

Thoughts on stillness, the mind and meditation from Sally Kempton's

MEDITATION FOR THE LOVE OF IT

Chapter 6: Working with the mind, Part 1

Navigating the Thought-Stream

"One of the game-changing recognitions for a meditator happens when you realize that meditation can go on even when there are thoughts in the mind . . . the mind *need not be completely still for you to experience the state of meditation*. Often when you are deeply settled inside, thoughts continue to drift across the screen of awareness. Even when actual thoughts slow down, a subtle buzz of mental static might remain. This is only a problem when you don't understand what thoughts are and how to deal with them. Much of the meditator's art lies in knowing how to work with thoughts and ultimately how to let them dissolve into the subtle fabric of the mind.

"This much should be obvious: you can't deal with thoughts by taking them out and shooting them. The delicate, intelligent energy we call the 'mind' does not respond well to harshness . . . the mind is essentially nothing more than a thought-clogged form of pure Awareness . . . ("Consciousness plus thoughts is the mind" says the *Yoga Vasishtha*, a text of high Vedanta. "Consciousness minus thoughts is God.") Consciousness filled with thoughts is Consciousness nonetheless, and Consciousness by its very nature is free, powerful, and elusive. That is why when we try to suppress thoughts or stamp them out, or even when we try to bring our attention forcibly to one point, the mind reacts rebelliously.

"The Indian tradition compares the mind to a king who has not been given a proper seat. Until the king is seated on his rightful throne, he will be restless, dissatisfied, and even quarrelsome. Once he is seated, however, he becomes calm and begins to manifest his royal qualities. The mind's proper seat – in fact, the

only place the mind will be satisfied – is in the Self, in the deep abode of pure Consciousness [the heart of your own being, your Essence]. The mind's restlessness actually comes from the fact that it is searching for the throne room, looking for the place where it can experience its true grandeur, as Consciousness.

“Our job in meditation is simply to keep the mind pointed in the proper direction. As you direct the mind toward its seat again and again, it will begin to settle down into being Consciousness and eventually take a seat there on its own.” p. 126-127