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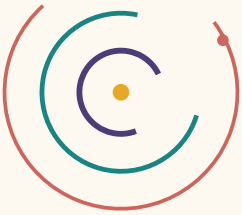
Meditation

An Inquiry into What We Are

AN INTRODUCTORY EDITION



DHARMENDRA SINGH



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A QUIET BEGINNING

An invitation to practise, question and look

No authority.
No required belief.
No promised destination.

No imposed religious doctrine or scientific bias.

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Introductory digital edition, 2026.
Published by Probing Consciousness as part of the Consciousness Series.
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A MAP OF THE INTRODUCTORY JOURNEY

From sitting to living

ENTERING — searching - method

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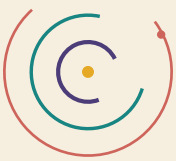
LEARNING TO SEE — attention - meditator

↓

OPENING THE EYES — world - relationship

↓

MEETING LIFE — identity - ordinary living



Sit. Look. Live.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Why This Introductory Edition Was Developed

Meditation is often introduced as a method. Sit in a particular way. Follow the breath. Repeat a word. Watch thought. These instructions can be useful, but the deeper question soon becomes personal: What is actually happening here?

This introductory edition was developed for readers who want to enter that question before committing to the complete work. It is not a shortened manual containing every method, argument or exercise. It offers several carefully chosen doorways into the full movement of the book.

The inquiry begins with searching, moves through attention and the meditator, turns toward the question of identity, and finally opens its eyes to relationship and ordinary life. The complete edition inhabits each of these territories much more fully.

Nothing here requires a religious identity, belief in non-duality or rejection of scientific understanding. Traditions and research can illuminate experience, but neither should be used to close an inquiry on the reader's behalf.

The exercises are invitations. Test what can be tested. Remain honest where the answer is uncertain. If something does not fit your experience, do not pretend that it does.

Meditation, as I have come to understand it, is not an escape from life. It is an intimacy with life that becomes possible when we stop imposing ourselves upon every moment.

There is no authority in these pages that can see for you.

No required belief.

No promised destination.

Only an invitation.

Look for yourself.

HOW TO USE THIS EDITION

Read slowly. Some passages ask for understanding; others ask for an experiment. When an exercise catches your attention, stop reading. Five minutes of looking may be more useful than another twenty pages.

There is no requirement to complete every exercise. A peaceful meditation is not a medal, and a restless meditation is not a failure. The exercises are ways of making something visible. Once it is visible, the exercise has done its work.

If a practice becomes overwhelming, disorienting or persistently frightening, open your eyes. Look around. Feel the ground. Move. Speak with someone. Stop the exercise if stopping is the intelligent thing to do. No instruction in this book outranks your need for safety or appropriate care.

Do not believe the book merely because it is a book. Experiment. Disagree where you genuinely disagree. Return to experience.

INTRODUCTION

The Question Beneath the Method

Why Meditation?

I did not begin meditating because I wanted to become a better meditator.

I began because something in me was searching.

I did not always know what I was searching for. Perhaps it was peace. Perhaps happiness. Perhaps an answer to questions I could not yet formulate. Perhaps, beneath all of these, I was looking for myself.

Many people arrive at meditation through some version of this uneasiness. Life may be functioning reasonably well. We may have relationships, responsibilities, pleasures, disappointments, ambitions and plans. Yet somewhere beneath the movement of ordinary life a quiet question remains:

> Is this all there is?

Meditation is often offered as an answer.

I have come to think of it differently.

Meditation may be a way of becoming quiet enough to discover whether the question itself has been understood.

But eventually meditation begins to reveal the meditator.

The direction changes.

Instead of asking only, How can I make the mind quiet? we begin to notice the one who wants the mind to be quiet.

PART ONE

Entering



CHAPTER ONE

Why Am I Searching?

The search usually begins with a feeling.

Something is missing.

We may call what is missing happiness, peace, love, security, success, God, truth or freedom. The names differ, but the movement underneath them is often the same:

I am here. What I need is somewhere else.

So we reach.

We reach toward people, possessions, achievements, experiences and ideas. Later, if the ordinary search disappoints us, we may reach toward spirituality.

The object changes.

The structure may not.

The Movement of Wanting

Wanting is not wrong.

Hunger moves us toward food. Curiosity moves us toward learning. Love may move us toward another person. A sense of injustice may move us toward action.

The problem begins when every desire carries a hidden promise:

When I get this, I will finally be complete.

Think of something you wanted intensely and eventually received.

Before receiving it, the mind moved toward it.

I need this.

When this happens, I will feel better.

Then it happened.

For a moment, perhaps there was relief.

The wanting stopped.

The mind became quiet.

We usually conclude that the object created the happiness.

But meditation invites a more careful observation.

> What was the experience of the moment in which wanting ceased?

We do not need to decide that happiness comes only from within or that objects never make us happy. Those conclusions would be premature.

We can notice something simpler:

the end of wanting and the experience of ease often arrive together.

That is worth seeing.

PRACTICE **- Feel the Reach**

Sit for five minutes.

Do not try to become peaceful.

Notice what the mind reaches toward.

A sound.

A memory.

Tomorrow.

A discomfort in the body.

An imagined result.

Whenever reaching is noticed, do nothing about it for a moment.

Feel the movement itself.

What does wanting feel like before the story explains it?

Where is it in the body?

What happens if it is neither satisfied nor suppressed for a few breaths?

This is enough.

Meditation has begun.

Not because the mind became silent.

Because something that normally operates unseen has become visible.

CHAPTER TWO

What Is Meditation, Really?

What Is Meditation, Really?

The word meditation covers an extraordinary range of activities.

Watching the breath.
Repeating a mantra.
Prayer.

CONTEMPLATION

Mindfulness.

Visualization.

Walking.

Self-inquiry.

Silent sitting.

There is no need to force all of these into a single method.

A more useful question is:

> What is this practice doing?
>
> A concentration practice steadies attention.
>
> A compassion practice deliberately cultivates goodwill.
>
> Prayer may express gratitude, longing or surrender.
>
> Self-inquiry turns attention toward the assumed experiencer.
>
> Different practices can serve different purposes.
>
> Confusion begins when we assume that the technique and the destination are the same thing.

Meditation Is Not a War Against Thought

Many beginners believe that successful meditation means a blank mind.

Then a thought appears.

Failure.

Another thought appears.

More failure.

Soon the meditator is thinking furiously about how badly meditation is going.

Thought is not the enemy.

Thought remembers an appointment, designs a bridge, writes a poem, solves a problem, warns us of danger and allows these words to be understood.

The difficulty is not thought itself.

It is our inability to notice when thought has carried us away.

A thought can appear without being completed.

It can be heard internally without being obeyed.

The mind may wander. The moment wandering is noticed, awareness has already returned to the movement.

There is no need for punishment.

Meditation and Concentration

Concentration narrows attention.

Meditation may use concentration, but it need not remain narrow.

If I follow the breath, I learn steadiness.

If I then notice the urge to control the breath, something else becomes visible.

If I notice the one who is proud of being concentrated, something else becomes visible again.

A technique can therefore become a doorway into investigation.

This is why meditation can deepen without becoming more complicated.

EXPERIMENT **- Three Ways of Being Here**

Spend three minutes concentrating on the breath.

Then three minutes receiving all sounds.

Then three minutes walking slowly enough to feel the body clearly, but naturally enough that you are not performing meditation.

Which form steadied you?

Which made you tense?

Which made you more awake?

There is no correct answer.

You are learning how attention behaves.

PART TWO

Learning To See



CHAPTER THREE

Attention and the Meditator

Attention Without Violence

Attention is often trained through force.

Stay here.

Do not move.

Concentrate.

Return.

There is a place for discipline, but meditation can reveal another quality of attention - one that does not need to dominate experience.

Sit quietly and listen.

At first you may choose a sound.

Then another sound arrives by itself.

A car.

A bird.

A voice.

The refrigerator.

Notice that hearing did not require strain.

There is an effortless receptivity already operating.

The Wandering Mind

When attention wanders, we usually notice only after it has wandered.

For several moments we were planning dinner.

Then suddenly:

I was supposed to be meditating.

That moment is not failure.

It is the moment meditation became conscious again.

Return gently.

A harsh return teaches the mind that meditation is another place where it will be judged.

A gentle return teaches familiarity.

Control Can Create Noise

Try very hard not to think for thirty seconds.

The effort itself becomes mental activity.

Now stop trying.

Thought may continue, but another layer of struggle has disappeared.

This does not mean effort is always wrong. It means effort should know its purpose.

We use effort to sit down.

We use effort to return attention.

We use effort to keep a commitment.

But if effort becomes a permanent tightening around experience, meditation has become another form of resistance.

Attention and Identification

A thought appears:

He should not have said that.

The thought itself may last a second.

But attention enters it.

Memory supplies the scene.

The body tightens.

Another thought arrives.

Soon an entire self has assembled around a sentence.

Attention has become identification.

Meditation gives us the possibility of seeing this assembly while it is happening.

Not every thought needs a home.

PRACTICE **- Listening Without Choosing**

Sit with your eyes open or closed.

> For five minutes, listen without selecting a sound.
>
> Do not move attention toward the pleasant and away from the unpleasant.
>
> Let the entire soundscape arrive.
>
> Notice distance and closeness.
>
> Loud and soft.
>
> Continuous and intermittent.
>
> Then ask:
>
> Was listening difficult before I began managing it?
>
> Remain with the question, not the answer.

The Meditator

Eventually meditation turns toward the person doing it.

> Who is the one who is meditating?

The first answer seems obvious.
Me.
This body.
This person with a name, history, personality and set of intentions.

We do not need to deny any of that.

But we can look more carefully.

The Meditator Appears

Sit quietly.
Notice the breath.
Soon a thought may appear:
I am doing well.
Or:
My mind is terrible today.
Or:

I am getting somewhere.

The meditator is not merely sitting.

The meditator is narrating.

Comparing.

Measuring.

Owning.

This is useful to see because spiritual practice can strengthen the very centre it intends to investigate.

The Doer

Now make a small movement.

Raise one hand.

The action feels voluntary.

Good.

Look at the moments immediately before it.

An instruction was read.

An intention formed.

A decision occurred.

Muscles moved.

> Where, in that sequence, is the completely independent controller?

We do not need to conclude that choice is unreal or that responsibility does not matter.

We are examining a more modest assumption: that there is a little executive standing outside the whole movement of life and commanding it.

> Can you find that executive?

The Owner of Experience

The meditator also becomes the owner.

My peace.

My insight.

My awakening.

My terrible mind.

Ownership gives continuity to spiritual identity.

Yesterday’s experience becomes today’s status.

This is why an experience that was originally free can become heavy when memory claims it.

The insight is not to stop using the word my.

It is to notice how quickly language becomes psychological possession.

PRACTICE **- Catching the Meditator**

During your next sitting, do not search for the meditator continuously.

Wait.

When a judgment appears - good meditation, bad meditation, I am restless, I am peaceful - notice it.

Ask once:

Who is being measured?

Then return to sitting.

The purpose is not to answer.

It is to catch the meditator entering the room.

CHAPTER FOUR

Who Am I?

Who Am I?

This question can become another spiritual slogan unless it remains alive.

> Who am I?

A name answers.

A history answers.

A profession answers.

A nationality, relationship, personality or belief answers.

These descriptions matter. They help us live together.

But the question is not asking for a better biography.

The Body

Feel the body from within.

Pressure.

Warmth.

Breathing.

Perhaps discomfort.

The body is intimate.

Yet it is also experienced.

It has changed continuously since childhood.

So the question becomes more precise:

> Am I only what I can presently feel, see and describe as the body?

Do not answer.

Thought and Memory

A memory appears.

It may feel deeply personal.

But it appears now.

A thought says, This is who I am.

That thought also appears now.

Personality has continuity, but it also changes with age, circumstance, fatigue, love, fear and understanding.

Again, no conclusion is necessary.

We are loosening certainty.

The Biography Is Useful

Inquiry does not require us to become suspicious of our history.

Our histories matter.

They shape nervous systems, relationships, expectations, wounds and strengths.

The mistake is not having a story.

The mistake is assuming the story exhausts what we are.

A book has a biography too. The biography is real, but it is not the paper on which every sentence appears.

The metaphor is imperfect.
Use it only to open the question.

The Sense of “I”

Now stop thinking about your identity and feel the bare sense of being someone.

> Where is it?
>
> Behind the eyes?
>
> In the chest?
>
> Spread through the body?
>
> Is it a sensation?
>
> An image?
>
> A thought?

Every answer that appears can itself be noticed.
This is where inquiry becomes silent.

Do Not Rush to “Awareness”

A spiritual vocabulary can answer too quickly.
I am awareness.
Perhaps.
But if the sentence arrives before the investigation, it is merely another sentence.

Let the question remain open.
The value of Who am I? lies partly in its refusal to let a conceptual answer close the door.

PRACTICE **- Ask Once**

> Sit quietly.
>
> Ask:

Who am I?

Do not repeat it like a mantra.

Let every answer appear.

Name.

Body.

Memory.

Role.

Image.

Feeling.

Notice each answer.

Then ask:

Is this what I am, or is this something I know?

When no answer remains, do not manufacture one.

Stay.

PART THREE

Opening The Eyes



CHAPTER FIVE

Meditation With Open Eyes

Meditation With Open Eyes

At some point the eyes have to open.

Not because inward meditation has failed.

Because it has done its work.

We learned to notice thought, sensation, reaction and the sense of the meditator in relative simplicity.

Now life returns in full colour.

The mistake would be to believe that meditation ends here.

The World as Distraction

Many meditation instructions require us to reduce stimulation.

Close the eyes.

Find a quiet room.

Turn off the phone.

Sit still.

This is sensible.

A laboratory simplifies conditions so that something can be observed clearly.

But eventually the laboratory door must open.

If silence is available only when the world cooperates, our peace remains dependent upon arrangement.

Open-eyed meditation does not reject the protected practice.

It completes it.

The Tree

Stand before a tree.

For a few seconds, do not call it tree.

See colour.

Texture.

Movement.

Shadow.

Light.

The word may arrive anyway. There is no need to fight it.

Notice the difference between seeing and immediately converting seeing into knowledge about what is seen.

The purpose is not to prove that the tree exists only in consciousness.

That is not the work of this meditation.

The purpose is simpler:

> Can the world be encountered before I cover it completely with myself?

The tree does not need to teach you anything.

It does not need to symbolize your true nature.

It does not need to become sacred.

Let the tree be free of your spiritual ambition.

Look.

Walking

Walk without headphones for ten minutes.

Feel the ground.

Let the eyes move naturally.

Hear traffic, voices, birds, wind.

Do not try to create a meditative bubble around yourself.

Let the world interrupt you.

A dog barks.

A truck passes.

Someone walks too slowly in front of you.

Notice the irritation if it appears.

The practice is not the beautiful walk.

The practice is the whole walk.

EXPERIMENT **- Ten Ordinary Minutes**

Choose an ordinary place you visit frequently.

A bus stop.

A balcony.

A parking lot.

A kitchen.

For ten minutes, do not improve the place.

Let attention receive it.

Whenever the mind says boring, ugly, peaceful, annoying, notice the label.

Then look again.

The world after the label is still here.

PART FOUR

When Meditation Meets Life

CHAPTER SIX

Living Meditation

Formal meditation creates a protected simplicity.

Living meditation removes the protection.
The child is crying.
The phone rings.
A deadline is approaching.
Someone misunderstands us.
The body is tired.
There are dishes in the sink.
Here meditation discovers whether it has become part of life.

No Special State

Living meditation does not mean walking around in a trance of permanent serenity.

It means that ordinary experience is no longer automatically disqualified from being practice.

Restlessness can be known.
Joy can be known.
Conflict can be noticed.
Work can receive full attention.
A conversation can become a place of presence.
Morning
Before reaching for the phone, feel the body waking.

Not for twenty minutes.
For ten seconds.
Light.

Breath.

Weight.

Perhaps reluctance.

Perhaps anxiety already waiting.

The day has begun before the story of the day is fully assembled.

Meet it there once in a while.

Work

Choose one ordinary task.

For ten minutes, do only that task.

Not because multitasking is sinful.

Because divided attention has become so normal that we may no longer know what undivided activity feels like.

The Search Begins to Quiet

The End of Seeking

We began with a feeling that something was missing.

We searched outward.

Then meditation turned us toward experience.

We learned practices.

We learned attention.

We met the meditator.

We asked who we were.

Then the eyes opened again.

We walked back into the world.

Now perhaps we can see the search differently.

The Structure of Seeking

Psychological seeking depends upon distance.

I am here. Completion is there. I must cross the distance.

This structure can survive almost anything.

Money.

Relationships.

Success.

Meditation.

Awakening.

Even the desire to end seeking can become another form of seeking.

So we will not command the search to stop.

We will understand it.

> What Are You Waiting For?

Sit quietly.

Ask:

> What am I waiting to happen before I allow myself to be fully here?

Listen.

Perhaps the answer is money.

Healing.

Recognition.

A relationship.

Peace.

Enlightenment.

An apology.

Certainty.

Some of these things may genuinely matter. Some should be pursued.

But look beneath them.

> Is there an additional promise?

When this happens, I will finally be complete.

That is the promise meditation asks us to examine.

A NOTE ON SAFETY

Meditation can be gentle, but it can also bring difficult material into awareness. If a practice produces severe or persistent distress, frightening perceptual changes, traumatic re-experiencing, or meaningful impairment in daily functioning, there is no requirement to continue. Shorten the practice, open the eyes, ground through ordinary sensory activity, speak with someone trustworthy, and seek qualified professional support when appropriate.

The purpose of meditation in this book is not endurance.

It is seeing clearly enough to respond intelligently.

THE COMPLETE INQUIRY

Where the Full Book Continues

This introductory edition offers several openings into Meditation. The complete market edition follows the inquiry across fifteen chapters, from formal practice into attention, the meditator, self-inquiry, relationship, prayer and surrender, suffering, fear, creativity, work, ordinary beauty and the end of psychological seeking.

It contains a much wider range of practices, experiments and contemplations, including open-eyed meditation, listening without choosing, difficult conversations, the return after insight and thirty days of ordinary meditation.

The full edition can be obtained through ProbingConsciousness.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dharmendra Singh

Dharmendra Singh is a writer, independent investigator and the creator of Probing Consciousness.

His work centres on direct inquiry into Consciousness, human dignity, self-understanding and freedom from fear and imposed authority. For more than four decades, he has explored how philosophical and contemplative questions can remain rigorous while becoming directly relevant to ordinary human life.

Meditation belongs to the Consciousness Series, a body of work that invites investigation without requiring religious doctrine, scientific reduction or allegiance to a teacher. Dharmendra writes not as a guru, but as one human being inviting another to look.

No authority. No required belief. No promised destination.

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Sit. Look. Live.

Meditation may begin with a method, but its deeper invitation is to look.

This introductory edition moves from searching and formal practice into attention, the meditator, identity, open-eyed awareness and ordinary life. Practices, experiments and contemplations invite the reader to test experience without required belief.

A meaningful doorway into the complete fifteen-chapter work.

EXPLORE THE COMPLETE EDITION

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