



Sanatana Mitra

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The Layers of Mind

Corresponding to the first five chakras or subtle energy centers are five layers of mental function. Knowledge of these five psychological levels is useful for understanding the nature and operation of our bondage to the material world and the means for liberation from this sensual playground. The process of going deeper into our nature and attaining to the True Self is one of expanding our mind to pass through the various levels.

The first layer is the conscious mind and is the layer of desire:

There are three functions associated with the first layer – sensory input, feeling either desire or aversion, and acting on the feeling. It is through the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell that we receive information about the world. We have the capacity for feeling and the capacity for action through the five motor organs of hands, feet, voice, sexual and excretory organs.

When a young man sees an attractive girl, desire arises and he walks over to her and starts a dialog to satisfy his desire to know her better. After their first date, he takes her to his home to see his collection of spiders. She is immedi-

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Finding Time for Practice

One of the greatest difficulties faced by the aspiring spiritual student is the lack of time that we all face in this busy age, especially in the more developed societies. It is one of the ironies that the average adult in the United States most probably has less free time than previous generations due to the stressful work environment and distracting media culture.

Of course, all sincere seekers have heard that maintaining a regular daily practice is the key to success in any of the many spiritual systems and this often leads to doubt in the sporadic efforts they can find in their busy schedule. However, where there is a will, there is a way.

All effective systems of Self-realization incorporate certain meditations that can be performed in any environment that you can close your eyes – in planes, trains, buses, waiting in line at the bank or doctor's office, during coffee break etc. What is needed is flexibility and determination.

Flexibility is needed to adapt to changing or adverse conditions while maintaining the essence of a practice. Determination is the will to look for and take advantage of any situation that may present itself for a practice session. Flexibility is the ability to modify or break up longer practices into short chunks to fit changing life conditions

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Wisdom From The Sun

It is recounted in the Mandala Brahmana Upanishad that the great sage Yajnavalkya attained to the sphere of the Sun and learned about the light that exists within the inner core of the spiritual seeker.

The following is the essence of the wisdom imparted to the sage by the Spirit of the Sun:

The human body-mind is burdened with five stains: passion, anger, unrest, fear and sleep. The removal of these stains can be very extremely difficult because it requires the super-human effort to abstain from intention actions, by absolute forgiveness, moderation in food, carefulness and the spiritual vision of building blocks of existence

called the tattwas.

There is a subtle path that reveals the mystical star or Taraka which is the way to cross the ocean of suffering where sleep and fear are the serpents of the deep, injury the waves, desire for sensations the whirlpool traps and family entanglements the muddy mire.

Taraka is the Atman when seen in the third-eye center between the eyebrows. It has the nature of the spiritual radiance of Satchitananda. The brilliant central channel, sushumna nadi leads to it and in this channel's center, the kundalini shines like countless lightning bolts and yet is subtle as the thread in the lotus stalk. Darkness and

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Finding Time for Practice

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or emergency situations. Determination is the constant intent to expand one's consciousness.

It is important to grasp that spiritual practice is not an 'all or nothing' scenario. If you are supposed to give 45 minutes to a session but only have 25 minutes, don't just skip the session, make the most of the 25 minutes. Every little bit helps in spiritual evolution!

There is always some time before a meal that can be taken advantage of, especially, before breakfast or dinner. This helps to maintain a regular routine. Alternatively, take a shorter lunch

break by practicing before eating a light lunch. Everyone has a different routines and constraints and must customize their practice accordingly.

Spiritual practice is a marathon, a long-term commitment and should be treated as such with forethought and planning. Make a plan for creating and maintaining this 'good habit.' The plan should consist of a series of possible practice sessions. Start with the ideal session – let us say, it is for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Now make a session set that is only half an hour long in the morning

and half an hour long in the evening. How about a fifteen minute long session? What can you do if you only have five minutes to sit on the park bench or a bus stop? What can you do if you have a one hour drive? Plan for these different scenarios and implement the one that fits the situation. You will always have some meditation or practice that you can make use of and so maintain the consciousness towards your spiritual goal.

One cannot make more time than one has, but we can take the skillful means to make the most of the time that presents itself for practice.

Wisdom From The Sun

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ignorance (tamas) is destroyed there. Through seeing the star, all sins are destroyed.

A technique for attaining the path of the mystical star is given: Close the two ears by the tips of the forefingers, and listen to the booming sound. When the mind is fixed on it, a blue light is seen between the eyes and also in the heart. Deepen the vision and make it steady. When one sees spiritual light above the head, then he attains the state of nectar and rays of the morning sun are joined with the moon and fire in the inner space. Then the yogi comes to have the nature of those lights. Through practice, he becomes one with this inner space (aksaha) devoid of all attributes or gunas.

In the course of practice, akasha, with its shining stars, becomes to him para-akasha and unites with para-akasha. Then she becomes one with the resplendent fire of maha-akasha. Next, she merges into tattva-akasha, lighted with the highest conceivable brightness. Finally, she becomes one with surya-akasha, brightened by millions of suns. In this way, the yogi becomes

one with That.

This is the great yogic science which is concealed in all the scriptures. When this is known, one is liberated.

Then the Spirit of the Sun explained to Yajnavalkya the essence of this inner sight:

It is the source of the five elements. In its midst, the tattvas are manifested. It is hidden. It can be known only by one who has attained wisdom and knowledge. Above the inner sight is the sphere of the sun, in the middle of which is the light of the nectary moon. It shines like a ray of white lightning striking the tip of the nose. When this is practiced, a deep darkness is seen at the root of the palate. In this practice, a jyoti (light) of the form of an endless sphere emerges. This is Brahman as satchitananda. When the mind is absorbed in this naturally produced bliss, then the kechari mudra takes place.

The following are the signs of inner sight: first light is seen like a faraway star; then a dazzling diamond; then the sphere of full moon; then the sphere of the brightness of nine gems; then the sphere of the midday sun – they are

seen in this order.

Once the inner sight is attained, there is no rising or setting of the eternal sun of Chit (awareness) in the yogi's heart and he has no karma to perform. Rising above day and night through the annihilation of sound and time he becomes one with Brahman. He is a true knower because he is now free from all thoughts.

When the triple aspects of knower, knowing and knowledge are dissolved by the inner sight, the yogi becomes the jyoti (light) without bhava (existence) or abhava (nonexistence), full and motionless, like the ocean without the tides or like the lamp without the wind.

The yogi who knows Brahman enjoys this bliss, which is eternal and has dawned on her, that yogi becomes one with Brahman. This yogi with inner sight is no longer troubled by the illusion of not-Self, the delusional universe.

This is a glimpse of the wisdom imparted by the Sun to the sage who has reached the realm of the light – the Adityaloka.

The Layers of Mind

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ately repulsed and runs out of the place and develops an aversion to him.

This is the level of instinctual desire and fears – they are quite natural since we developed from animals. As we have evolved, we need to learn to control and channel them.

The second layer is the subconscious mind – layer for reflection and recollection:

This is the mental layer that is responsible for most thinking processes – analytical and problem solving of day-to-day life. It is the scientific thought of information management and mathematical computation. This is also where deep philosophical and religious thinking is located. Argumentation arises due to the differences in the sub-conscious minds these thinkers.

This layer holds the function for memory which makes it possible to reflect and think on past experiences and not just on immediate sensory input.

The third function of this layer is dreaming. This is a critical process in order to discharge the excess nervous energy that accumulates in the human body each day. Dreams also help to process our daily experiences or to vicariously satisfy deep desires that do not find fulfillment in our conscious life.

Those who meditate can remove the need for dreams because there is a mental catharsis that occurs in meditation that performs the same function as dreams. The meditator can remain in a

deep and dreamless sleep and wake up refreshed.

The third layer is the super-conscious mind – layer for intuition:

This is the mental layer of creative insight and is beyond the logic and rationality of the subconscious mind. Many poets and artists have had glimpses of this layer and been raised up from their normal consciousness into the realm of beauty and bliss and have had temporary escape from the anxieties and restlessness of their normal neurotic selves.

This is the layer that is accessed by the greatest scientists such as Einstein or Newton and from which their scientific breakthroughs have come.

Deep meditation is necessary in order to reliably and consistently realize this layer of mind.

The fourth layer is the subliminal mind – layer of discrimination and non-attachment:

This layer of mind expands our awareness to all the various vibrations of the universe around us, enabling us to perceive the tiniest sub-atomic particle as well as the largest and farthest cosmic structures.

To one in this expanded consciousness, the joys and sorrows, the pleasures and pains of the sensory world are but the plays of a passing show. Such a one who has glimpsed the eternal is un-attached to temporary forms. However, true non-attachment is not

a denial of life as some who have not reached this level seem to think. Life in all its changing glory is embraced as a dance of revelation.

Discrimination is the ability to discern the permanent which underlies the changing manifestations of the illusory world. Realization of the nature of ultimate reality brings to an end all anxiety of loss and fear of death.

The fifth layer is the subtle causal mind – layer of yearning for union with the Eternal

This is the final thin veil of the mind, the most expansive layer and yet still separated from our True Self. The separation is so thin that the yearning for unity with the Spirit becomes almost unbearable and intense.

This layer of mind is a radiant golden glow that when directed outwards fills and surrounds the physical body while when directed inwards, it becomes a barrier separating the self from the Self.

The mystics have left us copious testament in their poetry and writings of this great yearning for union with the infinite and unknowable.

The various meditative practices of yoga are formulated to help the sincere seeker realize the different higher levels of the mind and reach the fifth layer. From this layer, persistent and regular practice, together with the grace of the Divine will enable the yogi to pierce the golden sheath enveloping the mind and transcend it.