

Meditation

The Most Common Mistake



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For too many years I suffered under the delusion that I was meditating. I had learned from the great masters, I thought, but my first hint that I was wrong came in 1969, when I described my meditation, and the teacher just said, “NO!”.

This left me very confused as I was sure I was on the right path, and saw nothing else which could be done. I thought I was following his instructions perfectly, and I was on my way to enlightenment, so I struggled for many years refining my skills. Finally, in the early 1980's I had enough insight to realize that I had never meditated, that everything I had done was a waste of time, that “NO!” was the right answer.

It is very difficult to get good advice, even from yourself. I read everything I could, and found that everyone is repeating what they read and hear, and the translations don't go beyond the translators understanding. You find common beliefs about meditation, which everyone agrees with. Moreover, each person soon develops an image in

his mind/body, which is what meditation becomes. You may think that you are aware of the waves of thought, the movement of consciousness. With a little insight you discover that this is all nonsense, and it is not meditation, but only the illusions of the mind.

Here is how it works. The ability of the mind to create illusion is inexhaustible. Take as an example the people who believe that meditation is the perception of the waves of thought. I started my meditative practice like this. You develop mental postures to see the waves. When you see the mind more clearly, you find that the movements begin before your consciousness exists. You and your consciousness are like the froth of bubbles created by an ocean wave. They occur at the end of the wave. The bubbles are not going to know the wave or the ocean. But the mind is very tricky, so it creates a dream world of space-time, in which your body/mind exists in time, such that you believe you saw the wave! In reality, the dream world was created at the end of the wave, and you did not see

the wave, you saw a dream memory of it. So the meditation simply becomes the dreamer seeing a dream wave.

For example, you may have had the telephone ring while you were sleeping. You were awakened, and the mind created a dream in which you were doing something before the phone rang. So the mind creates a dream in which you were, for instance, eating breakfast and then the phone rang in the dream. In reality, the phone rang and woke you up, but the mind creates a dream in which you were already doing something before the phone rang. The mind created you, in time, before the phone rang. This is the tremendous power of the mind. It can juxtaposition time, so that you believe you are the one in control. This delusion is happening every moment of our lives. You and your world are a dream event of space-time, the origins of which are not available to the dreamer.

Then when you become even more skilled at dream meditation, and you see that the dreamer is just

seeing a dream, you cleverly try to posture your meditation so you continually see the dreamer and the dream, and get the beginning of the wave. Your mind again creates this imaginary world for you in space-time dream consciousness, where there is a dreamer seeing a dreamer and the dream. Now you have a very complex dream and dreamer and feel satisfied with your progress. Meanwhile, someone who is doing Jhana meditation looks at you and just sees you lost in thought, exerting pressure on the mind.

With lack of awareness of all this, the meditator struggles to keep the mental posture, the dream and dreamer. To do this, the dream must be repeated constantly, every second. Then there is the problem recreating this dream the next time one meditates. So what the mind does for you is to create a permanent vision, a memory of this meditation and all of its feelings and awarenesses, so that you become an expert at recalling and reproducing this vision, this Gestalt. It becomes like a DVD movie you watch every time you sit

down to meditate.

When you see this style of meditator, and carefully watch their face, you will see their face distort, like some pressure is building up inside their head, and is trying to push out. Sometimes their heads bulge on the left side, sometimes on the right side, and during their meditation, it looks like their head might explode as they build up the pressure. Sometimes they will look as if their thoughts and dreams are floating away from their face. They tend to keep their dreams in or near their heads in a forward direction, and is clearly visible to the eye with careful attention.

What is amazing about these meditators is that they do not think they are lost in dreams and thoughts. They believe they are seeing their thoughts. They have carefully constructed a dream in which they are watching the waves of thought. It is this posture, which when repeated, causes them to know they are meditating. Without this dream posture, they do not think they are meditating. With

the dream posture, they know they are meditating. In reality, they are just lost in thought, dreaming about being separate from thought, and now they believe the dream so thoroughly that they can not accept the mistake.

In the beginning I was very good at this, but luckily I was told “NO”, and I relieved the pressure, and developed some inner power. When I tried these techniques of concentration with inner power, I got quick confirmation that I was making a big mistake, because all I got was severe pain which I couldn't stop. One famous teacher told of how he was good at sitting through the pain of this style of meditation and eventually rattled his front teeth out of his head before he decided to ease up on the pressure. So this technique is not only not meditation, it is also dangerous to your body and mind if you are lucky enough to develop some inner power. With no inner power, you are just thinking, dreaming and sleeping, and enveloped in delusion. With inner power, you risk damage to your body and mind.

When I did this method, I was told to ignore the pain, that pain was good for me. I became addicted to pain, and thought pain must be the gateway to enlightenment, but it lead nowhere. Finally the original teacher who told me “NO” in 1969 told me to “beware of the concentration camps of the gurus”, and I realized I was on the wrong path again. Pain was not an answer.

In my experience, the greatest danger in meditation is activating the mind in any way. Some people like to repeat words or sounds in their minds and call this meditation. This is a danger. Some people like to create and see images, visions, or dreams in their minds. This is a danger. Some people want to see the waves of thought, which is another idea, or thought in the mind. It is a danger. Any time you are conscious of doing something, seeing something, thinking something, it is the ego, the mind. It is just You, being there, grinding away with the mind, and it is just a danger, and it is not meditation.

One way to simply describe these techniques is like this: Concentrate your mind on an image or dream until you accidentally develop some inner power. Then the inner power will cause your technique to give you various levels of pain, which is the main technique. The pain will eventually cause physical and mental damage, leading to neurotic and psychotic episodes, some of which we will call spiritual events. This is the technique of the fakirs of India. They inflict pain on themselves until they have a psychotic episode and become holy men. I don't think this is the path taught by Buddha.

An alternative description would be this: Focus your mind on an image or dream until you become very good at dreaming. Then you should try to achieve certain types of dreams which are considered special. When you get the proper visions and dreams, you have attained the spiritual goal. For instance, some scholars invented the existence of 18 realms to attain. Asoke in 250 BC was purging the sangha and killing monks who

believed is such deviant views. Now meditators are making dreams and thinking they are attaining spiritual worlds and goals. Tibetan Buddhists, Hindus, and western spiritual teachers all use this dream technique. It is probably the worlds most popular technique, but there are no spiritual results, no positive changes, no attainments of Jhana, and no stages of the Arahant.

My Best

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