Big Mind Meditation

Guy Armstrong · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Guy Armstrong · 42:22

So we're going to do a meditation this morning, a guided meditation called Big Mind that directs the attention toward this conscious quality, encouraging us to notice the faculty of consciousness as it happens.

In this meditation, rather than talk about the six types of sense consciousness, I'm going to use the term awareness to refer to the whole field in which consciousness is happening. Awareness is more or less a synonym for consciousness, but not the specific knowing of one object, but rather the whole field in which consciousness of all the appearances is taking place.

As you begin the meditation, please take a comfortable posture. In this meditation especially, the stiller your body can be, it will help the mind to also become still. Be comfortable not in a stiff way, but just as a way to encourage a posture that you can sustain for some time in the meditation.

Please begin by bringing the attention to sounds. Let your awareness become expansive and wide to take in the sounds all around you—in front, behind, to the right or left, above or below—so that the awareness is felt like a big clear sky or like empty space. All the sounds are just appearing and disappearing in this vast and open space of awareness.

Because the hall is very quiet this morning, I'll introduce a sound from time to time just to let the attention know that. And sometimes I'll hit the big bell, sometimes other bells. But you'll know the sitting ends when there are three strikes of the big bell.

Not resisting any sounds and not holding on to any sounds. Just letting all the sounds come and go in the open space of awareness. Awareness is like the sky. It's clear and limitless. To see if it's like that, look directly at the nature of your own awareness.

Now becoming aware of sensations throughout the body. Sensations are just points of feeling, points of sensing. They arise and glimmer like stars in the sky at night, all in the big empty space of awareness. In the actual fact of our experience, there's no head or shoulders or back. There's no chest or arms or legs. Just sensations arising and changing, all in the big open space of awareness.

Awareness has no inside or outside. There are no boundaries or separations. Just sounds and sensations arising, changing and passing in this one empty space of awareness. To see if it's like that, look directly at the nature of your own awareness.

Let the mind be soft and open and still, not moving toward or away from any appearance. There's no

inside and no outside. Just sounds and sensations arising and passing in this one open space. Not resisting, not holding on. Allowing them all to come and go in the open space of awareness.

Now becoming aware of thoughts and images. Thoughts and images are just like clouds passing through the sky. They have no roots and no home. They just arise and drift and pass away in this vast and empty space of awareness.

Look at the nature of your mind. It's clear and invisible, like vast space. It doesn't have any form. It doesn't have any boundary. This mind is, but it doesn't quite exist. It contains all things, but it's not composed of them. This mind is empty and without any foundation. It's insubstantial like the sky. To see if it's like that, look directly at the nature of your own mind.

Now to put it all together. Sounds are simply appearing and disappearing. Sensations in the body arise and change, glimmering like stars in the night sky. Thoughts and images drift like clouds, rootless and homeless—all within the vast and empty space of awareness. To see if it's like that, look directly at the nature of your own awareness.

Ajahn Jumnian: Rest the attention in the pure knowing space of consciousness. That is the dharma of the deathless.

Suzuki Roshi: Always live in the utter darkness of the night sky.

Upasaka Ki offers this teaching: an inward staying, unentangled knowing, all outward turning cast aside.

In this practice, we discover that awareness itself is our true refuge—not the objects that appear within it, but the pristine space of knowing in which all experiences arise and dissolve. Whether sounds, sensations, thoughts, or images, all phenomena are like visitors in the infinite guest house of consciousness, appearing momentarily before returning to the vast silence from which they emerged.

This is the invitation: to rest in that which never comes or goes, that which remains untouched by the constant flux of experience. In the words of these great teachers, we find the same pointing—toward the deathless nature of pure awareness, toward the profound darkness that is simultaneously luminous knowing, toward the unentangled presence that recognizes all yet clings to nothing.

May this practice support you in discovering the peace that is already here, the awareness that is your deepest nature, and the freedom that comes from recognizing what you truly are.

Thank you for listening.

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