

The Path

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The path of the Himalayan masters is well described by Swami Rama in his many books, videos and audio tapes. This paper is but a footnote in comparison to the wisdom which Swami Rama has left us. This paper is in no way intended to replace direct and thorough study of those profound teachings. Quite the contrary, it is hoped that this paper will help you succinctly grasp the principles, so that when you study his teachings you will more easily assimilate the depth of what he has to say.

The style of Swami Rama's oral and written teachings is a direct reflection of the fact that his view is from the highest of vantage points. In a single paragraph or page he might intertwine so many key principles, in simple language, that we, the reader and student, go right through it and miss most of what was said. This has a certain advantage. It means one can read a book, miss most of it, yet get enough to do some of the practices. One can also feel a sense of fulfillment from reading the book, without being overwhelmed by that which is not understood. However, if one has a better sense of what is written there, sentence after sentence can speak its wisdom, and the quality of one's practice can increase significantly. The same writing serves everybody, one who is new to meditation, and also the longer-time student.

This paper is designed to help you to better know what to look for when you're studying Swami Rama's descriptions of the path to enlightenment, which he has continually told us is easy and systematic, but that he has also often said none of us understood or was doing. If we diligently pursue the wisdom he has given us, maybe we can actually understand and *do* what it is *he* has suggested for so many years. And maybe, just maybe, we will find that he has told us the truth—that it is both systematic and easy.

To gain this understanding and put it into practice is actually the purpose of the ongoing one-month residential program at Swami Rama's Ashram in Rishikesh, India. In that program, we systematically go through the teachings, following several of the books, in conjunction with various experiential practices and practicums. This paper comes as a result of the experiences with those program participants.

Please note that the purpose of this paper is to help you increase your understanding of the process. You will want to have direct guidance in doing any of the practices, exercises, or methods which are discussed.

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Preliminary explanations

The clouded mind

Three problems are frequently mentioned in the teachings: 1) the external world keeps changing, 2) the senses are unreliable, and 3) the mind is clouded. This third one, that “the mind is clouded,” is a real trouble maker. This is the fundamental problem. It is the reason we do not see Truth, Reality, or experience the Center of Consciousness within.

The “clouded mind” is also the reason that it is so difficult to understand and follow the teachings. It is the reason we can read right through a description of the method of meditation, completely miss the point, never practice it, and then wonder when we’re going to learn or be given more advanced practices. It’s actually right in front of us.

It is not an insult to say we have clouded minds. It is simply a statement of the nature of the problem. If we really understand and accept that this is the problem, then we can take actions to work around the problem, and eventually eliminate it. To work around the clouded mind first means accepting the reality that this is the problem. Then we can train ourselves to consciously be more observant, do a better job of discriminating, and to repeatedly go over the same basics. This means doing the same simple practices, reading the same books, and listening to the same explanations, over and over, and not always looking for something new.

When we have sufficiently thinned out the cloud bank over the mind, the systematic nature of the method given us by Swami Rama becomes profoundly clear. We then only have to continue to work on removing the clouds so that we might finally reach the Goal, what Swami Rama has referred to as the glittering light deep in the unconscious.

Beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels

There is a series of four audio tapes available from the Himalayan Institute, which are by Swami Rama and are entitled:

Guided Meditation for Beginners

A Guide to Intermediate Meditation

First Step Toward Advanced Meditation

Meditation for Initiates

Side 1 of these tapes is mostly descriptions of the stages and aspects of meditation, and side 2 is guided practice. The descriptions on these tapes can be very useful, particularly if you listen carefully and often enough to really assimilate them.

In this paper the reference to beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels is based on these tapes. Though they are systematic, they are not a “system.” Swami Rama has not created what he refers to as a “brand name” system of meditation, suggesting rather that one recognize the universal aspect of meditation. He says that the teachings are of the Himalayan masters and that he is only a messenger. The teachings have a basis in several sources, including the *Upanishads*, *Tantra*, and the yoga of Patanjali as outlined in the *Yoga Sutras*. The teachings are not affiliated with any religion.

Since no particular “system” is being promoted here, we should probably not look at these beginning, intermediate, and advanced stages in a rigid way. Rather, we should see that they give us some useful boundary markers to understand the whole process. Using the three audio tapes as a general framework, the various teachings in the books can also be seen within that same framework. What emerges is a clear understanding of the systematic nature of the practices.

For example, in the book *Meditation and Its Practice*, Chapter 6 is entitled “A Program for Progress in Meditation.” In this program for progress in meditation, Swami Rama gives some useful timeframes of what to emphasize for the first month, the second month, two to three more months, three to four months past that, and then beyond. The various practices and timeframes mentioned in this chapter match up nicely with the audio tape series.

In the book *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*, the process is broken down into eight clearly differentiated steps, which one implements over time (he recommends that you commit yourself to a serious study of this process for at least a year). This eight step process is covered in Chapters 6 through 8. These eight steps also match up with the four audio tapes. So, for example, you will see that Steps 1 and 2 are part of the beginning level, whereas Steps 7 and 8 are part of the advanced level.

By looking at the material from these three sources (the tapes and the two books), your understanding of the systematic method of meditation will become even clearer. A summary consolidating some of the highlights from the audio tapes and these two books has been included at the end of this paper. You should find it useful. When you read his other books, you will then notice that what he describes in those books follows the same systematic process, though using different words, and with slightly different emphasis. Each of these other descriptions adds new perspective and insights about this universal process of meditation.

Six suggestions

There are six suggestions given on pages 13 and 14 of *Meditation and Its Practice*. These are not instructions of what to do, but rather constitute basic skills one needs to develop. Each of these skills has many techniques, instructions and practices of how to acquire proficiency in them. Swami Rama says that in order to meditate, you will need to learn:

1. How to relax the body
2. How to sit in a comfortable, steady position for meditation
3. How to make your breathing process serene
4. How to witness objects traveling in the train of the mind
5. How to inspect the quality of thoughts and learn to promote or strengthen those which are positive and helpful in your growth
6. How not to allow yourself to become disturbed in any situation, whether you judge it to be either bad or good.

Numbers 1 and 2 relate mostly to the beginning level. Number 3 relates mostly to the beginning and intermediate levels (In the advanced level you have the feeling that you are not breathing—you have started to move inward, beyond the breath). Numbers 4, 5, and 6 really begin in earnest in the intermediate level and reach their full meaning in the advanced level.

These six suggestions are extremely important and should not be read over lightly. It is very easy to read these items and think you understand what they mean. What they actually mean, and their significance will unfold in much greater depth as you go on in your studies and practice.

Here's an example: making your breathing process serene seems simple and straightforward (which it is). But did you know that breath awareness at the bridge of the nostrils is the recommended method for what is called "sushumna awakening," and that the yogis say that this, according to Swami Rama, is the most important factor in spiritual practices?

Another example: witnessing thoughts may sound familiar. Many people know that thoughts and worries in the mind should merely be watched, and that one should learn to not get involved with them. But did you know that in advanced meditation one intentionally brings forward thousands of thoughts from the unconscious, and that these thoughts may come at the rate of several per second? This is actually the normal operation of the mind, but it's just usually not seen. Witnessing at this level is actually the recommended way to burn up samskaras, the deep impressions which form one's karma. And this practice is also the key to remaining undisturbed, as mentioned in number 6, above. Thus, learning the fun-

damental skill of witnessing thoughts, rather than pushing them away or suppressing them, is extremely important, right from the beginning.

Many of the teachings, throughout the levels of advancement in meditation, will relate back to one or more of these six principles. To be mindful of that will help you greatly in your understanding and practice of meditation.

Threefold purpose of meditation

In *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma*, Swami Rama describes meditation as having a threefold purpose. The first purpose is to calm the conscious mind. Second is to teach us how not be disturbed by the flood of images arising from the unconscious mind. Third is to go beyond the conscious and unconscious mind to the highest state of consciousness.

In order to reach the highest state, it is necessary to gain control over the unconscious level. To get control over this unconscious level, the conscious mind must first be calmed through meditation, so that the contents of the unconscious can be intentionally allowed to surface. As one learns to be undisturbed by what is surfacing, the aspirant can then begin to go beyond it.

Steps of a meditation session

Five general steps in a meditation session are described in *Meditation and Its Practice*. The steps are in an order which takes one from outer to inner, from gross to subtle. Doing these five steps each time one does practice creates a groove of habit in the unconscious. The five steps are:

1. Preparation
2. Stretches
3. Relaxation
4. Breathing
5. Meditation

The specific content of each step might change from one session to the next, depending on time of day, level of expertise, time available, and one's individual inclination. This simple series of steps can be followed regardless of one's level of practice, whether one is a beginning, intermediate, or advanced meditator.

Different types of instructions

Please do not get confused over the different types of instructions you encounter in the teachings on meditation. You have already encountered several types of instructions in reading the first few pages of this paper. They actually complement one another—they are not in conflict and should not be allowed to become confusing.

For example, this paper has so far mentioned skills to acquire, steps within practice sessions, steps to implement over time, and has touched on how some particular practices evolve over time. In your studies you will encounter even more types of instruction, such as detailed descriptions of how to do individual practices, and how practices flow together in sequence, such as the various breathing exercises.

Just remember that each of these types of instruction has a purpose, and that one serves to enhance the other. What this paper is trying to give you is an understandable overview of the whole process of meditation.

Meditation and modern goal setting

Modern goal setting methods for planning and implementing desired outcomes has a particular style and language. To view the process of the inner journey from that perspective can provide useful insights to the modern aspirant.

MISSION: attaining the direct experience of the Center of Consciousness within, which is commented on in numerous places by Swami Rama.

GOALS: achieving three factors, as described in *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma*:

- 1) Calming the conscious mind
- 2) Remaining undisturbed by the flood of images from the unconscious mind
- 3) Going beyond both the conscious and unconscious mind

OBJECTIVES: acquiring basic skills, as outlined in *Meditation and Its Practice*:

- 1) How to relax the body
- 2) How to sit in a comfortable, steady position for meditation
- 3) How to make your breathing process serene
- 4) How to witness the objects traveling in the train of the mind
- 5) How to inspect the quality of thoughts and learn to promote or strengthen those which are positive and helpful
- 6) How not to allow yourself to become disturbed in any situation, whether you judge it to be either bad or good

PROCEDURES: putting the specific methods into practice by:

- 1) Systematically following the five step sequence of preparation, stretches, relaxation, breathing, and meditation on a regular, daily basis, as described in *Meditation and Its Practice*
- 2) Integrating and implementing the Program for Progress in Meditation, as described in Chapter 6 of *Meditation and Its Practice*, and the eight step program as described in Chapters 6 through 8 of *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*
- 3) Incorporating other compatible written or oral instructions.

METHODS: Learning specific techniques for the inner journey, such as internal dialogue, mindfulness, stretches, sitting postures, breathing practices, meditation, yoga nidra, and agnisara.

When viewing the process of the inner journey in this way, we can see that one first learns specific practices (METHODS), which are then implemented systematically (PROCEDURES) so that certain skills (OBJECTIVES) may be attained. Those skills lead us to higher levels (GOALS), so that we may finally attain the highest level (MISSION).

Swami Rama writes, “Above all else, remember this one thing, ‘It is easy to meet the Infinity within—to attain this awareness, you just have to be silent and quiet’”

Beginning Meditation

Several main tasks are to be accomplished during the beginning stage of meditation training and practice:

- Developing the practice of internal dialogue
- Learning to cultivate mindfulness or meditation in action
- Having a regular practice time and place
- Developing a steady, comfortable sitting posture
- Relaxing the body
- Learning the basics of breathing

Internal dialogue

The practice of internal dialogue should be learned and practiced before one learns meditation. But people are in a hurry, and want to go right into meditation. Learning internal dialogue is Step 2 in the book *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*. The description in this book is the most thorough single description in the various books. There's also a section on internal dialogue in *Enlightenment Without God*. There are some excellent explanations in *The Art of Joyful Living*. Swami Rama also talks about internal dialogue in most of his other books. In those books, it's usually written about along with explanations of other topics, rather than as a separate subject.

The key task of internal dialogue is to make friends with your unconscious mind. This is meant literally, not just as a metaphor. You will actually find that your own mind becomes a very good friend who is always with you. This friend will then help you on your inner journey. As the practice grows, it leads one to finding the teacher within. Leading you to the teacher within is one of the main tasks of the external teacher.

Internal dialogue is talking *to* your mind as if it is a person, not just talking. Everybody knows how to have a chattering mind. This is different; it is a dialogue between two "people." This is an incredible practice which you simply must do and experience for yourself. Initially, it may seem awkward, but you can read the descriptions in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*, and then just start talking to yourself.

Cultivating mindfulness or meditation in action

"Meditation" means to "attend." It means attention to the whole of life. It should not be a strenuous act; it should not be forced. Your whole life can be one of meditation. Instead of making dramatic resolutions, simply make yourself open to observing yourself

and decide to experiment in observing yourself. Once purity of mind is attained, then one is fully prepared for the inner voyage. To achieve this state, one should cultivate constant awareness by being mindful all the time. To purify the buddhi, the faculty of discrimination, is the most important task.

Attention is the key point that leads you to concentration, then to meditation, and then to samadhi. Mindfulness means paying attention. You have to pay attention to the thing you are doing, and you have to learn to train your mind. This is a very preliminary step and you have to learn that first.

A significant part of mindfulness is paying attention to the functioning of the four functions of mind (manas, chitta, ahamkara and buddhi). This means learning to separately watch the operation of the individual functions of mind, and then to observe the interplay of these four functions of mind. This is not an intellectual learning, but a learning through the direct experience of self-observation. It means consciously observing one's actions, speech and thoughts. All actions and speech, including one's gestures and body language are driven by the thought process.

One must also learn to observe the interaction of the four functions of mind with the ten senses, the streams of emotion, and the four primitive fountains. Paying attention to one's thoughts in this way is a very important part of meditation in action, and is the critical element in the first niyama, which is purification of body and mind.

Manas is the aspect of mind which is the importer and exporter of information and expression with the external world; it directly controls the ten senses. Chitta is the storehouse of information or memories. Ahamkara is the "I-maker," which is somewhat like ego, although it is ahamkara which colors the objects or thoughts in chitta, such that one thinks these thoughts or objects relate to "me." Buddhi is the aspect which knows, decides, judges, and discriminates. Purifying buddhi is actually the most important task.

The ten senses are: five cognitive senses of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling; five active senses of speaking, grasping, moving, reproducing and eliminating.

The four primitive fountains are food, sleep, sex, and self-preservation. It is important to skillfully regulate these four urges. But it is also extremely important to be aware that these are the source of one's other desires and expectations. One needs to be able to gradually observe this internally.

The prime emotion is desire or expectation itself. If that desire is fulfilled, it can lead to pride, attachment, and greed. If that desire is not fulfilled, it can lead to anger and jealousy. In either case, desire can lead to egoism. Note that desire is different from enjoyment. One can be completely desireless and be filled with enjoyment. It is the desire which leads to

suffering, not the enjoyment one has. Life should be enjoyed, and this can be done without desire or expectation.

The metaphor of a wheel is used to describe this process. There is something in you that moves, like a wheel in motion. But there is also something in you, a hub within you, that does not move, yet is with you wherever you go. This still part is the center of consciousness within. However, the wheel moves because of the spokes, and the spokes represent the functions of mind.

The goal is to experience the still center of consciousness, the hub, but to do that, there is an essential fact that you must be aware of: You must first learn the spokes, the functions of mind, observing the functions of mind as they are functioning. When you know how the functions of mind function, then you will know how to work with yourself.

One should also practice the yamas (non-violence, non-stealing, non-lying, continence, and non-materialism) and the niyamas (purity of body and mind, contentment, training of the senses, self-study, and surrender). The yamas and niyamas are practiced at the levels of actions, speech, and thoughts. This is also true for skillfully regulating the four primitive fountains of food, sleep, sex, and self-preservation. However, to practice these in actions and speech, one must be aware of the thoughts in the mind. This means mindfulness, always being aware of one's thoughts, which is actually the first niyama, that of purification. With awareness, one can then sort out, or discriminate that which is useful and that which is not useful, promoting or strengthening that which is useful.

These practices of mindfulness give one the direct experience of understanding how the mind works, rather than just intellectual knowledge. This is very useful when one begins to encounter the contents of the unconscious mind in the later stages of meditation. It allows one to be more open to the inner journey, in a spirit of fearlessness.

Swami Rama discusses these topics throughout his books, but the single place where it is most thoroughly covered is in the book *The Art of Joyful Living*. In *Meditation and Its Practice*, he actually refers the reader to *The Art of Joyful Living* to gain an understanding of the mind. The streams of emotion are also well explained in *A Practical Guide to Holistic Health*. *Sacred Journey* has an excellent review of the four functions of mind.

The practice of mindfulness is vast and will continue to expand for you as you read about it and practice it in daily life. At the end of this paper are some reading references which will guide you to specific books and pages on some of the various aspects of mindfulness. You may want to read some of these many times—you will see more each time. Also at the end of the paper is a summary sheet on mindfulness which will help you to internalize some of the key things for which you want to be mindful.

Regular time and place for practice

It is very important to have a regular time for meditation. The best time for your meditation is the time that is best for you and your schedule. However, the circumstances which are most conducive to meditation are early mornings or late evenings, when the environment is more quiet and you are less likely to be interrupted by others.

If you do your practice at the same time, day after day, it becomes a deep habit; it becomes part of you. Do your meditation at exactly the same time, no matter what happens, and make it prominent in your life.

The place for your practice should have good air circulation, and should be clean and quiet. A small corner of a room can be set aside for your meditation space. One needs to be reasonable in their expectations of the environment for meditation—it need not be perfect.

Though a quiet time and place is useful, you should remember this: It is not a sound that disturbs your meditation, but your reaction to the sound. A student of meditation needs to learn to remain undisturbed by external sounds. Some sounds exist in almost any environment. An advanced meditator can sit in meditation almost anywhere, and we all can learn to be advanced meditators.

Developing a steady, comfortable sitting posture

It is essential that your sitting posture be steady and comfortable. If you are not comfortable in your sitting posture, you simply cannot meditate. One of the tasks of the first month of practice is to develop a good sitting posture. This does not mean that it needs to be an advanced posture. It does mean that it needs to be steady and comfortable.

If sitting in a chair is what is needed to feel comfortable, then sit in a chair and spend that first month perfecting the proper way of doing so. Over the coming months and years the more difficult postures can gradually be developed within your comfortable capacity.

If you are truly comfortable sitting on the floor, then do so. Spend a month working on refining the selected posture. You will probably find an easy, cross-legged posture the best to start with. But remember, you really do want to be able to sit comfortably and in a steady position so that the other aspects of practice might evolve. One can stay stuck for many months or years by struggling with a posture that is too difficult for them, or is painful, and this is not useful.

Relaxing the body

Relaxing the body is a skill one needs to develop. It is not just a series of techniques to cause relaxation, though the methods are very important. You really want to have the

direct ability to allow your body to relax. If you can do that, then when you notice tension, you will be able to just let it go.

The basic method of relaxation taught by Swami Rama on the four audio tapes and in *Meditation and Its Practice* (as well as other places) is that of systematically scanning the body with your attention and using breath. He clearly states that one need not give suggestions to the body or mind. He explains that this method of relaxation is spontaneous. This type of relaxation does not involve hypnosis or autosuggestion.

Swami Rama does, however, suggest internal dialogue be used. He says you should ask your mind to observe and watch the whole body from head to toe. The mind can easily know which part of the body is tense. You should also ask your mind to relax. If you find that a certain part of the body has any aches or pain, you can discover that and gently ask your mind to go to that spot and heal that aching part. "The mind definitely has the inner capacity to correct and heal such discomfort; do not doubt that," says Swami Rama in *Meditation and Its Practice*.

In general, one first breathes diaphragmatically, taking five to ten breaths. When you exhale, you let your diaphragm push in and exhale completely; then you inhale. After you have done that, you forget your diaphragmatic movement, and focus on the flow of your breath. Observe that you do not create jerks, pauses, noise, or unevenness.

Then survey your body, going from the crown of the head to the tips of the fingers, back to the shoulders, down to the tips of the toes. Then go back, following the same pattern in reverse. You are hurriedly examining the whole body. Wherever mind, just for a moment, stops, there is something wrong there. Take several breaths when you come to the chest and feet. When you return, direct the mind along the vertebrae, locating any tension along the spinal column.

Your breath should be as deep as you can comfortably exhale and inhale. Watch the capacity of your lungs. Do not strain your lungs. Quietness and stillness of the body, without any strain are the important factors. The more the body becomes still, the more you'll find joy.

Breathe as if your whole body is breathing. Inhale as if energy is coming in from the atmosphere, and exhale as though you are exhaling all your tensions. Breathe deeply five to ten more times.

With practice, you will discover for yourself that simple attention and deep breathing really do bring a deep relaxation conducive to meditation.

Basics of breathing

Breath awareness is essential to deep meditation. It is not merely a beginning level practice from which one graduates and then leaves behind. It is the very foundation of all progress in meditation. This cannot be stated strongly enough. It is very common that when one is experiencing difficulty in advancing in meditation that the problem goes back to breath.

First, one must become aware of the breath. One can then notice whether the breathing is predominantly with the chest, the diaphragm, the abdomen, the shoulder muscles, or some combination. Learning diaphragmatic breathing is essential. One should also become aware of, and eliminate the four irregularities of breath: jerkiness, pauses between breaths, noise, or unevenness in the exhalation and inhalation. Eliminating the gross levels of these irregularities is needed for deeper meditation. These irregularities are later used as a barometer for what's going on in the mind. The breath and the mind actually go together. A disturbance in one is reflected in the other.

Lying on your back in the corpse posture will help you become aware of, and regulate your breath. If you place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest, you will easily be aware of when you are breathing diaphragmatically.

While lying in the corpse posture, you may also place a ten to fifteen pound bag called a "sandbag" between the chest and the abdomen. This helps to strengthen the diaphragm as well as to increase awareness.

In the crocodile posture, you lie on your stomach, with the legs apart. The arms are folded, with the hands resting against the biceps. The forehead is placed on the crossed arms. The arms are positioned such that the chest is not on the floor. In this position one automatically breathes diaphragmatically. You can then easily notice this diaphragmatic movement and allow it to form a habit.

Once diaphragmatic breathing has been mastered, there are other helpful breathing practices to be learned. Some are introduced here, and others will be covered in the section of the paper on intermediate practices.

Two-to-one breathing means that the exhalation is allowed to become longer, until it is twice as long as the inhalation. You may mentally count along with your breath to help accomplish this ratio.

Nadi shodhana, or alternate nostril breathing, is also called channel purification. It purifies the subtle energy channels, or nadis. As the name implies, it involves breathing alternately between the two nostrils. This has to do with the subtle energy channels of su-shumna, ida, and pingala, which are discussed later in this paper. There are many variations of alternate nostril breathing, some more subtle than others.

Three methods of nadi shodhana are presented in *Meditation and Its Practice*. These are learned one at a time, but then once learned, are done in sequence, becoming progressively more subtle. Initially, one is sometimes taught to use their fingers to alternate between nostrils. However, one should learn to do this with their mind by alternating attention to the flow of breath at either nostril. Also, one can use internal dialogue to help achieve this kind of mental focus, simply asking the mind to pay attention and move between the nostrils.

These, and other breathing practices are discussed in *Meditation and Its Practice*, *Lectures on Yoga, Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I*, *Science of Breath*, and other books.

Intermediate Meditation

The main tasks of the intermediate stage are:

- Continue internal dialogue, mindfulness and other beginning level practices
- Complete the process of learning the basic breathing practices
- Learn the practice of meditating with breath along the spinal column
- Opening a blocked nostril with your mind
- Sushumna awakening, using breath awareness at the bridge of the nostrils
- Developing determination, sankalpa shakti
- Letting go of the trains of thoughts; dealing with the conscious mind
- Meditation in the space between the eyebrows

You should implement the individual practices of the intermediate stage over time, not all at once. For example, it is recommended in *Meditation and Its Practice*, that one emphasize the breath along the spinal column practice for one month. Then one goes on to the sushumna awakening practice, which may be emphasized for two to three months. You may want to later add the practice of meditation at the space between the eyebrows. However, you also want the practices to blend together in a way which feels natural and comfortable to you.

Internal dialogue

One should by now have gotten over the initial hurdle of developing a relationship with the mind. You can now increasingly utilize this friendship with the mind for positive purposes. Since it is the unconscious mind which is in direct control of the mental, energetic, and physical functions, it already knows what is happening in these areas, and can most effectively make changes there.

For example, as it was mentioned above, if there is tension in the body, it is created by the mind. The mind already knows where it is, whereas the conscious mind may not. Also, it was the unconscious mind which created the tension, and therefore can much more easily release it than can the conscious mind. This means that you, as conscious mind, can simply ask the unconscious mind to find and release the tension.

One can also ask the unconscious mind to focus on the nose bridge for meditation, to scan the body for relaxation, to stay awake when it starts to drift off in meditation, or to travel along the spine. Your understanding of the many ways that internal dialogue is useful will expand significantly now.

Mindfulness

By now, you have a sound intellectual understanding of the four functions of mind, the ten senses, the streams of emotion, and the four primitive fountains. You can observe them in action as they perform their individual functions, as well as watch them interact. You are more mindful of your actions, speech and thoughts. You notice how your gestures and body language are caused by your mental functioning. You have also begun to be increasingly aware of, and practice the yamas and niyamas, not only in terms of regulating actions and speech, but also observing the mental functioning itself, regardless of whether you consider the thoughts to be good or bad.

What will increasingly happen now, if you allow it, and consciously practice it, is seeing the way that all of these various elements of mindfulness interact with one another. A single external incident or internal thought bubble can send out a sort of shock wave throughout, which effects many of the other functions. One bubble from chitta, awakened by a single visual image causes immediate reactions in emotions, the other functions of mind, as well as triggering primitive fountains and causing the senses to respond. You can become more and more aware of all of these, as they occur. And you also find that with this awareness, you can become more of a witness, remaining undisturbed. And with an increase in awareness comes an increased ability to act out of choice rather than habit.

Additional basic breathing practices

You should now have a good foundation of diaphragmatic breathing and eliminating the irregularities of breath, and be regularly using corpse and crocodile postures. Two-to-one breathing should be comfortable. You should be refining your practice of nadi shodhana. Now, you want to learn some of the energizing practices, which cause prana, the subtle energy to move.

With the complete breath, you fill the lungs completely, beginning with the lower lungs, the middle, and then the upper lungs. Then you exhale by completely emptying the upper, middle, and lower lungs.

Kapalabhati is done in a seated posture and consists of a vigorous, forceful expulsion of breath, using the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. The exhalation is followed by a relaxation of the abdominal muscles, which results in a spontaneous inhalation.

Bhastrika is also called the bellows, for in this practice the abdominal muscles move forcefully in and out like a blacksmith's bellows. Both exhalation and inhalation are vigorous and forceful.

These, and other breathing practices are discussed in *Meditation and Its Practice*, *Lectures on Yoga, Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, Science of Breath*, and other books.

Breath along the spinal column

To do this practice, first make sure that your posture is steady, still, and comfortable. Make sure that your breath is calm and smooth. This exercise is more subtle, finer and more advanced than the previous practices of breath awareness.

While sitting in your meditation posture, become aware of the finer energy channels in your spinal column. This energy is already flowing there; you want to gently allow your attention to go there and be aware of the energy. The central channel is called sushumna, and the other two are ida and pingala. The more you focus your mind on the central channel, sushumna, the more your mind becomes sensitive and capable of being aware of these finer energy channels within.

Inhale as though you are breathing from the base of the spine upwards to the crown of the head. Exhale as though you are exhaling from the crown of the head downwards to the base of the spine. Using internal dialogue, you may ask your mind to travel along the spine.

You may visualize three cords, one in the center and two on the sides. Inhale and exhale through the central channel, which is the finest, milky white tube. Feel the subtle current that are flowing.

Observe the mind and notice how many times it becomes distracted. The moment the mind is distracted, you will find that there is a slight jerk or an irregularity in the breath. Continue the gentle flow of the breath throughout the practice, without jerks, noise, shallowness or extended pauses.

Let your mind become aware of the vibrations, the perennial sound along the spine. The sound which is heard there is, “SooooHummmm.” Your breath sings this song, “SooooHummmm.” When your breath is inhaling to the crown of the head, hear the sound, “Soooo,” and when it is exhaling to the root of the spinal column, hear the sound, “Hummmm.” Feel as though your whole mind is inhaling and exhaling.

This is a universal sound, which means, “That I am.” “So” means “That.” “Hum” means, “This.” You may or may not actually hear this sound internally (*not* with your physical ear). Be aware that it is, however, actually there. Take a mental stance of listening, and you will gradually become aware of the subtle energy vibrating there. Silently meditate on the subtle sound vibrations which are coming from your spinal column.

Developing the sequence of breathing skills

First you develop good diaphragmatic breathing, learn to control the four irregularities of breath, and become familiar with the various basic breathing methods. The next task is to learn to put them into a sequence which goes from gross to subtle.

This means starting with the energizing practices like complete breath, kapalabhati, and bhastrika (diaphragmatic breathing and general breath awareness are done throughout the breathing sequence). Then do practices such as two-to-one breathing and nadi shodhana. This is followed by the practice of breath along the spine. Later, after this method is well in place, you add the sushumna awakening practice of attention on the flow of breath at the bridge of the nostrils (this is discussed below).

When you first begin to do these practices in sequence, it might feel mechanical. But if you will gently stay with it, you will find that it evolves into a very smooth flow, like soothing music. It will become very natural and will lead you to a delightful, calm state. It takes you right to the door of meditation.

Opening a blocked nostril

After you inhale and exhale with awareness of the spine, next become aware of the breath as it comes and goes through the nostrils. You may notice that one nostril seems to be blocked and that the other one seems more open. Pay attention to the blocked nostril, and in a few seconds you may find that it has opened.

The first step of sushumna awakening (see below) is the learning to change the flow of breath with your mental ability. It may take a few days or a few months to be able to regularly open both nostrils with your mind and attention.

Sushumna awakening

According to the yogis, there are 72,000 nadis, or energy channels. Among them, ida, pingala, and sushumna are the most important. These energy channels lie along the spinal column, with sushumna being the central channel, and ida and pingala along the sides. When the mind is focused outward, only ida and pingala are active. But when the mind is calm and tranquil, then sushumna, the central channel is awakened. Then the mind automatically turns inward, and meditation can now come.

The sushumna nadi, or channel, travels along the spinal column and divides into an anterior portion and a posterior portion at the level of the larynx. Ida and Pingala travel upwards along the spinal column, crisscrossing each other and sushumna several times, before they all three come to the area of the bridge of the nostrils.

Sushumna awakening is the most important factor in spiritual practice and is the “cream” of yoga science, according to Swami Rama. The three most important points in the inward journey are to first learn to apply sushumna; next to awaken kundalini and lead her to the highest dimension; and then to attain the knowledge of the Absolute.

Though there are other ways to awaken sushumna, the recommended method is to simply focus on the flow of the breath at the nose bridge. Pranayama is the science of

breath, and sushumna awakening is the end of the science of pranayama. Though the method is so simple as to seem inconsequential, this is a profound and essential practice.

To practice sushumna awakening, it is necessary that the head, neck and trunk be aligned so that the spinal cord is not distorted in any way. After doing the preliminary practices, bring your attention to the flow of breath at the bridge of the nostrils. You are not remembering any mantra, but just meditating on the center between the two nostrils. When you focus the mind on the center between the nostrils, you will soon notice that both nostrils are flowing freely. This is called *sandhya*, the wedding of the sun and moon, or between ida and pingala. Initially, this may not last long and may be difficult to maintain for long.

Having both nostrils open is a sign of sushumna awakening. A great barrier has been crossed when one can maintain this state for five minutes. It is a sign that one has attained some one-pointedness. This application of sushumna is very important; without it, deep meditation is not possible, and without deep meditation, samadhi is not possible.

When you attempt sushumna awakening, use internal dialogue and ask your mind to focus on the nose bridge. Let your thoughts come and do not be afraid. At this point your whole unconscious mind will become more active and bring forward many hidden and forgotten things.

When disturbing thoughts come, it is not the meditation that is causing a disturbance; rather, it is what has been stored up inside that is disturbing. Allowing this release in meditation is a very good process, and one that the student has to go through. Let the distracting thoughts come forward, and then allow them to go. A time will come when none of these thought patterns disturb you, and you can simply watch your thoughts. Then you can witness your whole life. If a disturbing thought comes, you can allow it to go away.

Developing determination, sankalpa shakti

When the thoughts start coming forward in meditation, one can turn the mind into a battlefield. It is not intended to be a battlefield, but it can easily become that. Images or sensations may come which you judge to be “good,” and others may come which you judge to be “bad.” You may find yourself being pulled around by some of these images and sensations, while you are busy fighting off the others. You may end up in a fight with yourself.

It is now absolutely essential that you develop the determination, the sankalpa shakti to stay with it. Swami Rama has often said of this stage of meditation that one should develop the feeling that “I can do it! I will do it! I have to do it!” no matter what happens. People speak of awakening and raising kundalini, but the first aspect of shakti that you can see develop is not kundalini shakti, but sankalpa shakti, determination.

The internal dialogue and mindfulness practices which you are regularly doing can be of great value to you in developing determination at these times of internal “battle.” You will understand better what is going on by having been mindful of your mental processes, both in meditation and daily life. Thus, you are more aware that all of this inner conflict is not really “you,” but is the interplay of the various aspects of mind. All of your external mindfulness practices now serve you by helping you develop the determination to stick with it, and to stand back and watch.

Through internal dialogue, you can ask your mind, “Why are you disturbing me in this way? Where is all this coming from?” You can remind your mind that, “I am not these thoughts; I am Atman, the center of consciousness.” Through these types of dialogue, you can actually gain many insights, and what might otherwise be a troublesome and failed “meditation,” becomes a very successful and useful experience.

Two strategies of dealing with disturbing thoughts

As you continue your study and practice of meditation, you will encounter two general strategies taught or promoted by various teachers or authors. There are two parts to the problem of disturbing thoughts. One is that they are “thoughts.” The other is that they are “disturbing.”

One school of thinking says that the solution is to get rid of the “thoughts.” The theory is that if you get rid of the thoughts, they cannot be disturbing. A student may be taught to do this by a variety of techniques which initially seem reasonable. Such thought suppression does not work. It just pushes the thoughts, and the emotions which drive them, deeper into the unconscious.

The other approach is to work on eliminating the “disturbing” quality of the thoughts. If you are able to remain undisturbed by the thoughts, it does not matter what they do. In the path to enlightenment, this is the proper of the two approaches. It comes by increasing, not lessening, one’s awareness.

Swami Rama has repeatedly instructed to not push away, or interrupt the thought process, and explains that you cannot stop your mind from thinking. He goes so far as to say that if you do not examine your thoughts and thought process, you cannot attain enlightenment.

The center of consciousness which you are seeking is in your unconscious. The act of suppressing thoughts is an act of pushing against the whole field of unconscious. To push away the unconscious is to push away the very thing you are trying to reach. In the final analysis, learning to remain undisturbed by the thoughts and the thinking process is the only practical alternative.

Letting go of thoughts

At this point it necessary to learn the skill of letting go of thoughts in the mental train. This “letting go” is Step 6 of the eight in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*. It means one can let all of the thoughts come, and also let them go. If you can learn to do this, then you will be able to do the forthcoming steps of introspecting and witnessing (a somewhat different meaning of the word “witnessing” is used here). If you have not learned how to do this “letting go,” then the attempts to do introspection to burn samskaras will simply not work. You will just get caught up in the thoughts, which leads to distraction, worry and frustration.

Letting go of thoughts is actually a skill on its own. It is a matter of “doing” something by “not doing” anything. Hold an object in your hand, a pen, for example, using it to represent a “thought.” Holding on to the thought is like grasping the pen, whether loosely or tightly. Throwing the pen across the room is like getting rid of the thought, except that a thought, unlike the pen, will just come back. Even gently tossing the pen aside is a form of pushing the thought away. You might try glancing away, in the other direction, and with a quick flick of the wrist, tossing the pen down behind you, as if neither you nor anybody else would notice. But even that is just another form of pushing the thought away.

There is only one way to “let go” of the pen—release your grip on it, and allow it to do whatever it wants. The pen may rest in your palm or fall to the floor; it does not matter to you any longer—you have let go of it. Eventually, in the natural course of things, the pen will fall away on its own, simply by “letting go” of it. The same will happen with thoughts; let them come, and let them go.

Letting go is the first part of meditation. Maintain an attitude to let go, let go, let go. If intruding thoughts come anyway, you are somehow inviting them. Let them go. You will gradually learn how to decide what thoughts are useful and what thoughts are not useful. Then you can let go of the unuseful thoughts and strengthen those which are useful.

What is a “thought?”

There are different levels in this process of letting go of thoughts. You may have some worrisome or enjoyable thought with which your mind is absorbed. This thought may go on for several minutes and then you let it go. You become better and better at letting go of such thoughts.

You will then gradually discover that such lengthy thoughts are actually constructed of many individual thoughts, much like the frames of a movie. Thus, one of these lengthy “thoughts” is sometimes referred to as a “train of thoughts.”

These individual frames of thought are going on all the time, but are usually not noticed; rather, only whole trains are experienced. Usually these frames are not really associated to one another (unlike a movie, or a worrisome or enjoyable “thought” in which the frames are definitely related and sequential). But then along comes a random “frame” or “thought” to which you have an attraction or aversion. This single frame then sets off the whole train of thoughts. Sometimes it might seem like your mind is a huge train station! However, when you observe or witness a train of thoughts, it will often dissipate on its own.

In the intermediate stage, you are learning to let go of distracting “trains” of thoughts. As you move into the advanced level, you will become better at noticing the initial distracting thought (frame), which would otherwise form a train. If you can observe or witness that first frame, the train might not even form. Eventually, you are able to witness the whole stream of thoughts (frames), whether associated or random, and not be affected.

Observing the way the mind makes associations will later become a key part of purifying the mind, by noticing clearly the way the mind has made “mistakes” leading to various problems, such as fears. An example often given in yoga is that of seeing a snake in dim light, only later to discover that it is really a rope; the mind had made an incorrect association. The mind saw this intertwined shape on the ground, and linked it up (incorrectly) with some other old image in the mind of a snake. People often do this with other people or circumstances, unconsciously associating them with other impressions stored in the mind, and then reacting out of habit. Along the path of the inner journey, you will make many such wonderful discoveries, all of which gradually lead to a clear, purified mind which is needed for deeper meditation.

But for the intermediate level, remember that you are primarily working on learning to let go of the grossest level of distracting thoughts. If you do that well, the rest will come more naturally.

Emotions, thoughts, and words

Emotions or feelings are very deep, particularly the prime emotion of desire or expectation itself. Emotions are the driving force which leads to thoughts. And it is thoughts which then take the form of words (or actions). When you are learning to let go of thoughts, you may find that you need to first learn to let go of the words, allowing them to dissolve back into only thoughts.

This is not as foreign as it might initially sound; think of times when you see a person that you know, but cannot recall their name for several seconds. During that time, you

have a “thought” of the person, as well as a “feel” of the person, yet the name or “word” associated with that person does not come to mind.

In the process of meditation, you want to first let go of the words. Words, or speech is at the most surface level of mental functioning. Speech is one of the active senses according to yoga. Though the words are only a modified form of the underlying thoughts, the thoughts are actually deeper than the words. And “deeper” is the direction you want to go in your meditation. This is one of the reasons one should allow mantra to move beyond the word level, going to the levels of feeling, awareness, and silence (this is discussed later in the paper).

You want to learn to let go of both the words and the thoughts. If you are actively involved with internal words, or inner chatter, you might not experience the thoughts themselves. When you allow the words to become quiet, as you begin the journey to silence, there might appear to be an increase in thoughts. This is a good sign of progress, although it may not seem to be so at the time.

As you become able to let go of the words, and then the thoughts, you move to the even deeper level of emotions. And this is the level at which one experiences (or does not experience) the disturbances or distractions (which would then set off more thoughts, trains, and words). Remember, none of this has to do with suppression; it all comes as a result of awareness, in conjunction with the steps of meditation which are described in the rest of the paper.

Meditation in the space between the eyebrows

Let your mind be on the center between the two eyebrows. Here you will have to be aware that you are not consciously trying to visualize anything, but allowing the mind to go without any resistance.

Remember that your mind is in the habit of identifying itself with the objects of the world, or objects of your thoughts. Try not to brood on any thought that is appearing before you. Witness the activities of your mind, and if the mind roams around, gradually bring it back to the center between the two eyebrows. This center is called the ajna chakra. The ajna chakra is a very important center, which is the entrance to the city of life. It is the seat of the conscious mind during the waking state.

Let your thought patterns flow without any interruption. Observe your thinking process, but do not allow your mind to be involved with it. Continue to focus your mind on the center between the two eyebrows. Later, you may remember your mantra as you focus between the eyebrows, while observing a visualized object such as a flame contained within a tiny circle.

In the intermediate stage of meditation one learns the one-pointed sushumna awakening practice of focusing on the nose bridge. This may have the effect of allowing one to see more of what's already going on in the mind-field. When you then move your attention to the space between the eyebrows, even more can be experienced (see the notes on the normal operation of the mind in the section on advanced meditation). It is because of this increase in thoughts that it becomes necessary for one to develop determination and the skill of letting go of thoughts.

It may be comforting for you to know that Swami Rama has acknowledged that this phase can be frustrating and that it can completely disillusion a student. If you will patiently persist, you will find that you actually can let your thought process go on, right in front of you, while you remain undisturbed, unaffected and uninvolved. This is the stance which sets the stage for advanced meditation. Also, if you can learn to remain undisturbed while watching your thoughts at meditation time, you can gradually learn to do the same thing in worldly life.

Some possible confusion

Different instructions are given regarding the objects on which one should meditate. Some of these instructions might appear to be confusing or in conflict, although they really are not. For example, on the intermediate tape one is instructed to meditate *without* mantra. Later, on the same tape, one is instructed that now, at that point, one *can* remember their mantra. Another example is, on the intermediate audio tape the student is specifically instructed to *not* have a visualized object, while on the advanced tape there is an instruction that one *should* visualize a tiny circle with a flame inside of it. Similar instructions are included elsewhere in the books and oral teachings of Swami Rama, which might also seem confusing or in conflict.

It is important to be aware that there are two separate aspects of meditation being described. One is the process of purifying the mind, of burning the samskaras or subtle traces in the unconscious, and the other is that aspect of meditation which ultimately takes one beyond the mind (this should come after the purifying). These two aspects of meditation are really not in conflict; in fact, they complement one another. Both are essential.

In the process of purifying or clearing the mind, one intentionally, directly observes or witnesses the mind and its contents. This does *not* mean focusing on one's mantra or object of visualization while allowing other thoughts to be "witnessed" in the periphery. It literally means directing one's attention such that the mind and its contents may be directly examined and studied in meditation. This is discussed in *Meditation and Its Practice* and

Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, as well as most of the other books. It is particularly well described in *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma*.

Mantra and visualized objects are then used to lead the aspirant's attention inward. These concentration practices are more subtle than the earlier focusing practices with body or breath. The choice of what object to meditate on may relate to one's level of progress or to individual predispositions. In advanced meditation the object of meditation will become even more subtle as one focuses on sound and light. Later on, the mantra, sound and light merge into a single, even more subtle essence.

These two types of attention (on either one's thinking process or an object of meditation) are not purely independent. Most students do not, for example work solely on the purification aspect, without mantra and visualized object, for months or years, and then switch over to mantra and visualized objects. In actual practice, one will likely use both of these during the same meditation session (this is why some of the instructions can seem confusing).

Ideally, one allows *all* of the thoughts to go through the mind until everything one needs to deal with is dealt with. When *all* of the thoughts which want your attention have received your attention, your mantra and object of meditation come on their own, and you then follow these "thoughts" further within. Incidentally, allowing all of the thoughts to first go through the mind, before remembering the mantra, is the way Swami Rama says that he personally does meditation.

For meditation on a mantra and visualized object, one *does* allow the other thoughts to continue to come and go, but *without* giving them any attention. In other words, they are allowed to do as they wish, but are not blocked out in any way. These other thoughts are only attended to if one finds that the thought has caused a distraction that is drawing one away from the chosen object of meditation. By then attending to it, or witnessing it, the thought will dissipate so that the meditation on the chosen object may continue. The mind will automatically return to the object of meditation.

In addition, many of the objects to be visualized already exist inside, but are just not seen. At one stage of one's practice, the object may be visualized, or created by the imagination, so that it can then be meditated on. Later on in one's development, he or she might meditate in darkness, without visualization, watching and waiting for the "real" object, which is already there, to appear in one's view.

A similar evolution of practice can happen with the use of mantra. Some students will initially "say" the mantra internally, and later begin to "listen" for the mantra. During those middle weeks or months, before actually "hearing" or "feeling" anything, it may seem that there is no mantra, though it is there all along. Reading or hearing about such instruc-

tions or direct experiences can sound confusing and in conflict, although this is not actually the case.

Advanced Meditation

In general, the tasks of the advanced stage are:

- Allowing thoughts to come forward from the unconscious
- Introspection; discriminating useful and unuseful thoughts
- Witnessing thoughts in the mental field
- Examining fears and eliminating samskaras
- Ajapa japa; being led by mantra towards silence
- Meditation on mantra and/or visualized objects
- Meditation at the space between the breasts or eyebrows
- Meditation on light or sound; merging of mantra, light and sound
- Subtle meditation and traveling to sahasrara, the crown chakra
- Expansion of the conscious state to that Beyond

Descriptions of the advanced stages are naturally inadequate. But please remember there is a simplicity to this process which we can all understand in a general way. Even such a general understanding can be inspiring and lead one to further their studies and practice. We can certainly grasp it well enough to practice, while continuing to deepen and expand our meditation through study and direct experience. Remember too, that we are discussing the practice of meditation, and where meditation ends, samadhi begins. We are not trying to “understand” samadhi through the study of this process.

Internal dialogue

Your mind has become a constant companion. This sets the stage for the advanced meditation practices where you allow the whole of the unconscious to start coming forward. Gradually, the conscious mind is to expand to the point that there is no longer any unconscious. Unconscious means unknown. Once it all becomes known, there is no more unconscious; it is all conscious. And this process begins by having made friends with the mind through internal dialogue.

Mindfulness

The practices of mindfulness are now well in place. There is a sound, experiential base of understanding how the mind works, and how it effects all aspects of one's life. As one enters the advanced stage and starts to more directly experience the operating of the subtleties of mind, there are not so many surprises. The content may seem new, but the underlying process will be familiar. As you more and more clearly see the marvelous way in

which the mind operates, there will be a sense of awe and delight, rather than a fear of the unknown. The skill of paying attention to all aspects of one's life and being can now deepen to include subtler and subtler realms.

Breathing

The mechanics of the breathing exercises have been learned and they are being done in sequence, going from outer to inner, from gross to subtle. The practices are now moving with a consistent flow, from one to the next, like music. Sushumna awakening can be maintained for longer periods.

During meditation you may get the feeling that you are not breathing, though you actually are. This is an encouraging sign of advancement; attention is moving inward.

Introspection

Introspection is learning to inspect your thoughts and deciding what is useful and what is not useful. Swami Rama points out that usually when one starts to inspect within, there is not a capacity to continue it because you become swayed by your thoughts and identify with the thought patterns. Then you become controlled by the thoughts. If you do not first have determination, you should not inspect your thoughts. And having determination comes by first having the ability to let go of thoughts. Determination is increased by paying attention and discriminating.

In *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*, introspection is Step 7. In step 4, one becomes focused on the bridge of the nostrils, bringing sushumna awakening and an increased awareness of one's thoughts. In step 5, one develops determination. In step 6, one learns to let go of thoughts. Now that you have determination to deal with the thoughts which are coming, and have learned to let go of thoughts, you can learn to call back individual thoughts by your own choice. Then you are able to inspect them. It is an important point to recognize that, at this step you have attained the ability to choose whether to let a thought go, or to bring it back, at your own wish and desire.

By gaining control over the thinking process, one can control the impressions stored in the mind and eventually over one's karma. Through introspection, one can discover the nature and origin of thoughts. Through introspection one can learn to understand and see clearly habits and their origins. Through introspection one can change habits and thus change character and personality.

Thoughts are people. They are not mere thoughts; they are people within you. You are a world in yourself. Just as people are born and die, so too, thoughts are born and die. Those thoughts that are deep grooves or imprints in the mind, samskaras, can be eliminated.

One can be free from these samskaras. One can obtain freedom from their samskaras, from the impressions that have been stored in the unconscious mind.

To burn your samskaras, you sit in meditation and ask all the impressions in your mind to come forward, so that you can examine and burn them. In this method, you observe the thoughts but you do not get involved with them.

Through introspection you can learn what is your real nature and what is not your real nature. We can use discrimination and introspection in looking into the stream of symbols, ideas, images and fantasies that are in the mind. One can see right away that these images are not independent; these symbols have certain inner meanings. We color them ourselves, and we cannot trust them without analyzing them. Yoga science never asks us to follow anything blindly but rather to discriminate and analyze. Learning to discriminate between useful and harmful knowledge is an important part of the process of introspection.

In the dreaming state, one has no control over the dream, but in meditation one has perfect control. One can remain in meditation and recall all the unfulfilled desires that are normally expressed during dreaming. One can then analyze and resolve them. One can judge, analyze, and decide the usefulness of the impressions coming from the unconscious that are the root of the dreaming reality. The meditator can experience all that which is experienced during the dreaming state. When the conscious state is expanded, dream analysis becomes clear, and the ideas and symbols that are experienced during that state are easily understood. If one has clear introspection, the harmful and injurious dreams that strain and distract the mind and its energy can be analyzed and resolved. A time comes when meditation stirs the unconscious mind and brings forward impressions from its hidden recesses. It quickens the method of analyzing, understanding, and surveying the whole dreaming state.

With introspection, you learn to examine each of your fears, one by one, to encounter them and then be free of their control. As you examine your fears, you will learn that all your fears are somehow false and based on misunderstandings. There is no truth or reality to your fears. This process is very important. To fear and try to escape from examining one's thought process is a serious mistake for a student to make.

All of our samskaras reside in the *latent* bed of memory. To study action and even conscious thought can provide some personal consolation; but it is *not* the way of liberation and enlightenment. Without focusing on the subtle traces of our mind stuff, that is, on the samskaras in their *latent* form rather than on their manifestation at the surface, enlightenment is *not* possible, according to Swami Rama.

There is a bed of memory in the mind where we store the seeds of our impressions or samskaras. Without this bed, the river of mind cannot flow. From this bed arise many of the memories and impressions which trouble and disturb us. In meditation we learn *first* to

calm down the *conscious* mind, *so that* these impressions may be allowed to rise and pass through our mind without troubling us. *Then* we learn to deal with the deeper memories of the *unconscious* mind with which we normally have no contact.

In this introspection, you want to study the mind, but how do you actually do it? You don't have any external device or instrument to use to study the totality of your mind, so you have to train one of the aspects of your mind to study the totality of your mind. You have to train a part of the mind, so that all of the functions of the mind can be studied through the use of that one part. All sadhanas, spiritual practices, techniques, and disciplines are actually means to train the mind.

Introspection, or inspecting within is covered in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II.*, and is also well described in *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma.*

Witnessing

One becomes a mere witness to mental activity, observing silently the thought waves arising in the mind. One should not associate with the passing thoughts; one should merely watch them flit by. No attempt should be made to use the faculties of discrimination or will, and there should be no struggle for control of the emotions and impulses. One should, however, note carefully the degree and duration of conflicts and attention.

Many people assume that meditation means not thinking. But if you stop your mind from thinking, you will hallucinate, and your mind will lose consciousness. Meditation does not mean losing touch with yourself or denying your thinking process. When you are fighting with your thinking process, you are not meditating. Fighting deepens negative thought patterns. Learn instead to let go of the thinking process; learn to gradually strengthen the witnessing faculty of your mind. In this way, you can understand and examine thought patterns with the help of introspection, strengthening those thoughts that are inspiring, helpful, and positive.

You are the architect of your life. Never forget that. By systematic practice, in three months' time you will be able to calm down your breath. Gradually, you will be able to have perfect serenity on your conscious level, and then you will find that infinite library called the unconscious mind slowly coming back to your conscious level. Then you can go beyond these levels to the very center of consciousness.

The *first* stage of meditation is to *clear* the mind. We all know that we think, but do not know why or what are the root causes of our thoughts. It is essential to observe the thinking process and witness the contents of the mind. To establish ourselves in our own basic nature we need to know how to cleanse the mind. We constantly identify with the content of the mind and with our memories. Things which trouble us inwardly are hidden

from others, but we see them and allow ourselves to be disturbed constantly by them. Through meditation we gain control over these disturbances and learn to observe and witness them. Then slowly problems fade from our mental processes.

Gradually, you will acquire the power to inspect your own thinking process, while remaining undisturbed. Such a mind attains clarity and is then prepared to attain samadhi.

Witnessing is covered in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II.*, and is also well described in *Freedom from the Bondage of Karma*.

Normal operation of the mind

A thought normally takes 2/25 of a second, which is a rate of 12½ thoughts per second, 750 per minute, or 45,000 per hour. This is the normal operation of the mind, but it is usually not noticed. Through the process of meditation the mind becomes progressively more purified or clear, and one starts to experience the mind as it is actually operating. As meditation advances, the thought process even speeds up faster than this. The process of introspection and burning samskaras quickens.

To experience the mind in this “normal” way is actually a part of the process of the expansion of the conscious mind. One might begin to experience this with the one-pointed concentration of the sushumna awakening practice of focusing on the flow at the bridge of the nostrils. It is this expansion process which eventually leads one to enlightenment or Self-realization; the conscious expands until there is no unconscious. Since that is the goal, one does not, therefore, want to skip this aspect of meditation where the mind is encountered in this way.

It is obvious that to be able to consciously experience such a stream of thoughts, one must have the ability to remain undisturbed by those thoughts. In fact, if a disturbing thought does come, one then loses sight of the others by becoming absorbed in the disturbing thought. That single disturbing thought acts as the engine of a train of associated thoughts which becomes a subject of worry or distraction.

The elimination of the disturbing quality of thoughts is the purpose of introspection and burning samskaras, which was described above. It is for this reason that one should learn, from the very beginning, the strategy of letting go of the disturbing quality, rather than the strategy of getting rid of the thoughts themselves. Many people believe you can stop the thinking process, but you cannot actually do that.

Remember also, that one of the six skills mentioned at the beginning of the paper had to do with witnessing thoughts. First one learned to witness a gross level of thought, and now is experiencing a deeper level of this same process of witnessing. In this process, one continues to progressively experience deeper levels of the mind. The ability to witness

may seem to change with each level, yet it remains fundamentally the same skill. This is why it is so important to cultivate this skill from the beginning, including in daily life.

Ajapa japa

Mantra has been referred to as a boat which carries one to the other shore. When one enters the ocean of the mind as described above, mantra is the boat which helps one journey through the unconscious, on the way to the Self within.

Mantra has by now become the dominant thought in the mind. The thousands of other thoughts are not as strong as they used to be, and the student has learned the skills of letting go and witnessing. With those skills in place, mantra automatically rises to the surface as the dominant thought. There is no battle between thoughts and mantra. The mantra is automatically going on, on its own, repeating itself. One simply “watches” it with attention. The mantra has a leading quality to it. By just paying attention to it, and following it wherever it goes, it will lead us.

This leading quality is very important. To find out where it is trying to lead us, we must follow it. It is trying to take us somewhere. If you internally “say” your mantra, and then stop, you will notice that the feel of it remains and tries to take you somewhere. If you will allow your attention to stay with it, in an inquisitive way, you will find that it carries you to the place of silence. It’s actually going very deep, right to the center of consciousness, but we usually don’t allow it to lead us quite that far. But the point is this: we need to keep following, trying to find the place to which the mantra is trying to lead us. It’s like being in a forest, hearing the sound of an animal in the distant bushes, and then trying to follow that sound until we find the source of it. We just keep listening, paying attention, and following.

Japa is sometimes described as the repetition of a mantra. *Ajapa japa* is sometimes described as the automatic, internal repetition of the mantra. But there is a deeper meaning to *ajapa japa*. A word Swami Rama often uses when discussing mantra is “remembering” the mantra. And remembering does not mean speaking or talking, whether externally or only in the mind. He explains that one should “listen” to, or “hear” the mantra. One should allow the mantra to “arise and repeat itself.” This means taking a stance of paying attention to the mantra which is already there. He even explains that by mentally repeating the mantra, the mind then repeats many things (which is not how you want to train your mind).

Advertising people are well aware of this principle. They create a catchy tune which a person hears a few times, and then automatically repeats internally. You do not use will power to cause the advertising tune to come up; it’s just there, like it or not. A meditator wants the mantra to arise, rather than the advertising tune. The meditator then wants to then

pay attention to that mantra which has arisen. The meditator wants to watch it, listen to it, hear it, feel it, and become completely absorbed in it. It does not require an act of will to cause the mantra to come, to be “repeated.” It is already there. All you have to do is notice it, pay attention to it, and follow it.

A mantra has four bodies, or koshas. Outermost is the word and its meaning; next is feeling, then constant awareness, and finally soundless sound, or silence. The mantra will move past the quality of just being a word and one will experience the feeling associated with the mantra, and a constant awareness, which then guides one towards silence. All sounds, including mantras, arise from silence and go back to silence. This is where the mantra is trying to lead you, if you will allow it to do so.

Sometimes one can think that they are forgetting their mantra when they notice that the syllables start to drift away. What might be happening, is that the mantra is leading you inward, past the level of verbal language. But, not understanding this, the student might get concerned and try even harder to hold on to the verbal level of the mantra. The student might “repeat” the mantra with more intensity, or intentionally faster, so as to not “forget” the mantra, when what is needed is to allow the mantra to do its job, which is to lead you inward towards silence.

This notion of “feeling” and “awareness” might be more easily understood by thinking of some person you love (or someone you dislike). How do you remember that person? Do you have to repeat their name over and over? No. You remember the “feel” of the person inside of you, and if the emotion is very strong, it might be a “constant awareness.” In this constant awareness, the name of the person may come and go, but the awareness is always there. A parent of a new-born baby is constantly aware of that child, though not actively thinking of the name of the baby.

It is this constant awareness that is the real meaning of ajapa japa. In meditation, you make that awareness the object of meditation. It then carries you, fully awake and alert, through the ocean of the unconscious. And when you choose to observe the ocean, the mantra remains your boat. Done internally, it is meditation, Done externally, it is meditation in action. They are both ajapa japa.

Going to the silence

Though he repeatedly teaches that one should go to the silence, and that meditation ends in silence, Swami Rama makes this point particularly clear in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*, where he writes succinctly, “You go to the silence, you go to the silence, you go to the silence.”

Meditation between the breasts or the eyebrows

At this stage of advanced meditation, there are two points on which the mind can be focused, the space between the breasts or between the eyebrows. By the time one comes to the advanced level of meditation, one's inner tendencies and inclinations should be clear. If you are emotional, the center for meditation is the anahata chakra, the space between the two breasts. If you are more intellectual, or think a lot, then the center for meditation is the space between the eyebrows. Both will eventually lead you to the same intuitions. However, at this point of meditation one should not meditate on the crown chakra, or on any of the lower chakras. Meditating on the crown chakra might lead to hallucinating, and meditating on the lower chakras might lead to significant distraction from meditation.

When meditating on the space between the breasts, one might meditate on a point of light in the space. When meditating on the space between the eyebrows, there is a tiny circle there. Inside the center of the circle, there is an unflinching flame steadily burning. It is like a milky white light. This flame has also been described as being like a crystal flame. One might also experience there a tiny black lingam, or oval shaped object. One might also meditate in the darkness at either of these two centers, with no visualized image. You may ask a teacher if you are uncertain about which center to meditate on, or on what object, if any, to meditate.

You continue to allow your thoughts to come forward from the unconscious, but only witness them rather than brooding on them. If the mind does not brood on the thoughts, then you remain unaffected, and you allow your thoughts to let go.

Meditation on sound or light

There is a fine and subtle point that then comes, again according to one's internal tendency. There is sound and light within. You should strengthen visualization or you should engage your mind in listening to the sound coming from within. Every individual has one of these two predominant tendencies. For some, visualization is easy; for others, hearing sound is easier. You have to judge yourself by studying the tendency of your mind. Again, you should consult your teacher if you are uncertain.

When one listens to the sound, the inner sound, anahata nada comes. It will systematically go through a variety of sounds. Finally, you'll hear the sound like "Om." Your whole being vibrates from within, though your body is still. These inner sounds come to both those who practice mantra yoga and to those who do not use mantra, but practice listening for the anahata nada. This practice is called nada yoga.

Your mind is being led by the mantra, toward the silence. When your mind is not following the subtle sound of the mantra, then it becomes aware of the illumination at ajna chakra, the space between the eyebrows.

The illumination may be experienced as coming from ajna chakra, the space between the eyebrows. The sound may be experienced as coming from anahata chakra, the space between the breasts.

Merging of mantra, sound and light

The meditator is becoming aware of the inner sound and the inner light which are already there.

When one develops the feeling of constant awareness of the mantra, it unites with the mainstream of consciousness where light and sound are inseparably mingled. That is a state of perfect concentration. The light of consciousness and mantra become one, and the mantra is not actually remembered, but its meaning and feeling are revealed.

In a higher stage of meditation sound and light are united, and in the highest state pure Consciousness alone exists.

Tunnel

While meditating on the sound or light, your mind suddenly enters into something like a tunnel that leads you to the gateway of sahasrara chakra, the thousand-petaled lotus. This particular gate, according to the yogis is called the eleventh gate in the city of life.

Sushumna, the central channel along the spine, actually divides into an anterior portion and a posterior portion at the level of the larynx. The anterior portion of the sushumna passes through the ajna chakra and the posterior portion passes behind the skull, the two portions uniting in the brahmarandra, or cavity of Brahma, the thousand-petaled lotus at the fontanel.

Bindu

Bindu means point or dot. In the yogic tradition it means the point at the ajna chakra where the gateway to sahasrara begins. It also means the seed of life.

In meditation on the bindu (*bindu bhedana*), the bindu is visualized at the ajna chakra as a tiny transparent pearl until the vision is clear. Then the visualized pearl-like bindu is moved to the sahasrara chakra. In this practice the bindu is regarded as the essence of the mind, and the mind is enriched by direct contact with the resulting superconscious state.

Finally the teacher leads the student to pierce the pearl of wisdom (*bindu vedhana*) and go beyond to the Limitless.

Shaktipata

“Shakti” means “energy,” and “pata” means “bestowing.” Shaktipata means the bestowing of energy, or lighting the lamp. Shaktipata is the Sanskrit word for grace, and is sometimes referred to as a descent of power. It is the grace of God transmitted through a master.

When a student has sincerely followed the instructions, enlightenment comes with the removal of the subtlest obstacle through shaktipata. There are various ways in which shaktipata may actually be given, such as by touch, glance, through another person, or by some physical object. One need not be in the physical presence of the master.

Guru

Guru is not any person, though guru can be represented in a person. “Gu” means darkness; “ru” means light. Guru is that light which dispels the darkness of ignorance. Guru is that special energy that is guiding individuals toward their fulfillment as human beings, toward perfection.

When the student is prepared, the guru always arrives to help the student do what is necessary to progress in removing the veil of ignorance. The student should not worry about who the guru is, or what the guru will do. The student’s first concern is getting prepared.

It is the duty of the external teacher to lead the student to the path of silence. Then the job of the external teacher is done. Guru will then operate from within, guiding the student from the silence. The best teachings of the guru are given in silence. The student actually learns in the cave of silence.

This guidance may come in many forms, and operates completely independently of where you are physically. Guru is the guide throughout life and beyond the realm of death. Guru is a process which is so incredible that it is often described as indescribable.

Complementary Practices

Sixty-one points

In this exercise you lie on your back in the corpse posture (shavasana), and as the name implies, you go through a series of focal points within the body. This exercise may be used both for relaxation or preparation for yoga nidra, which is discussed below. The sixty-one points exercise is more subtle than just scanning the body for relaxation. It gives excellent training for the control of one's mind.

The sixty-one points exercise is described (along with a sketch showing the points) in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II* and *Enlightenment Without God*.

Shitali karana

Shitali karana is a deeper exercise than sixty-one points, and may also be used for relaxation or leading to the practice of yoga nidra. In this practice you breathe as though you are breathing from the crown of the head to the tips of the toes, then from the crown of the head to the ankles. Then you progressively breathe from the crown of the head to other spots, coming up the body. You end at the eyebrow center and then reverse the process, going back to the toes.

Shitali karana is described in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*.

Yoga nidra

Yoga nidra is a profound and essential practice. Yoga nidra goes hand-in-hand with meditation. It provides rest to the whole of the mind, including the unconscious part. Yoga nidra is also used to examine and resolve all desires, thoughts, and feelings at the deep level of their samskaras.

In meditation one is awake and alert, and experiences that aspect of the unconscious which is normally only accessible during dreaming sleep. One intentionally brings forward that state of consciousness. You remain in the waking state and bring the other state to you.

Yoga nidra is used to go into the state of deep sleep, but remaining awake. It is as if one is going to that other place, called deep sleep, but bringing along their awakensness. In the state of yoga nidra the clarity of mind is more profound than in the waking state. Yet, you are actually leaving the waking state, going to sleep, but taking the waking with you. You must experience yoga nidra to understand it.

With the combination of meditation and yoga nidra, one gradually expands the waking state such that it contains the dreaming and deep sleep states. The conscious has been expanded to contain the unconscious; it is now all conscious.

Yoga nidra is described in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II* and *Enlightenment Without God*. In reading these descriptions and doing the practices, it is useful to remember that yoga nidra is the state of consciousness, not necessarily the particular techniques which take you there. For example, in *Enlightenment Without God*, the method given involves sixty-one points, but not shitali karana, whereas in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II* a method is given which involves the use of both sixty-one points and shitali karana.

In *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II* a simple yoga nidra technique is provided (page 196, paragraph 2). This involves moving attention progressively from the eyebrow center, to the throat center, and finally to the center between the breasts. This is the center of concentration for yoga nidra. You breathe at this center, using no mantra or visualized object. In the waking state, the center of consciousness is between the eyebrows, whereas in deep sleep, the center of consciousness is the space between the breasts.

Using this simple method of yoga nidra may not initially take you to the state of yoga nidra. You might want to first practice the longer methods which first use sixty-one points and shitali karana. Gradually a habit develops, and it becomes easier to enter yoga nidra. Initially, one should not practice yoga nidra itself for more than ten minutes, for this is the normal limit of this level of brain wave relaxation. At the end of yoga nidra, you may or may not experience a sort of “jolt” in your body, breath, and mind. This is a signal that you are done with this session of yoga nidra.

Agnisara

Agnisara is a very useful exercise that everyone should do. If you cannot do any other physical exercise on a particular day, at least do this one exercise. Agnisara energizes and provides warmth to the entire solar system of the body. The solar system is the largest network in the human body.

In general, you stand with your feet about six inches apart and rest the weight of your body through your arms onto your knees. You then exhale, contracting the muscles of the lower abdomen. You inhale by releasing the muscles, allowing the lower abdomen to return to its natural position .

There a variety of different ways of doing agnisara. The method presented in *Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II*, is what Swami Rama refers to as the “real” agnisara.

Further study

Each of Swami Rama’s books is insightful and offers practical advice. However, in the context of what has been covered in this paper, the books mentioned below are particularly concise and systematic.

Meditation and Its Practice outlines the sequence of a practice session in a series of five steps. Chapter 6 is entitled “A Program for Progress in Meditation.” It describes what to do for the first month, second month, two to three months, three to four months, and then beyond (there are no bold headings for these last few time periods, so you will have to read closely). This chapter can be very insightful if you will read it over and over.

Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II describes eight progressive steps which the student is to implement over time. These eight steps are explained in Chapters 6 through 8. The most thorough description on internal dialogue is in this book, in Chapter 6. This book constitutes a complete program in itself. Swami Rama suggests that you commit yourself to a serious study of this process for at least a year.

The Art of Joyful Living is the single book which contains the best descriptions of how the functions and aspects of mind interact, including the four functions of mind, the streams of emotion, and the four primitive fountains. It is very useful in providing a foundation for practicing mindfulness and introspection. In *Meditation and Its Practice*, Swami Rama actually refers the reader to this book to understand the mind.

Freedom from the Bondage of Karma gives excellent explanations of the process of purifying or clearing the mind through the various practices such as introspecting and witnessing. This book is concise, clear, thorough, and practical.

Enlightenment Without God contains tremendous insights on the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and turiya. Swami Rama explains that if you understand the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, you will definitely understand that there is a fourth state. That insight can be very inspiring. Individual sentences of this book can be profound and leap out at you.

The Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita provides never ending insights, regardless of the stance from which you read it. However, if you will read it in the context of what has been discussed here, you will gain a great deal of insight about how gaining self-knowledge (Chapter 2), action in the world (Chapters 3 through 5), and meditation (Chapter 6) work so well together.

Choosing a Path provides overviews of the various paths of yoga. Chapter 5 discusses Raja Yoga, the yoga which contains the other yogas. The simple, straightforward descriptions of the yamas and niyamas are very useful.

Back to basics

Please remember that this paper has briefly outlined some of the systematic process of the path to enlightenment. Some of it may seem new to you, some of it alluring. You

might want to go right to advanced meditation. This desire might actually be useful in the sense that it represents desire for the goal.

Yet, we must all start with the basics, and continue with the basics throughout the journey. This means staying focused on acquiring those six skills mentioned at the beginning of the paper, including relaxing the body, sitting still and comfortably, making the breath serene, witnessing and discriminating thoughts, and being undisturbed.

The process of meditation should not be forced or strenuous. It is a matter of simple attention, which goes progressively deeper. This attention will lead one to concentration, then to meditation, and then Beyond. Help will come along the way.

Levels of Practice

The following will help you determine where you presently are in your practice of meditation and what aspects to focus on developing.

These highlights are from a series of three audio tapes and two books by Swami Rama. The audio tapes are on beginning, intermediate, and first steps towards advanced meditation. Both of the books list detailed instructions on the progression of practice. Comparable highlights have been lined up next to one another in a way that should make it easy to follow.

AUDIO TAPES	MEDITATION AND ITS PRACTICE	PATH OF FIRE AND LIGHT, VOL. II
<p>GUIDED MEDITATION FOR BEGINNERS</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Clean, quiet, pleasant environment Fixed time every day</p> <p>Practice the same posture every day</p> <p>Seated systematic relaxation. Do not suggest anything to your mind. Relaxation is a spontaneous aspect of this method.</p> <p>Learn to use your diaphragm; Work on eliminating irregularities of breathing; Pay attention to the flow of your breath.</p> <p>Exhale and inhale at least five to ten times, without any pause; don't retain breath.</p> <p>That relaxation and the preliminary step toward meditation, which you are seeking will soon be yours after about one month.</p>	<p>.....</p> <p><u>First Month:</u> Time and place, pp.16-17 Maintain a regular time, p.18 Relax and stretch the muscles, p.19</p> <p>Attaining a still, comfortable posture, p.80 Use the support of a wall, p.80 Learn to ignore shakes, perspiration, numbness, and twitching, p.80</p> <p>Seated survey of body, p.81</p> <p>Diaphragmatic breathing, p.66 Breath awareness for irregularities of: jerkiness, shallowness, noise, or extended pauses, p.86</p> <p>Prayer for better meditation, p.81</p> <p>Understanding the mind¹; four functions of mind, etc., pp.82-86</p>	<p>.....</p> <p><u>Step 1:</u> Regular Practice Time, pp.100-102</p> <p><u>Step 2:</u> Developing an Internal Dialogue, pp.102-110 To succeed in meditation you have to develop this important step; do not begin with meditation itself, p.102</p> <p><u>Step 3:</u> Establishing a Steady Posture for Meditation, pp.111-114 A steady and comfortable posture is needed to achieve a real state of meditation, p.114</p> <p><u>Step 4:</u> Establishing Serene Breath, pp.114-125 Diaphragmatic breathing, p.115 Breath awareness for irregularities of breathing, pp.115, 118</p> <p>Two-to-one breathing, p.116</p> <p>Observing breath and mind flow together, p.117</p>

¹ On p.84, the reader is referred to *The Art of Joyful Living* for greater detail on understanding the mind.

AUDIO TAPES	MEDITATION AND ITS PRACTICE	PATH OF FIRE AND LIGHT, VOL. II
<p>A GUIDE TO <u>INTERMEDIATE</u> MEDITATION</p>		
<p>Universal prayer Being sensitive to the finer energy of sushumna which is already flowing on your spinal column; centralis canalis, ida and pingala. Hear the sound “so hum,” with “hum” going to the base of the spine and “so” going to the crown of the head.</p>	<p><u>Second Month:</u> Breath along spine, from base of the spine to the crown of the head, visualizing centralis canalis, ida and pingala, pp.87-88</p>	<p><i>Continuation of</i> <u>Step 4:</u> Establishing Serene Breath Let your mind flow with the breath; ask your mind to travel, p.117</p>
<p>Meditation on flow of the breath</p>	<p>After inhalation and exhalation with awareness of breath along spine, then awareness of breath as it comes and goes through the nostrils, p.88</p>	<p>Breath is the finest focal point for a meditator; breathe in such a way that the breath is fine, full, and sensitive, p.118</p>
<p>Meditation on clogged nostril to open it</p>	<p>Paying attention to a blocked nostril to open it, p.88</p>	<p>Changing the flow of breath with mental ability, which is the first step of sushumna application,p.121</p>
<p>Application of sushumna; meditate on the center between the two nostrils.</p>	<p><u>2-3 More Months</u> Sushumna awakening; focus of mind on breath between the nostrils, pp.89-91 Both nostrils flowing freely is a sign of sushumna awakening; when this can be experienced for five minutes, the student has crossed a great barrier, and the mind has attained some one-pointedness, p.90</p>	<p>For sushumna application, ask your mind to focus at the nose bridge; let your thoughts come and don't be afraid, p.122</p>
<p>Determination that you will not allow yourself to be identified with your mind and its objects.</p>		<p><u>Step 5:</u> Cultivating Sankalpa Shakti, pp.127-133</p>
<p>Letting thought patterns flow without any interruption</p>	<p><u>3-4 More Months</u> Dealing with the conscious aspect of the mind, pp.91-92 Purifying the mind and making it one-pointed; training the mind to form a new habit, p.92</p>	<p>Dealing with the conscious mind, p.127</p>
<p>Witnessing² activities of the mind Observing your thinking process, but not allowing your mind to be involved with it.</p>	<p>Transforming the personality by learning to let go of the habitual thoughts arising in the conscious mind, p.92</p>	<p><u>Step 6:</u> Learning to Let Go of Distracting Thoughts, p.133 The first part of meditation is learning to let go, p.133</p>
<p>Remembering mantra while meditating between eyebrows.</p>	<p>Witnessing² the thoughts going on in the mental train, practicing and learning to remain undisturbed, unaffected, and uninvolved, p.92</p>	<p>Ask yourself if this thought that is coming is helpful for your meditation or not, p.133</p>

AUDIO TAPES	MEDITATION AND ITS PRACTICE	PATH OF FIRE AND LIGHT, VOL. II
<p>FIRST STEP TOWARD <u>ADVANCED</u> MEDITATION</p> <p>.....</p> <p>When breath and mind integrate, you may have the feeling that you are not breathing. This is an encouraging sign of advancement.</p> <p>Allowing your thoughts to come forward from the unconscious.</p> <p>Learning to witness² thoughts.</p> <p>Gradually eliminating habits and hidden tendencies of the mind and crossing the final boundary built by your mind.</p> <p>Ajapa japa: you do not have to make a conscious effort to remember your mantra, for it has become part of your life and you spontaneously remember it.</p> <p>Meditation on inner light at ajna chakra, or on inner sound at anahata chakra, depending on one's inherent tendency.</p> <p>Allowing mind to be led by the mantra toward silence. When your mind is not following the subtle sound of the mantra, then it becomes aware of the illumination of ajna chakra.</p> <p>Entering into the tunnel which leads to sahasrara, the crown chakra.</p> <p>Your mind gradually experiences the joy of expansion and finds delight.</p>	<p>.....</p> <p><u>Beyond a Total of 7-9 Months:</u></p> <p>Examining your fears, p.93</p> <p>Contemplation with analysis, p.93</p> <p>Gradually acquiring the power to inspect you own thinking process, while remaining undisturbed, p.93</p> <p>Attainment of fearlessness, p.94</p> <p>The undisturbed mind attains clarity and is prepared to attain samadhi. Samadhi is nearly attained with ten minutes of undisturbed focus, p.93</p> <p>The final step of meditation is to remain in silence, p.94</p> <p>From silence emanates peace, happiness, bliss, and intuition, p.94</p>	<p>.....</p> <p><i>Step 7:</i> Developing Introspection Seeing which thoughts are worth-while to cultivate; yoga manuals talk of klista and aklista, helpful and harmful thoughts, pp.100, 133-135</p> <p>When human beings start thinking beyond the level of the human personality, that is exploring their divinity, p.134</p> <p><i>Step 8:</i> Developing the Capacity to Witness² the Thoughts, pp.135-136</p> <p>Eliminating/becoming free from samskaras, the deep groves or impressions stored in the unconscious mind, pp.135-136</p> <p>Mind starts flowing in the new, consciously created grooves, p.136 Correctly used mantra goes to sound, not remaining only a word, p.142</p> <p>Meditation on light or sound, anahata nada, pp.138-139</p> <p>You go to the silence, you go to the silence, you go to the silence, p.140</p> <p>Expanding the waking state through meditation, p.135</p> <p>Commit yourself to a serious study of this process for at least a year, p.144</p>

² The word "witnessing" is sometimes used in somewhat different contexts.

Cultivating Mindfulness

“Meditation” means to “attend.” It means attention to the whole of life. It should not be a strenuous act; it should not be forced. Your whole life can be one of meditation. Instead of making dramatic resolutions, simply make yourself open to observing yourself and decide to experiment in observing yourself. Once purity of mind is attained, then one is fully prepared for the inner voyage. To achieve this state of purity of mind, one should cultivate constant awareness by being mindful all the time. To purify the buddhi, the faculty of discrimination, is the most important task.

Attention is the key point that leads you to concentration, then to meditation, and then to samadhi. Mindfulness means paying attention. You have to pay attention to the thing you are doing, and you have to learn to train your mind. This is a very preliminary step and you have to learn that first.

In doing practices of mindfulness, internal dialogue, and meditation, including introspection and witnessing, it is extremely useful to have a road-map. Otherwise, the mind can just toss and turn in a confused sort of “dialogue” while one is struggling to be “mindful.”

The concepts listed below are important working tools for your practice; they are not just background information. As you come to understand these concepts, you will enjoy knowing and using them, as you also come to know and be friends with your own mind.

You may want to photocopy this sheet and keep it with you in a pocket until you have learned the concepts. Use the principles often each day to observe your thoughts, words, and actions, as well as your gestures and body language. You may want to mentally scan all of the items from time to time during the day as a means of cultivating mindfulness.

Yamas & niyamas

Yamas:

Non-violence (ahimsa)
Truthfulness (satya)
Non-stealing (asteya)
Continence (brahmacharya)
Non-materialism (aparigraha)

Niyamas:

Purity (saucha)
Contentment (santosha)
Training senses (tapas)
Study (svadhyaya)
Surrender (ishvara pranidhana)

Five elements

Earth/solidity/form (prithivi)
Water/flow/fluidity (apas)
Fire/energy/power (agni, tejas)
Air/lightness/airiness (vayu)
Space/ether/existence/beingness (akasha)

Ten Senses

Five Cognitive:

Hearing
Touching
Seeing
Tasting
Smelling

Five Active:

Speaking
Grasping
Moving
Reproducing
Eliminating

Four functions of mind

Manas
Chitta
Ahamkara
Buddhi

Streams of emotion

The prime emotion:

Desire/expectation (kama)

If desire *is* fulfilled:

Pride (muda)
Attachment (moha)
Greed (lobha)

If desire is *not* fulfilled:

Anger (krodha)
Jealousy (matsarya)

If desire *is* or *is not* fulfilled:

Egoism (ahamkara)

Four primitive fountains

Food
Sleep
Sex
Self-preservation

Practicing Internal Dialogue

This step is a very important one, but one that few students understand. To succeed in meditation you have to develop this important step. You do not begin with meditation itself. First you learn to set a regular meditation time, and then to have a dialogue with yourself. In this process you are coming in contact with your inner, internal states. You are learning about the subtle aspects of your mind, your own conscience, and at the same time you are also training yourself.

The following highlights and reminders will help you get started in the enjoyable and fruitful practice of internal dialogue. This practice will make a friend of your mind, a friend which will then help you on your inner journey. You may want to photocopy this page on the back of the mindfulness sheet. Reviewing it from time to time will aid in your development of internal dialogue.

- To communicate with others, you have to first communicate with yourself.
- Ask buddhi “should I do it or not?”
- Ask “is my first thought good or bad—is it clear or clouded?”
- Don’t do anything in life unless your buddhi, the counselor within, tells you to do it.
- Learn to self-counsel about negative emotions.
- Ask yourself why you are doing an action.
- From where a question comes is also the answer.
- When questions come, say to them, “okay, come.”
- Ask your mind what you have to do.
- Ask your mind, “what do I want?”
- When upset, ask “why am I thinking like this?”
- Ask how you think, why you are emotional, and what the problems are with your mind.
- Ask why you: become emotionally disorganized, forget things, and do not attend to things properly.
- Ask your mind what your fears are.
- Ask “does my ego get in my way or not?”
- In relaxation, ask your mind to be alert and not go to sleep; ask your mind to locate and release tension.
- When sitting for meditation, ask your mind to go to, and to heal aching parts.
- With distracting thoughts, remind yourself of your purpose; tell yourself that this thought or desire is distracting and will lead you to a fantasy.
- The preliminary steps are to watch your gestures and movements.
- Ask your mind to go beyond your senses.
- Dialogue with your mind as a friend, but don’t accept everything it says.
- Talk to your mind so that you know that your mind is not preoccupied with stupid thoughts.
- If you don’t want to meditate, then don’t meditate; have a gentle dialogue with your mind.
- You will learn many things when you dialogue.
- If you make a mistake, dialogue with yourself.
- Dialogue with yourself before meditation.
- Many problems can be solved by dialogue.
- You will receive new insights by dialogue.
- Cultivate a relationship with your own mind.
- Raise questions about the purpose of life.
- Ask the mind why it disturbs you during meditation.
- You will enjoy internal dialogue if you do it well.
- For a few minutes each day, be honest with yourself.
- Ask what your purpose is.
- Explain to your mind that it is too worldly and materialistic.
- Tell the mind that it has become dissipated, and it should tread the path of light, love, and devotion.
- Don’t order your mind around; it won’t take dictation; but don’t let it order you around.
- Be a close friend to your mind, a very close friend.
- Contract: Let the mind whisper those inner secrets to you, and put all things in front of your mind.
- Train the senses and mind by using dialogue.
- Your mind is vast and can tell you many things, but don’t let your mind be your teacher.
- Establish a friendship on an equal basis.
- Learn to love by being gentle in your dialogue.
- When sitting, ask your mind to withdraw itself.
- Ask your mind to flow with the breath.
- When you attempt sushumna application, ask your mind to focus at the nose bridge.
- Ask yourself if this thought that is coming to you is helpful for your meditation or not.
- Ask yourself if you want to meditate, to explore, to know yourself, and to choose your habits.
- Ask your mind to open a blocked nostril for you.
- As with any friend, listen to your mind.
- Don’t condemn yourself or be judgmental.
- Remind yourself of your real identity.
- Say to your mind, “please be my friend.”

Reading References

Orientation of the tradition:

Our tradition

- Living with the Himalayan Masters, 478-482

Upanishads

- Book of Wisdom, 36-40
- Life Here and Hereafter, 1-4
- Wisdom of the Ancient Sages, 1-14
- Enlightenment Without God, 3-8

Mandukya Upanishad

- Enlightenment without God, 8-11¹

Yoga system of Patanjali

- Lectures on Yoga, 13-19²
- Choosing a Path, 117-144
- Life Here and Hereafter, 121-129
- The Art of Joyful Living, 10-12
- Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita, 84

Samaya tantra

- Choosing a Path, 187-188, 199
- Living with the Himalayan Masters, 262-263
- Wisdom of the Ancient Sages, 58

Sri Vidya

- Choosing a Path, 188-192
- Living with the Himalayan Masters, 257-260; 427-429

Guru

- Living with the Himalayan Masters, 391-394
- Sacred Journey, 81-90

Doing the practices:

Summaries of practice

- Meditation and Its Practice, 13-14, 18-22, 79-94
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 99-136, 200-201
- Lectures on Yoga, 138-141
- Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita, 193-194, 238-241
- Wisdom of the Ancient Sages, 127-128
- Book of Wisdom, 31-34
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 37-39
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 154-156 or Science of Breath, 128-129
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 91
- Freedom From the Bondage of Karma, 74

Specific topics to study for practice³:

Mindfulness

- The Art of Joyful Living, 119
- Choosing a Path, 125
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 22-23
- Meditation and Its Practice, 2
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 96, 145
- Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita, 77-78

Four functions of mind

- Choosing a Path, 41-45
- Sacred Journey, 29-36
- Meditation and Its Practice, 82-84
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 32-35, 84-85
- The Art of Joyful Living, 4, 54, 79-82, 132-135, 154, 166-168, 170-172, 194
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 17-19, 119-121
- Book of Wisdom, 27, 89-90
- Lectures on Yoga, 122-123
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 114

Ten senses

- The Art of Joyful Living, 106-107, 149-152, 163-164
- Choosing a Path, 8, 127, 137
- Life Here and Hereafter, 67-70
- Lectures on Yoga, 124
- Meditation and Its Practice, 91
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 55-57, 124

Four primitive fountains

- Choosing a Path, 57-62
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 98-105
- The Art of Joyful Living, 83-86, 191-206
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 69-72, 103-105

Streams of emotion

- Choosing a Path, 62-65
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 97-108
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 67-69
- The Art of Joyful Living, 19, 73-78, 82, 97-98, 105

Yamas and niyamas

- Choosing a Path, 120-130
- Lectures on Yoga, 23-28
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 7-9

The five elements

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 95-99, 105-108
- Choosing a Path, 8, 150-153

¹ This reference is a brief description. The entire book *Enlightenment Without God* is on the Mandukya Upanishad.

² The entire book *Lectures on Yoga* is about Patanjali's yoga.

³ Some page references are included under more than one heading.

Internal dialogue

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 78-79, 102-110
- The Art of Joyful Living, 96, 107, 119-122, 138, 167-168, 173, 201, 203
- Enlightenment Without God, 103-105
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 122
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 19, 33, 70, 73
- Lectures on Yoga, 112

Deciding

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 45, 101
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 100-101
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 87-88
- The Art of Joyful Living, 32, 69, 107-108, 114, 124
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 34

Introspection

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 59, 95, 133-135
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 28-29, 69-74
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 31-33
- The Art of Joyful Living, 26-27, 51, 194, 197
- Meditation and Its Practice, 54-55, 92-93
- Enlightenment Without God, 91-93, 107-108

Witnessing

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 122-123, 135-136
- The Art of Joyful Living, 45, 108, 111, 121-125
- Meditation and Its Practice, 13, 50, 84-85, 92
- Sacred Journey, 78-79
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 49-51, 72
- Lectures on Yoga, 112-113, 128
- Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita, 98,454

Expansion

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 36-38, 42, 63, 75, 79-81, 135, 179
- Enlightenment Without God, 92, 98, 107, 113-115, 119
- The Art of Joyful Living, 54, 105-106, 107, 176
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 90-91, 123
- Choosing a Path, 142-144, 152-153
- Sacred Journey, 79-80
- Lectures on Yoga, 137
- Wisdom of the Ancient Sages, 128
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 33

Sushumna Awakening

- Meditation and Its Practice, 77, 89-90
- Choosing a Path, 164-166, 199
- Science of Breath, 100, 136-141
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 157
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 8-9, 108-110
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 120-122
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 82-83
- The Art of Joyful Living, 231

Yoga Nidra

- Enlightenment Without God, 56, 61-65, 97
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 179-198

General Topics:**Stretches, asanas, and sitting postures**

- Lectures on Yoga, 31-80
- Choosing a Path, 130-134
- Meditation and Its Practice, 29-44

Breath

- Science of Breath, 91-143
- Meditation and Its Practice, 57-77, 115-121
- Lectures on Yoga, 83-104
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 79-110
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 114-125
- Choosing a Path, 134-137

Understanding the mind

- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 16-27
- Lectures on Yoga, 121-131
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 19-20, 35-39, 111-121
- Book of Wisdom, 24-35
- Meditation and Its Practice, 82-86, 91-94
- Choosing a Path, 9-20

Waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and turiya

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 59-81
- Enlightenment Without God 1-119

Meditation

- The Art of Joyful Living, 221-233
- A Call to Humanity, 59-71
- Meditation and Its Practice, 1-14, 45-55
- Lectures on Yoga, 135-151
- Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita, 225-261
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 111-128
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 25-33, 143-152, 153-159
- A Practical Guide to Holistic Health, 73-91
- Choosing a Path, 137-142

Mantra and the science of sound

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. II, 137-150
- Freedom from the Bondage of Karma, 66-75
- Inspired Thoughts of Swami Rama, 82-83, 247-254
- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 126-128
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- Choosing a Path, 174-176

Kundalini and the chakras

- Path of Fire and Light, Vol. I, 129-160
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