



#### OSHO is a registered trademark of Osho International Foundation, www.osho.com/trademarks.

LEARNING TO SILENCE THE MIND. Copyright © 2012 by OSHO International
Foundation, New York, www.osho.com/copyrights.
All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.
For information, address St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

#### www.stmartins.com

The material in this book are questions and Osho's responses selected from various talks by Osho given to a live audience. All of Osho's talks have been published in full as books, and are also available as original audio recordings. Audio recordings and the complete text archive can be found via the online OSHO Library at www.osho.com.

ISBN 978-1-250-00622-6 (trade paperback) ISBN 978-1-250-01583-9 (e-book)

First Edition: August 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

### What Is Meditation?

TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT MEDITATION IS a contradiction in terms. It is something which you can have, which you can be, but by its very nature you cannot say what it is. Still, efforts have been made to convey it in some way. Even if only a fragmentary, partial understanding arises out of it, that is more than one can expect. But even that partial understanding of meditation can become a seed. Much depends on how you listen. If you only hear, then even a fragment cannot be conveyed to you, but if you listen. . . . Try to understand the difference between the two.

Hearing is mechanical. You have ears, you can hear. If you are getting deaf then a mechanical aid can help you to hear. Your ears are nothing but a certain mechanism to receive sounds. Hearing is very simple: Animals hear, anybody who has ears is capable of hearing—but listening is a far higher stage.

Listening means: When you are hearing, you are *only* hearing and not doing anything else—no other thoughts in your mind,

no clouds passing in your inner sky—so whatever is being said reaches you, as it is being said. There is no interference from your mind; it is not interpreted by you, by your prejudices; not clouded by anything that, right now, is passing within you—because all these are distortions.

Ordinarily it is not difficult; you go on managing just by hearing, because the things you are hearing concern common objects. If I say something about the house, the door, the tree, the bird, there is no problem. These are common objects; there is no need of listening. But there is a need to listen when we are talking about something like meditation, which is not an object at all; it is a subjective state. We can only indicate it. You have to be very attentive and alert—then there is a possibility that some meaning reaches you.

Even if a little understanding arises in you, it is more than enough, because understanding has its own way of growing. If just a little bit of understanding falls in the right place, in the heart, it starts growing of its own accord.

First try to understand the word "meditation." It is not the right word for the state about which any authentic seeker is bound to be concerned. So I would like to tell you something about a few words. In Sanskrit we have a special word for meditation, the word is *dhyana*. In no other language does a parallel word exist; the word is untranslatable. It has been recognized for two thousand years that this word is untranslatable for the simple reason that in no other language have people tried it or experienced the state that it denotes; so those languages don't have the word.

A word is needed only when there is something to say, something to designate. In English there are three words: the first is *concentration*. I have seen many books written by very well-meaning people, but not people who have experienced meditation. They go on using the word "concentration" for *dhyana—dhyana* is not

concentration. Concentration simply means your mind focused on one point; it is a state of mind. Ordinarily the mind is continuously moving, but if it continuously moves you cannot work with the mind on a certain subject.

For example, in science concentration is needed; without concentration there is no possibility of science. It is not surprising that science has not evolved in the East—I see these deep inner connections—because concentration was never valued. For religiousness something else is needed, not concentration.

Concentration is mind focused on one point. It has its utility, because then you can go deeper and deeper into a certain object. That's what science goes on doing: finding out more and more about the objective world. A person with a mind that is continuously roaming around cannot be a scientist.

The whole art of the scientist is to be capable of forgetting the whole world and putting your whole consciousness on just one thing. And when the whole consciousness is poured into one thing, then it is almost like concentrating sun rays through a lens: Then you can create fire. Those rays themselves cannot create fire because they are diffused; they are going farther away from each other. Their movement is just the opposite of concentration. Concentration means rays coming together, meeting on one point; and when so many rays meet on one point they have enough energy to create fire.

Consciousness has the same quality: Concentrate it, and you can penetrate deeper into the mysteries of objects.

I am reminded of a story about Thomas Alva Edison, one of the great scientists of North America. He was working on something with such concentration, and when his wife came with his breakfast she saw that he was so much involved that he had not even heard her coming. He had not even looked at her, he was not aware that she was there. She knew that this was not the right time to disturb him. "Of course the breakfast will get cold but he will be really angry if I disturb him—one never knows where he is." So she simply put the breakfast by his side, so that whenever he came back from his journey of concentration he would see the breakfast and eat it.

But what happened? In the meantime a friend dropped by—he also saw Edison so concentrated, and he looked at the breakfast getting cold and said, "Better let him do his work. I will take the breakfast, it is getting cold." He ate the breakfast, and Edison was not even aware that this friend was there.

When he returned from his concentration, Edison looked around, saw the friend and saw the empty plates. He told the friend, "Please forgive me. You came a little late and I have already taken my breakfast." Obviously, because the plates were empty, somebody had eaten, and who else could have eaten it? He must have! The poor friend didn't know what to do. He had been thinking to give Edison a surprise, but this man had given him a bigger surprise: He said, "You came a little late. . . ."

But the wife was watching the whole thing. She came in and she said, "He has not come late, *you* have come late! He has finished your breakfast. I was watching, but I saw that it was getting cold anyway; at least somebody ate it. You are some scientist! How you manage your science I cannot understand."

Concentration is always the narrowing of your consciousness. The narrower it becomes, the more powerful it is. It is like a sword that cuts into any secret of nature: You have to become oblivious of everything. But this is not meditation. Many people have misunderstood—not only in the West, but in the East, too. They think that concentration is meditation. It gives you tremendous powers, but those powers are of the mind.

For example, in 1920 the king of Varanasi in India went through surgery—and created news all over the world because of his opera-

tion. He refused to take any anesthetic. He said, "I have taken a vow not to take anything that makes me unconscious, so I cannot be put under chloroform; but you need not be worried. . . . "

It was a major operation, to remove his appendix. Now, to take out somebody's appendix without giving him anesthetics is really dangerous; you may kill the man. He may not be able to bear the pain, because the pain is going to be terrible. You have to cut his abdomen; you have to cut out his appendix, you have to remove it. It will take one hour, two hours—and one never knows in what condition the appendix is.

But he was no ordinary man-otherwise they could have forced him—he was the king of Varanasi. He said, "Don't be worried . . ." and the best doctors available in India were there; one expert from England was there. They all consulted: Nobody was ready to do this operation, but the operation had to be done; otherwise any moment the appendix could burst and kill the man. The condition was serious, and both the alternatives seemed to be serious: If you left him without the operation he might die; if you did the operation without making him unconscious which had never been done, there was no precedent. . . .

But the king said, "You don't understand me. There has never been any precedent because you have never operated on a man like the man you are going to operate upon. Just give me my religious book, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. I will read it, and after five minutes you can start your work. Once I am involved in the Gita then you can cut any part of my body—I will not be even aware of it; there is no question of pain."

When he insisted . . . and anyway he was going to die without the operation, so there was no harm in trying. Perhaps he was right—he was well-known for his religious practices. So this was done. He read the Gita for five minutes and closed his eyes; the Gita dropped from his hands, and they did the operation. It took

one and a half hours. It was really serious: Only a few hours more and the appendix could have exploded and killed the man. They removed the appendix, and the man was completely conscious, silent—not even a flicker of his eyes. He was somewhere else.

That was his lifelong practice: just to read for five minutes, then he was on the track. He knew the Gita verbally, he could repeat it without the book. Once he started going into the Gita then he was *really* in the Gita, his mind was there—it left his body totally.

That operation made news all over the world; it was a rare operation. But the same mistake was committed: Every newspaper had it that the king of Varanasi was a man of great meditation. He was a man of great *concentration*, not of meditation.

He himself was in the same confusion; he also thought that he had reached to the state of meditation. It was not. It is just that when your mind is so focused on one thing, everything else falls out of its focus and you are unaware of it. It is not a state of awareness, it is a state of narrowed consciousness—so narrowed that it becomes one-pointed and the rest of existence falls out of it.

So before I talk about what meditation is, you have to understand what it is not. First: it is not concentration.

Second: it is not contemplation.

Concentration is one-pointed; contemplation has a wider field. You are contemplating beauty. . . . There are thousands of things that are beautiful; you can go on moving from one beautiful thing to another. You have many experiences of beauty; you can go on from one experience to another. You remained confined to the subject matter. Contemplation is a wider concentration—not one-pointed, but confined to one subject. You will be moving, your mind will be moving, but it will remain within the subject matter.

Science uses concentration as its method; philosophy uses con-

templation as its method. In contemplation also you are forgetting everything else other than your subject matter. The subject matter is bigger and you have more space to move; in concentration there is no space to move. You can go deeper and deeper, narrower and narrower, you can become more pointed and more pointed, but you don't have space to move around. Hence, scientists are very narrow-minded people. You will be surprised when I say this.

One would think that scientists would be very open-minded. That is not the case. As far as their subject is concerned, they are absolutely open-minded: They are ready to listen to anything contrary to their theory, and with absolute fairness. But except in that particular matter, they are more prejudiced, more bigoted than the ordinary, common man, for the simple reason that they have never bothered about anything else: They have simply accepted whatsoever society believes in.

Many religious people brag about it: "Look, he is such a great scientist, a Nobel Prize winner," and this and that, "and yet he comes to church every day." They forget completely that it is not the Nobel Prize-winning scientist who comes to the church. It is not the scientist who comes to the church, it is the man without his scientific part who comes to the church. And that man, except for the scientific part, is far more gullible than anybody else—because everybody is open, available, thinks about things. Everybody compares, thinks about what religion is good, sometimes reads also about other religions—and has some common sense, which scientists don't have.

To be a scientist you have to sacrifice a few things—for example, common sense. Common sense is a common quality of common people. A scientist is an uncommon person, and he has an uncommon sense. With common sense you cannot discover the theory of relativity or the law of gravitation. With common sense you can do everything else.

For example, Albert Einstein dealt with such big figures that only one figure would take up the whole page—hundreds of zeros following it. But he became so involved with those big figures—which is uncommon—that about small things he became oblivious.

One day he entered a bus and gave the conductor the money. The conductor returned some change; Einstein counted it and said, "This is not right, you are cheating me. Give me the full change."

The conductor took the change, counted it again and said, "Mister, it seems you don't know figures."

Einstein remembers: "When he said to me, 'Mister, you don't know figures,' then I simply took the change. I said to myself, 'It is better to keep silent. If somebody else hears that I don't know figures, and that too from a conductor of a bus. . . .' What have I been doing my whole life? Figures and figures—I don't dream about anything else. No women appear, no men appear—only figures. I think in figures, I dream in figures, and this idiot says to me, 'You don't know figures.'"

When he came back home, he told his wife, "Just count this change. How much is it?" She counted it and said, "It is the right change."

He said, "My God! This means the conductor was right: Perhaps I *don't* know figures. Perhaps I can only deal with immense figures; small figures have fallen out of my mind completely."

A scientist is bound to lose his common sense. The same happens to the philosopher. Contemplation is wider, but still confined to a certain subject. For example, one night Socrates was thinking about something—one never knows what he was thinking about—standing by the side of a tree, and he became so absorbed in his contemplation that he became completely oblivious that snow was falling; in the morning he was found almost frozen.

Up to his knees there was snow, and he was standing there with closed eyes. He was almost on the verge of death; even his blood might have started freezing.

He was brought home; a massage was given to him, alcohol was given to him, and somehow he was brought to his common senses. They asked him, "What were you doing there, standing outside in the open?"

He said, "I had no idea whether I was standing or sitting, or where I was. The subject was so absorbing that I went totally with it. I don't know when the snow started falling or when the whole night passed. I would have died, but I would not have come to my senses because the subject was so absorbing. I was still unfinished; it was a whole theory, and you have awakened me in the middle. Now I don't know whether I will be able to get hold of the unfinished theory." It is just like you are dreaming and somebody wakes you up. Do you think you can catch hold of your dream again by just closing your eyes and trying to sleep? It is very difficult to get back into the same dream.

Contemplation is a kind of logical dreaming. It is a very rare thing. But philosophy depends on contemplation. Philosophy can use concentration for specific purposes, to help contemplation. If some smaller fragments within the subject need more concentrated effort, then concentration can be used; there is no problem. Philosophy is basically contemplation, but it can use concentration as a tool, as an instrument, once in a while.

But religiousness cannot use concentration; religiousness cannot use contemplation either, because it is not concerned with any object. Whether the object is in the outside world or the object is in your mind—a thought, a theory, a philosophy—it doesn't matter; it is an object.

Religious concern is with the one who concentrates, with the one who contemplates.

Who is this one? Now, you cannot concentrate on it. Who will concentrate on it?—you are it. You cannot contemplate it because who is going to contemplate? You cannot divide yourself into two parts so that you put one part in front of your mind, and the other part starts contemplating. There is no possibility of dividing your consciousness into two parts. And even if there were any possibility—there is none, but just for argument's sake I am saying if there were any possibility to divide your consciousness in two—then the one that contemplates about the other is you; the one being contemplated is not you.

The other is never you. Or, in other words: The object is never you. You are irreducibly the subject. There is no way to turn you into an object.

It is just like a mirror. The mirror can reflect you, the mirror can reflect everything in the world, but can you manage to make this mirror reflect itself? You cannot put this mirror in front of itself, by the time you put it in front of itself it is no longer there. The mirror itself cannot mirror itself. Consciousness is exactly a mirror. You can use it as concentration for some object. You can use it as contemplation for some subject matter.

The English word *meditation* is also not the right word, but because there is no other word we have to use it for the time being, till *dhyana* is accepted in the English language, just as it has been accepted by the Chinese, by the Japanese—because the situation was the same in those countries. When, two thousand years ago, Buddhist monks entered China, they tried hard to find a word which could translate their word *jhana*.



# LEARNING TO SILENCE THE MIND

## **BUY THE BOOK NOW**

Amazon
Barnes & Noble
IndieBound

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOOK macmillan.com