wealth and privilege, no doubt understanding and knowing deeply that all these things are impermanent and will fade - so why identify and attach to them.

So, there you go.... Enjoy what life offers you and brings your way (if that is our destiny), but more importantly we develop wisdom, compassion and generosity in our relationship with all worldly things and practice deepening our understanding of the Dharma - then we won't go off the path.

Q: For clarity if I may? We all know what thinking is, but contemplation is to gently hold a concept and just look at it, with no thinking about it? Whereas meditation holds no concept, just IS. I know it all depends on what one's definition of IS is, but is that correct basically? If I just have no thought without meditation, I become the all ground of conditioning, like my computers been hacked and programs are running unseen. Is that the meaning of all ground?

A: In the Dzogchen teachings the "all-ground" is often referred to as a state of absentmindedness, vacant, and indifferent and non-conceptual. However, it lacks awareness and clarity unlike the full

awareness or Rigpa which is space-like, clear, free from thinking about past, present or future, empty and most importantly, cognizant. The cognizance though is more akin to intuitive knowledge rather than intellectual or discursive knowledge. It is clear knowing, clear seeing without the conceptual machinations of the normal intellect. Hope that helps clarify somewhat for your own practice.

Q: I have a question that I have not been able to solve, maybe you can help me or direct me to where I may find the answers. Padmasambhava says, "On any particular occasion, when your own (internal) mind-stream undergoes changes, then there will arise appearances, which you will perceive as external changes. Therefore, everything that you see is a manifestation of mind."

I always interpreted this as a kind of "Law of attraction" type of teaching. What do you get from that? Do we manifest our life from our thoughts? And how do you deal with this teaching?

A: Yes, he emphasises and repeats throughout this teaching: "There exist no phenomena other than what arises from the mind." This is the core teaching of the mind only school too. However, Padmasambhava always stressed (as did the Buddha) not to take any extreme views or positions on this Reality. Everything is in essence empty appearance arising from the mind - but these appearances still appear so in that sense karma is still an irrefutable law for ordinary beings - or law of attraction if you want to relate to it like that. All of these high teachings have to be kept in perspective and balance until we realise the Truth directly and it is sustained within our very being. However, these teachings can help point us towards the Reality when we start to understand them even just intellectually.

Q: Thank you Samaneri Jayasara for this beautiful posting, which I was compelled to listen to several times. The simplicity of this Dzogchen teaching left me confused and the more I listened to it a question came to mind. Do meditation teachings vary according to the different Buddhist Traditions and/or individual Masters? I understood that just sitting there with no goal is not meditation. So, which is it?

A: Yes, there are many different meditation techniques that are taught. The Buddha himself taught hundreds of different methods depending on the acumen of the student/disciple. He could see what was needed. However, although the Dzogchen teachings are not really "techniques" they do point to a practice whereby one develops an open awareness - or recognition of this Natural state - and abides in it. It is not so much a "technique" as a waking up and recognising what is already there. Dzogchen is said to be the highest pinnacle as it is suited for those who can do this easily - recognise the Natural State - and not be overwhelmed by discursive thinking or afflictive emotions. However, it does not deny the benefit of techniques for those who need them - they are a skillful means especially when one is starting out on the path. Hope that helps clarify.

Q: I have been pondering the meaning of "enlightened intent" in Longchenpa's teachings. I am curious how you/others personally define that phrase and also how it applies to your/others' daily life. Thank you.

A: Hi there, best to let Longchenpa himself explain that term as it is quite a unique term used mainly in translations of his. He says: "The natural abiding of enlightened intent is meditative absorption as

a state of resting imperturbably. If the characteristics of ordinary consciousness do not stir in the mind, that itself is enlightened intent."

So, we could say that if one turns the mind continuously towards the Deathless element - the natural abiding of Awareness itself - and stands upon that, one can attain final fruition, or the supreme awakening. The enlightened intent is this "intention" to recognise and to naturally abide as this Awareness which is self-liberating. Hope that helps clarify somewhat.

Q: Couldn't help noticing the emphasis on "effort" and "accomplishment". Padmasambhava always stresses that nothing need be attained and no effort need be made. But it doesn't really matter. Does it?

A: These are all just various skillful means being taught to different people at different stages of development and understanding. When one sees clearly, then there is an understanding that there is no effort required and in essence all striving undermines it. However, many people need to make right efforts in the beginning to clear the murky mind and this is what the Buddha taught to those people and what Rinpoche is stressing here too.

Q: I would like to check with you about the word "Awareness" here in this meditation. Here, are you using this word as limitless "Consciousness" or as just "attention"? Some masters use this word as the first one and some use as the second meaning. It's just a little confusing for me sometimes even being possible to infer by the context... Thanks!

A: Good question and one that often comes up when people use the words 'awareness', 'mindfulness', 'consciousness' or 'presence' and a few others. Lots of debates and questions arise in many meditation and spiritual circles about what each word means, what is right and wrong, and people often get lost in semantics. So, from the outset, "Awareness" is simply a word, a concept and a pointing to something beyond the conceptual realm. Right attention (and right intention) takes us to an open, encompassing awareness, but awareness has many different layers and depths to it in some ways - this is speaking from a relative perspective. However, in the Buddhist framework there must be Right View for it to be liberating Awareness. You see that cat, she is very, very attentive and aware of certain stimuli, but her awareness is limited to the animal realm; to the level of simple, pure being, without self-consciousness and ego but also without the self-reflexive capacity that human beings have to turn the awareness in on itself. That is: Wisdom (paññā). So, the capacity to realise "limitless consciousness" in ourselves and thus liberate ourselves from all bodily and mental clinging, identification and attachment is the gift and potential we have been given in this life as human beings.

I wouldn't get too bogged down in the meaning or semantics of these words if you can avoid it (Nisargadatta and Ramana Maharshi use the words Awareness and Consciousness very differently too and it can do your head in). Simply Be Aware, rest in this Awareness with full mindfulness as much as possible (Satisampajañña - mindfulness with full wisdom/awareness). This path of mindful, clear awareness and knowing is the path to the Deathless, so one has to learn to trust in that. It is the Knowing wisdom that liberates by itself, coupled with right action and other aspects of purification that support and propel it - not 'me', not 'you' - so there is a need to get out of the way as much as possible and trust in the process unfolding. The liberating wisdom and insights arise by themselves once one is practicing correctly with Right View as the forerunner.

Q: Do objects create desires or the other way or both? Then again, both objects and desires are manifest and within the domain of empty cognizance. Any response? I don't care about being right or wrong, only clarity.

A: Interesting question, but the only way objects can create desires in us is if we are conditioned to have desire for them, and then feed, believe and cling to the object of our desire. For instance, your desire for strawberry ice cream is your particular and unique desire - other people may either find it repulsive or be neutral about it and have absolutely no desire for it. So, objects by themselves never create desires - they arise in us, and it is our own interpretation and clinging to the various objects of desire that grabs us - that is the root of desire. Careful though, about interpreting all desires as "bad" if that is where you are heading with this. There are wholesome desires that we should encourage in ourselves. For instance, the desire for liberation, the desire to care for others, the desire to be free from base desires. Desire is just energy and if we can harness it correctly with wisdom and mindfulness, [and not identify and cling], then it can be a great source of strength and an ally.

Q: It seems to me that Citta is the same as Rigpa or Clear Light in Tibetan buddhism. Correct me if I'm wrong.

A: Yes, they are pretty much synonymous terms. "Citta," in the way Ajahn Maha Boowa is referring to it, is the "mind's essential knowing nature" (fully awakened citta is deathless). Rigpa is the mind's essential knowingness, as distinct from the unawakened citta (sems) which grasps, measures and discriminates.

Q: I am trying to understand "...it is now like the trace of a bird flying in the sky!"

A: Ah, such a beautiful metaphor here for what the Great Master is pointing to! Essentially, he is saying, that now there are no traces left. He is free from any karmic propensities or creating or leaving karma behind. He is the "thus gone" - the Tathagatha - he is free from any scent or smell of ego or individuality. Thus, he flies free like a bird in the sky, his mind unencumbered and free from any fabrications - his flight path just like the traceless path of a bird in the sky - he leaves nothing behind.

Q: How can there be an interval between cause and effect?

A: There is generally a space between the two. Even if you think about an action as gross as eating, it takes a while for the digestion process to produce the result! The same applies with the subtle sense doors of the mental thinking processes. One needs to allow the mind to quieten and settle down to be able to detect the space, but it is there.

Q: So, basically no expectation, just be and go with the flow? Is this correct?

A: So long as you recognise your True Nature and can "flow" with the Awareness/Rigpa for awakening and liberation, then yes. But the clear light of Awareness is essentially stopping the "flow" of samsara.

~ Questions on Advaita-Vedanta ~

Q: As a Buddhist nun what are your thoughts on Advaita Vedanta? Very keen to hear your opinion!

A: 'Advaita' means non-duality. 'Vedanta' is a sanskrit term meaning "conclusion" (anta) of the Vedas, most notably the Upanishads. Such a beautiful tradition - full of wisdom, truth and love.

Q: When I AM is realized to be a mind game and 'someone' dissolved into the real world, could that being still understand how to pay the bill and run a bank account when they are totally alone with this understanding. This is what my mind is wondering if it were to give up and remain still? This is a fear in the mind, but when you are too old to live on the streets and have a comfortable place to be would you be capable of dealing with payment?

A: The true and deep letting go does require trust, faith, and surrender - but also wisdom. The wisdom is in knowing that there is a power that will take care of all these mundane affairs if someone were to be dissolved completely of their ego. A rare occurrence in this world, but as we know there are Masters where this phenomenon has occurred. They are then surrounded by all the supports they need to survive on this earthly plane if that is their karma. They know and trust this power and let it flow through them. As Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Don't worry too much - just let go little by little with joyful abandon. As Ramana says, "It will all come alright in the end."

Q: How do you find oneness in the belief in atman and anatman? Is there a correlation between the two?

A: By recognising, as you say, that these are mere beliefs and concepts. The experience of non-self or the Oneness of all is just that - a direct realization free from concepts and beliefs. These words are just pointers to the beyond.

Q: Is the I AM here meant to be the 'ego'?

A: When the 'I am' moves outwards into the thinking, discursive mind, full of emotional reactions, views and opinions, and becomes the I am 'this' or I am 'that', it is very much the ego in full swing. Although Nisargadatta pointed to the 'I am' as the first ignorance, the point of practice is that if we stay with the simple, pure presence - the 'I am' without any elaborations - the pure mindfulness of the present moment - it eventually dissolves the ego and the outward flow of the I am and takes us inward to the Absolute, our true nature and home.

Q: Is the "I" the observer of all phenomena or the observer of the observer watching phenomena or none of these things?

A: The "I" that Ramana is referring to here is the Source of all and everything. You are that Source itself - not your ego or little "I" which is simply a delusion and veil to the Reality - the practice is to fully realise this and stabilise in it.

Q: Is the Absolute the same as Awareness? My understanding is - 1. Awareness; 2: of Being (I Am); then 3. All of the rest (mind, body and world)

A: In Nisargadatta's words: "Awareness is primordial; it is the original state, beginningless, endless, uncaused, unsupported, without parts, without change. Consciousness is on contact, a reflection against a surface, a state of duality. There can be no consciousness without awareness, but there can be awareness without [sense] consciousness, as in deep sleep. Awareness is absolute, consciousness is relative to its content; consciousness is always of something. Consciousness is partial and changeful, awareness is total, changeless, calm and silent. And it is the common matrix of every experience. Since it is awareness that makes consciousness possible, there is awareness in every state of consciousness. Therefore, the very consciousness of being conscious is already a movement in awareness. Interest in your stream of consciousness takes you to awareness. It is not a new state. It is at once recognized as the original, basic experience, which is life itself, and also love and joy."

Q: I see the source where the sense 'I am' comes from the subtle energy. I am that source I am aware of it but who am I? Who is seeing the stillness, the source I can somehow sense or see the source but I can't find myself anyone who can enlighten me or guide me somehow?

A: Ahh, you have discovered there is no one home! You are the Source, but there is no 'you'. There is just what there is - no need for labels, concepts, or ideas. Let go of all that and rest into Awareness itself.

Q: Can you tell us how the body is projected?

A: As Ramana declares - the body is a mental projection. One has to reflect deeply on this profound point and can only truly realise it in deep meditation. However, an intellectual understanding can provide a start or foundation. If you reflect back to when you were a baby, you did not have a sense of a separate body. Rather, we learnt through the conditioning process where this 'body' began and the boundaries around it. We learnt the name for hand, foot, arm, leg, etc. and learnt how to use them slowly. We were led to believe that this is 'me', 'my body' - but before that conditioning process happened, we had no sense of an individual self, body or existence. We just were - boundless, spaceless, formless. So, it is through a long, complex conditioning process - through concepts, labels and mental constructs that we actually form the boundaries and idea of this body as 'me' as a mental projection. Obviously, it is helpful and necessary for functioning in this material/relative world but we have taken it to be ultimate truth, as a solid separate self - and this is delusion/illusion. Hope this helps. My encouragement would be to reflect on and look at babies - imagine their world before we start telling them they are a name and form. They are blissing out in their oceanic Oneness, albeit with a latent nescience.

Q: This one is confusing to me, or my ego at least. I feel resistance in accepting [that] in order to be free we need to stop seeking personal attainment. What about making a living? If I favor the

concept that I am not the body and not separate but I haven't experienced that yet, how do I get there (although there is nowhere to get)? How do I see through this illusion?

A: Sure, make a living without ego or conceit as much as possible - or at least be aware when it arises, which it will. That's all. We are not fully free from the ego (which is merely a delusory phantom) until we are totally liberated so we learn just to be aware of it, with clarity, understanding and a non-judgmental frame of mind. We 'get there' in the end, even though there is nowhere to get and no one to arrive. Nisargadatta worked in his little beedie shop in India as he needed to make a living - working, practising, and letting go. No big deal.

Q: I pay attention to what you say. in this video, at the end, you say "Discrimination will lead to detachment". I can not understand what it means. thanks a lot for any help.

A: In this context Maharaj is using the word "discrimination" to mean wisdom mind. So, when one sees clearly with wisdom the Reality, one will naturally experience detachment. Often the word "discrimination" is used by Masters to mean the thinking, discursive, analytical mind but it is being used differently here. Hope that helps clarify

Q: What do you think about a more modern approach to this that says it's not just wanting and grasping, on a deeper level it's the sense of guilt causing any motivation in our lives, i.e. desire for money or career is not just a desire for money but a sense of guilt related to money that the person tries to "pay back". I've read about this in the book 'Disappearance of the Universe', and psychotherapy says the same thing like in the Good Will Hunting movie.

A: Sure, guilt sounds like a primary motivator - especially for us Westerners. However, regardless of the analysis of what is driving the grasping, the important thing is simply to see clearly and to understand the grasping itself when it is occurring in that very moment. It is the seeing it with clear wisdom that unlocks the door to Liberation - the letting go happens naturally then.

Q: So, Awareness is even beyond God?

A: Well in the way he is conceptualizing and positing the term here in this instance. But if the Absolute is beyond all concepts, timeless, formless, unborn and undying, then for many people this would equate with their understanding of "God". Such a problematic concept to posit or discuss in any context I feel personally, so best to leave it alone. As soon as we try to say what God is, it isn't that at all!

Q: How would you describe "what the self-enquiry is"? Is it another name for "being aware"? Being conscious, being here and now?

A: Yes, and also investigation into the nature of that Being itself. Not so much an intellectual enquiry - although it might start out that way - but more an enquiry that comes from the basis of a quiet

mind that looks and sees. Hope that makes sense or at least comes to make sense at some point in your meditation practice.

Q: Breath control? I find as absorption in meditation is occurring, I find my breath naturally pausing after I exhale. Is this what is meant? Not holding a big breath, is it? If I make myself hold my breath it is a forced thing, taking concentration at this point.

A: No, it's definitely not about holding or forcibly controlling the breath but allowing it to be a more natural, aware process through attention and mindfulness. The origins of these instructions were said to have been given to a group of Rishis who were obsessed and attached to concentration practices but who were not Liberated. Therefore, Shiva gave these instructions, some of which can seem a bit ambiguous. Breath control can definitely control the mind and lead to siddhis (powers) but the overall emphasis in this teaching is to go beyond all action/karma. It is not by action but by renunciation of action that one is liberated. So forcibly trying to do or attain anything (even control the breath) seems to run counter to the overall spirit and principles of the teaching here. Just my thoughts. Once the mind is calm, the breath naturally subsides or disappears altogether so there is really no need to 'control' it. Better to practice self-enquiry as per Ramana's recommendation and let the breath take care of itself.

Q: When abiding in I Am, is it normal to experience uncomfortable bodily tensions? Could it be that such physical symptoms are invariably tied to the I Am such that if the I am disappears, so will the symptoms?

A: Uncomfortable bodily tensions are normal and a natural part of having a body, especially for those of us who are older. They need not be seen as a problem as they are a powerful teacher, but nor should they be focused on excessively in the practice. Nisargadatta had very uncomfortable bodily sensations, particularly in the latter stages of his illness which he refers to in his talks, so did the Buddha! The only way they fully disappear is when one is in the deepest samadhi, dead, heavily medicated, or unconscious.

However, one can have unpleasant bodily sensations and be totally unaffected by them, and that is what this practice of "I am" or Beingness is encouraging us to do and realise. We are not the body, we are not the sensations that arise in the body - pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. These are merely bodily feelings, but it is our mental conditioning that latches on to them and labels them as "my" feelings, good or bad, and we either try to get rid of or push away the unpleasant ones or hold on to the pleasant ones. But the practice should involve investigating feeling sensations to their deepest level - what are they really? When the mind can be detached, settled, centered and quiet, we can really begin to understand the deepest nature of the body and the bodily sensations, and in this way arrive at a stage where we remain totally unaffected or disinterested in them. Whatever is arising is okay as we no longer identify ourselves with or as the body. This is quite an advanced stage, but it is essentially where this practice will take you if you pursue it and persist. The first step is to let go of wanting to control the sensations and get rid of them. Just changing that attitude can see a radical shift in both the manifestation of sensations themselves and our entire outlook. Hope this helps somewhat.

Q: I am new to meditations and a little confused. What is the exact process of reaching the I AM space? Isn't that mind THINKING? And how do we hold on our focus there? Again, isn't that effort and if I understood right there shouldn't be any effort. And what is this 'I Am' concept all about?

A: Yes, the confusion around this concept of "I am" is a very common one and takes a while to get a handle on in practice. However, if you strip it back to the very basics of what is being pointed to here, it is very simple. You do need to go beyond the concept or thinking about this statement of "I am" to simply "just being". You know how to do this as you have been it since you were a baby but were not aware of it. Now Maharaj is asking you to be aware of it. So, what does it mean? Just notice "you are", Be your essential Beingness that exists when all thoughts subside (they don't have to completely disappear just allow them to be in the background), and your mind can become more settled and calm, your body is still. Notice how that feels when you just "are" without all the turbulent thoughts or ideas about "yourself" - you can remain naked, simple, unembellished by any thoughts, concepts or emotions. This is the "I am" place. Start from here, remain settled in here without force, keep returning to this pure, quiet place and allow things to unfold naturally. Insights will come, understandings will come, peace will emerge and the path will unfold naturally.

Ultimately it will help you to realise that in fact you are NOT a person. Truly, you are not! And with that realisation slowly dawning you will feel free and unconcerned with any issues related to the illusory personality. Start to believe this and slowly recognise it and you will be liberated from all mundane concerns.

I also just wanted to follow up and add to that last response that focused on the Absolute truth, that, yes, practising meditation and this method can help people connect more with their feelings and heart and thus make connecting with people easier and more authentic. In fact, these practices can align you so much with your heart and authentic Being that you can feel overwhelming love and connection to others, radiate calm and peace, and thus find that human relationships can become more meaningful. Hope that helps strike a better balance in my response. With all blessings in your practice and life.

Perhaps listening to this Guided Meditation I just uploaded may help a bit too as they are both pointing to the same place of settling into Awareness.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iONoeSfAVNc>

Q: When I focus on the 'I Am' I find that I get stuck up in my head. This is an unpleasant experience for me. Your feedback would be greatly appreciated, if you have the time.

A: It sounds like the meditation is becoming too conceptual for you then. You would be best to focus more on being in your body so that you are more grounded and centred and less in your head. To do this, try to start simply by feeling the sensations in your feet and hands when you are meditating and move your awareness in a relaxed way around your bodily sensations - not in too methodical a way, but just gently sweeping the attention to be in the body, especially when you notice you are stuck in your head. And recognise your basic "beingness" this way... The "I am" can become an idea and too much of a mental/conceptual meditation for some people, as they can pick it up wrongly in terms of what Nisargadatta was pointing to, so it would be good to also open yourself to integrating other practices if you find it is not working so great for you.

Q: You are not the knower of the field. I was like WHAT ?? stunned mind 🤔 I thought I was the knower lol! I am confused.

A: He's having a go and challenging all our fixed views and concepts, especially those that we have about our "self" and what or who we take ourselves to be. You may notice that at one point earlier in the meditation he says "you are the knower of the field" and then later on he says (as you note) "you are not even the knower". So there appears to be contradictions and there always will be in using language, but Nisargadatta was notorious for not caring about being consistent in using words as he knew the Reality beyond that. I think he had fun always challenging people to let go of whatever ideas and concepts they were clinging to, because if we have an idea or concept in our heads about what the Ultimate Reality is, then it is not it. He was always encouraging people to let go and know the Truth beyond the mind. Glad you are enjoying the readings - with all good wishes.

Q: It says in this teaching, "Let NOT the mind think of anything else." I really don't get/understand the meaning of this sentence. How can one function in the world if the mind doesn't think of anything else (and only focuses solely on the Atman)? We all need the mind in all activities including interactions with other people in this world. Even as I'm typing this I'm also thinking. According to spiritual perspectives, are there perhaps only certain types of thoughts that we should not allow to arise? Hopefully, you or anyone who has a deep understanding could enlighten me on this part. Thanks in advance!

A: I think the word "think" is actually a poor translation here and bound to create confusion as it has done in you. It would be better to relate to it more as the mind "dwelling or resting" in That - the silent Awareness. If you can imagine yourself engaged in any activity but you are aware that your mind is fairly still and quiet even in the midst of activity. Kind of like the zone one can get into on a long run or bike ride. If you do exercise, you'll know what I mean. You don't have to think about running or riding - the body knows what to do. In fact, if you do think about the mechanics of it, you are more likely to stuff it up! Thoughts are not the problem - it is the identification with them as 'me' or 'my' thoughts that is the problem. When we are totally identified with them as my 'self' that's when we get tense and into conflicts about right/wrong, good/bad, and so on. The recommendation then is to abide in the silent, still awareness that you can notice in the gaps between thoughts and allow that to grow stronger and more pronounced within you. You don't have to suppress or fight neurotic thoughts - they will still come and go - but ignore them, don't identify with them - let them float by like clouds in the sky. Not all thoughts are evil or wrong either - there's lots of wisdom in some of them, but the key is not to think that they are 'yours' or who you are. How can they be, they are just like floating embers! Stay more in the silence of your own heart, make friends with your thoughts but don't invite them to stick around. They will soon leave once they get bored that you are not paying them much attention. Hope this ramble from the thought/non-thought space helps a bit!

Q: Is it possible to be as/in pure awareness (the Self) while thinking simultaneously? According to my common sense, it's not possible because to be as pure awareness/consciousness is to look inward (within/inner/internal world), whereas, thinking is about the world (the mundane) whose direction is outward (toward the external world). It's like trying to go North and South at the same

time. Hopefully, you can understand what I'm trying to convey to you and hopefully, with your deep spiritual understanding, you will be able to clarify. Thanks so much again in advance, Samaneri!

A: There are different degrees of samadhi/absorption where one would be completely merged without the slightest trace of thought - immovable and untouched by any trace of the mundane existence. However, Bhagavan Ramana mostly encouraged people to be in and experience Sahaja samadhi - which is the natural state. Thoughts may come and go in this natural state of consciousness, but one is not identified, moved, or influenced by them in anyway. Rather than be engaged in long, discursive thinking and analysing which so many people are trapped in, we need to just be aware if they intrude but turn away - unless of course they are really important for survival and functioning in the world. But you may have noticed that most of our thoughts are useless, neurotic, repetitive, and ego-centric. Few thoughts fall into the category of truly wise and helpful! If you think of Ramana Maharshi, he moved about with people, engaged and talked but for certain he never moved from that immovable state of the Self or Reality - his being was so connected and absorbed in that from the Ultimate point of view. As he encouraged his devotees saying: "Your hands may do the work but your mind can remain still. You are that which never moves." So, if you contemplate this, thoughts too are not really the problem - they are just fairy floss that flies in the mind's sky but they are not who we are, and in their essential essence they are empty, insubstantial, and substanceless. Whether they appear or not in consciousness is not important - the important point is that one not identify as them and rather remains completely stabilised in the conviction that they are that immovable source from which they arise. Hope this helps

~ Questions on practicing Yoga Nidra ~

Q: I felt asleep while watching myself during this Yoga Nidra. I couldn't move and I freaked out after I put my whole attention to my hand then I could move. Is this normal? What should I do next time?

A: Sure, it's normal in the sense that anything can and does happen - there is nothing to fear or worry about. You entered a transcendental state whereby the observing mind separates from the body - this is a deep, alpha like state that is facilitated by these Yoga Nidras. In fact, it is the intention to enter that in order to give the thinking mind and physical body complete rest. You 'freaked out' because it was a new experience and because we are so identified with our bodies as our self that when we 'drop' the body consciously or subconsciously in meditation or yoga nidra it can feel frightening. This is all good though and signifies the slow dissolution of the ego. Nothing to fear here except fear itself - which is not real and only a product of the mind. Just relax and let go.

Q: This yoga nidra is really pure joy. Thank you for that. I have a question. Is it possible that the relaxation is so efficient that it is just impossible to sleep? I'm doing that each night and cannot sleep anymore.

A: Yes, it can make the mind very bright and awake and that is a good sign so long as one does not stress over it and worry about not falling asleep. This worry will prevent sleep from coming too. They say that 20 mins of a deep yoga nidra is the equivalent of 4-5 hours of sleep, so you should feel refreshed if you are accessing those deep states of quiet mental relaxation. Many people spend their nights in fitful sleeps with anxious dreams and nightmares and wake up exhausted. It sounds good that you are entering such deep, relaxing territory. Just don't worry about what happens - let go and trust the unfolding.

Q: When I attended a teacher certification class, I was introduced to yoga nidra and they did this body scan. And I found all schools do this body scan. I went on with this tradition and that day came when I really struggled with myself to do this. On one hand they put forth pointers of non-duality. Shankaracharya', Maharishi, Maharaj's teachings - You are not the body and you are not the mind. And after asana, you do a body scan telling a practitioner to pay attention to the body.

A: Sure, but that does not mean that we don't care for and attend to this vessel of the Spirit (so to speak). We are not the body, and do not need to identify as it, but neither should we reject, deny, or hate it. The body needs attention and to be listened to. The body has its own deep intelligence and can tell us what is needed when our rational minds refuse to listen to what is going on at the deeper levels. I find Yoga Nidras enhance and deepen all other meditation "practices" (for want of a better word), and enables one to enter that state between waking and dream, maintaining clear, bright Awareness. Very powerful stuff. Systematically relaxing each part of the body prior to entering that state is key to it. The two extremist views can be subtle and can creep in if we are not careful - either denying or affirming "this body". Denying the existence and value of the body leans towards the Annihilationist/nihilistic view. Affirming it (or anything else as permanent) leads to the Eternalist view. Both are erroneous views. The Buddha always taught the Middle Way Dhamma.