

IN PRAISE OF INSIGHT MEDITATION

In a world where time dominates our every second, the idea of a place where time does not exist seems like an anomaly. The present-moment is such a place but to know its secrets we must commit ourselves firmly to it. The great Buddhist texts speak of unwavering attention, but they also specify attention without effort, which is nice work if you can get it, but again: getting there requires that no effort is made. Sounds like an oxymoron to me, yet it's not.

In the more advanced dharma techniques, what are called the "realization" practices (Insight Meditation and Mahamudra Meditation) are non-dualistic forms of meditation, which mean they involve the present moment and are thus outside the purview of time. They are indeed timeless.

If I happened to throw you into the deep end of a swimming pool, you will find yourself surrounded by water on all sides. There is nothing you can lean on and your only alternative is to swim or drown. These realization practices are like the analogy of the swimming pool, but without the drowning. LOL.

When we enter into Insight Meditation, for example, we are all in the pool of the moment and are free of any clinging thoughts or resistance. We are free-floating, so to speak, and being so, we have no references to cling to or that can cling to us. We are completely immersed in the moment, something known as a non-dualistic state.

This kind of immersion immediately throws us on our own recognizance, meaning that only what we are and know are in play and all external references (like second thoughts, etc.) are not entertained. This provides a certain purity and completeness that otherwise would be nickel-and-dimed by our habitual conceptuality. In Insight Meditation, it is all us, all the time, meaning that the entire sphere of reference is only what we are and can grasp. We are taking it all in. This explains why it is so natural to us, because it is just us. We are not confronted with our own ignorance as we usually are in samsaric life. Insight Meditation is an inhale.

The pristine purity of Insight Meditation is not that the world around us has changed, but only that our relation to that samsaric world has changed because we are totally engaged down to our finest pores. We could say that we are then one with all that is. Yet, I hope you see why I say this. To rephrase: this is because where before we were misaligned with reality (dharma), with the complete surrender required of Insight Meditation, we come into what I will call here cosmic alignment. As mentioned, we are one with all there is. There is no difference between inside and outside, so it is non-dual.

And when we come out of Insight Meditation and back into what is called the "relative truth" of daily life, where there is a subject and object (dualistic), then perhaps we can see or sense where we went and what it was like. Traditionally, non-dual meditation is said to be ineffable. There are no words to describe it.

The mind, which is often called in Buddhism the “wish-fulfilling-gem,” is a well from which all of the future will emerge and where all of the past came from. To drink from that well is what we have always done to the extent that we can stand it. The realization practices like Insight Meditation are momentary excursions into these timeless regions (from which all things emerge) and our return with whatever it is that we most need at the time. Insight Meditation is a voyage of confirmation.

In my life, Insight Meditation (as part of Mahamudra Meditation) has been the single most vivid realization I have ever encountered. It is more than addictive; it is humbling in the most fertile sense of that word. If I were a Pavlovian mouse with a reward-pedal, I would be pressing that pedal all day long... and I do.

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http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish.”