

Senses of Non-Duality

Experience Life Fully

Story

There lived a Sadhu near Bombay, India where now a very saintly man is said to be. All who met him revered him for his purity of mind and many claimed that he must be fully liberated. Hearing himself described in such high terms, naturally, he started to wonder, "Perhaps I am in fact fully liberated." But being an honest person, he examined himself carefully and found that there were still traces of impurities in his mind. Surely, as long as the impurities remain, he could not have reached the stage of perfect saintliness. So he started asking those who came to pay respects to him, "Is there anyone in the world today who is known to be fully liberated?"

"Oh Yes Sir, there is the monk Gotama, called Buddha who teach the technique by which one can achieve liberation."

"I must go to this man and learn from him the way to become fully liberated." He started walking from Bombay across all of central India and came to Savatthi in northern India, where a Buddhist meditation center was located. There he saw a monk going from house to house to beg for food. The wonderful atmosphere of peace and harmony were surrounded this person. The Sadhu was convinced that he must be the Buddha. "I do not have much time left for my life and I want you to teach me the technique of becoming liberated."

"In your seeing, there should be only seeing; in your hearing, nothing but hearing; in your smelling, tasting, and touching, nothing but smelling, tasting, and touching; in your cognizing, nothing but cognizing." Buddha replied.

Within a few minutes left for him to live, he attained the final goal of life, full liberation.

Teaching

Bodily sensations are the great gateways and portals to access our inner stillness. This is why we are still living in and experience our bodies as human beings. When we fully integrate our perception into sensory experiences, we come to a state of joy and beauty, regardless of what we do and what we think. We all have a similar experience. For example, before we eat, we start to sense the aroma, colors, full body taste, and texture of food, and we then reach the state of satisfaction from the process of experiencing the food. When we have the same food but we eat it on the run or when we are angry, does the food provide you the same satisfaction?

The Buddha teaches us that when we live life through any of our sensory experience, there shall be no evaluation and no conditioned perception. Once our preconceived perception starts evaluating our experiences as good or bad, we see the world in a distorted way and fall into the dualistic living. In order to free the mind from all

conditioning, we must learn to stop judging and evaluating things based on past experiences and the knowledge we have learned. Instead, we must simply be aware of awareness taking place from within and without, without judging and reacting. Through sensory experiences as a spiritual path, we see the oneness in all and everything and then we all become liberated, according to Buddha.

Ancient Wisdom

The core of Ashtanga Yoga is the eight limbs. The first four limbs (yama, niyama, asana and pranāyama) are the outer practices. The final four (pratyahara, dharanā, dhyana and samadhi) are the inner practices. The first of these inner practices is pratyahara, the withdrawal of the senses.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras ~300 BC

Sutra 2.54: When the mind is withdrawn from sense objects, the sense organs also withdraw themselves from their respective objects and thus are said to imitate the mind. This is known as pratyahara.

The senses are slaves to the mind and go wherever the mind directs. If the mind is fascinated with the contents of awareness, the senses reach out into the appearance and bring the mind all the juice the mind has an appetite for. If the mind turns inward, becomes quiet and directs its gaze to the joyous equanimity of just breathing in and breathing out, the senses also become quite. So we see here that pratyahara is the mind withdrawing from external stimulation and focusing on the inner landscape; thus, the senses become withdrawn.

As a practical matter, we can't always sit cross legged in the dark breathing in bliss but we can remain centered in the inner quiet as we live our life. Pratyahara can be cultivated so that the senses are not such a distraction when we are focused on the task at hand.

Practice

1. Experience food in front of us fully without judging and without any other tasks in hand or in mind.
2. Experience walking for the simple sake of walking: rhythm of steps, muscle exertion, relaxation, heat from body, heartbeat, and breathing.
3. Experience thinking for the sake of thinking without judging and evaluating the thoughts that arise. It can be a bit tricky because of the complexity of the mind.
4. Experience washing dishes for the sensations of water, soap, and texture of dishes.

5. Experience the sensations that arise during yoga, meditation, and contemplation, without judging with our ego based mind.

Then there arise the sense of awe, joy, aha, love, serenity, contentment.