

Universal Space Within And Without

Transcend the mind and body

Story

One day in San Francisco at the Sivananda Vedanta Yoga Center, Susan, one of the students came to ask me after a yoga class that I lead, "Vedantin, I have a question to ask you and I do not know how to make out of this." "What is it?" I responded. She said, "During the last part of relaxation and meditation, my mind and body were so quiet that I felt I was transparent, like an empty space. Everything else around me, the walls and the building became transparent too. I felt that I could walk through the wall and the building because my body was connected to everything else I sensed." I told her that her experience was extraordinary and she had actually connected to the all-providing source of energy. She should try to remember that experience and the state and try to bring herself into that state very often to remind herself the world itself is nothing but the empty space.

Teaching

When we are in a meditative state, we create a space around us. That space gives us a cushion to watch the world as it is. We do not have to react to drama. Instead, we respond to all life situations with thought after solution or intuitive insights. That space becomes a buffer zone in which the reaction to life situations no longer exists. We then enter the world as a true watcher and an impartial witness without judgment and prejudice and connect to the space of universal consciousness with ease and limitless power, just like Susan did.

The vastness of the universal space from galaxy to galaxy is formless and nameless, beyond today's science and our minds' comprehension. In everyday life, we are simply a small yet integral part of the whole universe. We are the local addresses of the whole universe. We are the body, mind, and emotion, as a form to experience consciousness of the universal space. If we are conscious of our existence, we can sense the space between objects, subjects, life forms, and even between our breath, words, actions, thoughts, and emotions. When we can see, sense, and experience the space, we are not isolated and separated beings but connected and united human forms with the universe consciousness. We then start embracing the evolution of our spirituality personally and collectively as the human race and find the inner meaning and the flow of everyday life.

Connecting to the space of universal consciousness reminds us to be conscious in ourselves, not just in everything we do, see, think, speak, and act. It also reminds us to be conscious of perception and readiness to receive and connect to the vastness of the universal space. We then become aware of thoughts in the mind, sensations of bodily experience, and outbursts of emotion, and start the process of transcending our mind, body, and emotions.

Ancient Wisdom

Hastamalakiyam: Essence of Vedanta in Twelve Verses

When not associated with the limiting adjuncts (in the form of the body, mind and sense organs), I, (the Self) am like space.

Akasha:

The example of space (akasa) given by Hastamalaka is in line with the traditional teaching, where akasa is often used in the process of revealing the Atma. This is because akasa (space) has several characteristics similar to those of Atma, like all pervasiveness, support of everything, free from modification, etc.

This is why meditation on space is recommended for the Vedantic seeker as a means to familiarize with the nature of the Self (Atma svarupam).

[Notes taken from lectures by Swami Paranarthananda, teaching in Chennai, India]

Practice

1. Meditate on space. Imagine a space like a form of a rainbow around your body. Feel the space connected to the vastness of universal consciousness and your body. Sense the unity of all lifeforms beyond your body. Experience the formless of transparency and dwell yourself into the state of oneness.
2. Carry that space with you when you enter the world of drama and use that space as a cushion to delay any bodily and emotional reaction to life situations. Respond to them with the intuition of universal consciousness.
3. Recognize that you are not the mind you think, you are not the body you experience, and you are not the emotion you express; you are the flow of universal consciousness.
4. Recognize 99% of our human body is made up of space and our body is transparent, even in nature. Feel the connection and experience the same space we share between our bodies and the universe.