

Self Practice #2

“The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what you share with someone else when you’re uncool”. Lester Bangs (character in the movie “Almost Famous”)

Meditation helps us learn how uncool we really are (and be ok with that). The only true currency in this world is knowing yourself.

In this series, we pull from many meditation traditions - this month’s self practice is from Buddha and is centered on the concept of “samyak smriti” , right mindedness.

Everything we perceive is perceived through knowing. You look at a dog. You know this is a Golden Retriever. Energy moves from you to the Golden, take it’s form, then comes back to you and notifies you it is a Golden Retriever.

Initially, there appears to be two parts to knowing - the known and the knower. In our example, the known is the dog and the knower is you.

Consider knower and known. Knower is you. Known is the Golden Retriever. Knowledge is the the relationship between knower and known.

Knowledge requires understanding or both the known and the knower. You cannot be of right mind if you only know one point - you must know both points.

Think of how the energy flows - from knower to known, then from known to knower. As individuals, we typically look at only one portion of this equation at a time. We become the known. We are the knower. We do not become the known and knower by accident - it takes practice (meditation). You have to know both points to be of right mind.

All meditation practices are designed to reveal the knower.

When your attention is on the Golden (the known), it is not on the knower. When your attention is on the knower (you), it is not on the known. To be “right minded” you have to be aware of both directions, at once.

When you are aware of both points at the same time, magic happens, the known is your mind and the known is the world. You transcend and become a witness to three points.

The MoM (Meditation of the Month)

Last month focus was breathing, a physical thing, usually easier for people to achieve. This month’s focus is on the mind. Feel free to repeat last months MOM or feel free to substitute

any of our in class meditations (cloud, parity of breath, body scan or walking) as this month MOM. This is not a prescriptive experience - do what feels best for you - where you feel progress - not what I tell you to do.

I invite you to apply samyak smriti as your MoM.

Pick an object in the room - or an object you have seen within the past couple of hours.

Think about the object. Think about how the object looks or how the object feels. Think about the object with the other senses. Thinking "into" the object is one direction (think of this as an arrow with the arrowhead pointing towards the object).

Now think about the knower (you). Why do you "see" the object the way you do? Why do you "taste" the object the way you do? Think about "why" with the other senses. Think about you. Thinking "on you" is the second direction (think of this as an arrow with an arrowhead on the other side)

Now think about the object (known) - but while you are thinking about the object think about you (the knower). You and the golden retriever.

Now think about you but at the same time think about the object. The golden retriever and you. When you become aware of both arrows a third perspective happens, and right mindedness occurs.

Set a timer with a quiet alarm for seven minutes.

Find a time once a week to sit quietly. It does not matter how you sit, on the floor in a chair, in a yoga pose - it only matters that you are comfortable how you sitting. During your self-meditation, you do not want you mind to think about how you are sitting. Sit in a way that will not bring further attention to sitting.

Put this handout someplace where you do not have access to. Now go and sit and do what you remember reading about.

Post Exercise

- 1) Were you able to achieve knowledge ? (understanding the known and the knower as the same time) If not did you get stuck on the known or the knower or both? Ponder wherever you landed.
- 2) Was the known easier? Was the knower easier? Why do you think this is?
- 3) What emotions happened?
- 4) If you were to try this exercise a second time what would you do differently?

- 5) Try this exercise but don't make an object the focus of your "known" pick an emotion - like joy. Explore what is to know joy - relate your sense to joy (smell, sight, taste, hear, touch). Explore the knower of joy.
- 6) Try this exercise but make the known an activity - like walking or eating. Permute the senses on the known. Switch focus from known to knower, to knower from known, to both.
- 7) Congratulate yourself!!!

There is a Buddhist tale about a young warrior on his way home. During the journey, he gets to a large river too far to cross - but he sees a wise, elder teacher on the other side.

"Oh teacher, can you tell me how to get the other side?" ,
the teacher responds,
"My son, you are on the other side".

In many ways, thinking about right-mindedness makes you right-minded, but with practice we can cross large rivers easier.