

Lama Surya Das
Week Three, *Inter-Meditation: How to Co-Meditate with Everyone
and Everything*
June 15, 2015
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Again, homage to the Buddha-ness in your seat. Don't overlook her. I think we should give her a gong, don't you?

Inter-meditate with the vibrations of the gong, just listening, just hearing, and letting go of everything else.

Breathing in the sound through your ears and breathing it out through your ears, as it were. Don't stress about this. Just listen. As Buddha said, “In hearing there is just hearing, no one listening and nothing to listen for; in seeing, just seeing, no one looking and nothing to look for.”

Hear the source where the gong sound comes from and follow it to the dissolution point. Co-meditate with sound.

Follow the sound, watch the sound, and watch it go with your ears. Synesthesia, merging the senses. Just hear, letting everything else go. Breathing, relaxing, and hearing. Smiling.

Mm . . . Breathing, relaxing, smiling. How sweet it is. Natural meditation. Un-meditation. Allowing. Being with it rather than against it. Letting go. Letting come and go. Letting be.

Riding the breath as it were. Undiluted, total attention. The heart of prayer or contemplation. Soulful, mindful. Incandescently. Present. Luminous. Eye-gazing. You can try looking into a mirror like this into your own eye, the mirror to your own soul. It is not a staring contest. Notice what comes up. Get to know yourself. As Socrates said, “Know thyself.” Not just a small, confined puppy-like self, but a capital “S” supreme Self. The Godhead within. The Buddha nature. The inner light.

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Where nothing is done, friends, nothing remains undone.

This week’s subject is going deeper into dealing with difficulties like death, loss, grief, and co-meditating with death, loss, and grief. We touched on this last week, which was about relationships, and not just with people. But with experiences and with our inner feelings, the inner weather and moods and the practice of radical acceptance, of co-meditating with our feelings, an inner weather, and sitting in the still center of the turning wheel. The still axis of the turning wheel of life. Of the Universe. Of the mandala. The sacred circle of life. Inter-woven, interconnected, inter-dependent of which we’re an intrinsic part. Resting in the eye of the hurricane through co-meditation, cultivation, or practice.

How do we co-meditate with death, with tragedy, with loss? Life is ephemeral, transient, fleeting. It is beautiful. It is gorgeous. It is such a gift. It is a miracle just to wake up in the morning! On this side of the grass, as they say. It is a miracle.

And yet shit happens. Everything that is born dies, human, animal, and nature, too. The seasons change. Even the planets and the solar systems and the stars are born and die, come and go. The bigger picture. How do we live more fully or freely now? That is what we are talking about.

The meditation master, the compassionate Buddha, sage of India, twenty-six hundred years ago said, “As the biggest footprint in the jungle is the elephant’s, the greatest most major meditation is on death, impermanence, mortality.” So I like to practice graveyard sauntering and I’m recommending that to you as a good way to enter into the joyous spirit of co-meditating with death, of inter-meditating with those who are dead and gone. I am not talking about ghosts and spirits and goblins here and you can make it into whatever you want. I am just saying that walking in a graveyard is like the American Buddhist death, meditation par excellence. I spent over twenty years in Asia and the third world, mostly in the Indian sub-continent. The charnel

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grounds, the cremation sites along the Ganges were horrific places with bits of bodies, with jackals and ravens and vultures. Scary.

But here they are like parks. This is a beautiful practice and yet it will remind us to naturally consider and feel and intuit the bigger picture. When we look at the dates on the old tombstones, like here in New England, the 1600's and 1700's, people were born and died and had families and kids. Some died old or middle-aged or young. And the poignant little child tombstones. It always breaks my heart, next to the parent tombstones and grandparent tombstones. It's a reminder to cherish life now. That's how we co-meditate with death. We keep it in the forefront of our consciousness, not morbidly, but to prioritize life now, not wait till we retire, or next summer, to do what we need and wish and want to do.

We prioritize life now and the preciousness and miracle of life, not to mention not taking life, not killing, not squandering life, not deadening ourselves by wasting time, which is life and so on. So when people die and I remember I was sitting with my father and his deathbed the last three weeks of his life. I was lucky to be leading retreats in upstate New York in the Finger Lakes and I came down and visited him a lot and I happened to be there alone with him at seven in the morning when he breathed his last. My family, my New York clan, came and went every day and went back to their homes, but I stayed in a hotel nearby. So I was there at seven in the morning when he breathed his last, peacefully in his sleep. Thank God, as we say. May he rest in peace.

And then I just sat with him. I co-meditated with my dead father for forty-five minutes before the nurse came. Not doing anything, just being with him. It was some of the best quality time we ever spent together. Just mingled and merged and just feeling together and being his son and being there for him, with him. This is co-meditation par excellence. Just being there for other, with other, beyond self and other. Was he even there any more? Who knows. Just being there was so poignant, so intense. So delightful. It really was not sad. He had a good death. I was so happy. He lived a good life until seventy-six.

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It is much more tragic when the children die before the parents or the grandparents. That is the real tragedy. And when that happens, needless to say, other means and teachings and practices might need to be employed. I am not going to go into that horrific scenario right now. But death is the real illusion. It is real enough. It is like a dream, but it does not have to be a nightmare. We do not have to misunderstand what is going on. We can be grateful that Granddaddy died and the children and grandchildren are here every day. That is the good news. It's much worse when that gets out of order.

So trying to see the three quarters of the glass that is full, not just the half that is empty. How do you like that math? That is the way I practice. Co-meditating with grievous difficulties and challenges. Not to be Pollyanna or glad-handed, but to really look deeply and to take a breath and breathe it in and feel the pain and loss and grief and also breathe it out and let it go. And feel the energizing breadth of the oxygen and the *prana* and the spiritual awareness, all the outer, inner, and subtlest levels of this breathing practice we are talking about. Sometimes I like to keep flowers on my alter or kitchen table longer than their natural lifespan and just watch the deterioration process and see the beauty in that, just like the autumn leaves here in New England are so beautiful in their passing. It is not just spring or summer that is beautiful when it is flowering. Every season has its season including winter, the season of death, leading to rebirth, the bigger recycling, the bigger ecology of being, as we understand the bigger picture, the macrocosm and the microcosm, so that we can be with everything as it is rather than against it.

This is the secret of inter-meditation: being with it rather than against it. Non-aggression. Accepting, embracing. And still having strong intentional motivation to become better people and contribute to a better world, of course. A little acceptance goes a long way to actually transforming things. How long have you tried to transform your intimate partner or your children or change your boss or your mate? I can tell you that a little acceptance goes a long way to changing and transforming your relationship with them, which is the point after all.

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This is the magic, the magical potion of acceptance. If we are going to talk about cultivating letting go and non-attachment and acceptance, what Buddhism calls “equanimity,” there is actually a verse, a *shloka*, a mantra for this, which I use, which brings me great relief. It is to realize that everyone creates and causes their own experience with their way of relating to it. I did not cause it and I cannot necessarily cure it. Everyone creates or causes their own experience.

I am not entirely responsible for their happiness or unhappiness. When I looked into this at first I thought it was too cold, too detached, but then I realized it is not indifferent. It is a real recognition that frees me from co-dependence, that frees me from being a caretaker and allows me to be more of a caregiver without expectation of return. I did not cause it, I did not create it, I am not in charge, I am not in control. I can do my best and let go and whatever happens, happens.

So here is the mantra again, friends. This is for your homework to think about. Everyone creates their own karma, their own character and destiny, their own experience. I am not fully responsible for their happiness or unhappiness. And when I think about that I have a much more balanced communication with them. Much more really breathing it in, breathing out whatever they bring, whatever I can bring with mutual reciprocity and mutual enhancement. And my freedom or fullness or relief helps model that and embody that and I think communicates it to others – at least, that is a possibility.

So, please, carry that mantra or that equanimity, *upekkha*, meditation, home with you and co-meditate on equanimity with others. It is a great practice that can help us be clear and objective and detached even while we are compassionate and caring and work, give everything we can to others and for the future, for a better future to be possible, the future that begins now. And next week, friends, we are going to complete our month retreat by talking about the really big, transcendent issues: meditating on the higher power, binding ourselves, co-meditating to

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meditating with our best self, the better angels of our highest, innermost, deepest nature. How to meditate with our teacher or mentor or guru or archetype or God or Jesus or Dalai Lama.

And how to co-meditate with technology today. I have coined a new term for this: webitations. How to make social media the spiritual media. I mean, how many characters does it need to transmit a haiku? Or one-line enlightening slogan or aphorism? Webitations. So co-meditate with me, co-webitate with me. Here we are using technology. So let us realize that everything is workable. Everything can and must be co-meditated, be grist for the mill on this great path of shared spirituality, awakening together. Thank you and God bless, Buddha bless.

May the night be good. May the day be good. May all things be beautiful and true in the light of our own inner clarity and awakening, awareness, wakefulness.