

The Art of Meditation
Class 3: The deeper meaning of Meditation

In the first two classes we have dealt with the practical aspects of meditation and the goals of this meditation course ... which are three-fold: 1. You were taught the importance of the correct sitting position and correct breathing, and you were instructed in the use of a mantra; 2. You learnt meditation means fighting the mind, that you can use 'concentration-meditation' or 'awareness-meditation' to directly address certain issues in your life, but that the objective of *true* meditation is to still the mind. 3. Finally the classes shall inspire you to get into a routine, where you meditate regularly. An aid to these concepts is part 1 of THE ART OF MEDITATION on my website.

The last two classes will again confirm the practical side of meditation, but we will go to the deeper meaning of meditation; today we'll address the concepts of mind, ego and lower & higher consciousness, as per part 2 of THE ART OF MEDITATION ... in class 4 we will deal with the concept of enlightenment.

We are all aware of the cliché just how powerful the mind is. It is literally ruling our life, in fact it is designing our lives: Every action, every circumstance we create is preceded by a thought; mostly these thoughts are conscious, sometimes they are sub-conscious, nevertheless, it's always our mind that pre-determines what we do, by means of what we are thinking. In Eastern philosophies our thoughts are given great weight in the sense that negative thinking also has karmic repercussions ... not just negative deeds (karma = you reap what you sow).

One aspect of the mind that is of the greatest importance is that it creates our ego. Our ego is the sum of all our beliefs and our perceptions of the world around us ... it is the ego that constructs our truths, the ideas and concepts that form our interpretation of the world, our world-view. On this level our mind is our lower consciousness, it is the energy that runs the world ... all our wordly endeavours.

It is a small step now to realize that mind as ego, as our lower consciousness on the one hand has the capacity for building our lives, indeed of nation-building ... yet on the other hand it creates humanity's problems; in the preamble of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) constitution this nature of the mind is alluded to "... wars begin in the minds of men ...".

It is clear that we have an immense interest in learning to go past our ego, our ordinary mind, our lower consciousness, because on that level we are caught up with our daily life ... the routines of our day-to-day existence, at work and in our relationships. There our mind is embroiled in what we perceive to be our problems ... the issues that cause us anxiety and stress.

For us to free ourselves from this stranglehold the (ordinary) mind has on us it firstly is necessary to acknowledge the duality of mind: Its nature is at once that of lower consciousness as well as of higher consciousness. The latter is not the aspect of mind that is in the forefront, at least not most of the time. An effort has to be made to free ourselves from the influence of ego and to access - and then act from - our higher consciousness ... it has been said this is the greatest of human undertakings: All humans have the obligation to raise their consciousness. Then we gain peace within ourselves ... and ultimately peace in the world.

Higher consciousness is the faculty within all human beings of love, compassion understanding and forgiveness; as opposed to everybody's lower consciousness with its faculty of rationalization and judgement. Lower consciousness is our ego. Higher consciousness - our subtle mind - is soul, our inner self ... our inner God.

Thus it is the subtle mind - our higher consciousness - we want to access in order to counteract the thinking of our ordinary mind - our lower consciousness. As soon as we achieve this, our thinking will change. Where before we were caught up with thoughts that cause anxiety and stress, once we bypass ego and our mind acts from higher consciousness, our thinking will be imbued with clarity, purpose and resolve. Simply, we will be able to have good-quality thoughts.

While we do not engage in thinking during meditation (during true meditation we clear the mind, empty the mind of thoughts altogether) we experience a focused and clear mind in our subsequent activity of contemplation (contemplation = pointed, directed thinking). We naturally engage in contemplation before we meditate ... but our thoughts likely are confused as they are generated by our ordinary mind. In our meditation we purify the ordinary mind and bring the subtle mind to the fore. Thus our post-meditation thinking likely is clear and of a problem-solving nature.

Meditation is the process of stilling the mind, but it's the ordinary mind, our ego, our lower consciousness that's put to rest; the subtle mind, imbued by soul (our inner self or higher consciousness) is engaged and will subsequently rule our thoughts. This is impacting our own life on a day-to-day basis, but also the world around us, as we affect people we live and work with in a positive and constructive manner.

