

## **Spiritual Life is A Surrendered Life**

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When we're meditating, we want to move from achieving to resting, from seeing meditation as something that we're doing that's going to lead to a result. That's generally the way that we enter into meditation, we see it as some kind of a tool that we're using to get some kind of benefit. But the part of us that uses tools to generate benefit is the kind of wakeful state, gross body consciousness. When that's the part of you that's doing the meditation, it's going to be doing something in order to get a benefit later. There's a sense of achieving. If you let yourself feel it, you can feel what achieving relationship is. There's a grasping to it. There's a leaning into, looking for openings. It's a very active state versus the resting.

The resting is where you're resting in something that's already here. There's nowhere to go. There's nothing you need to find because it's already here. The experience of resting is completely different than the experience of achieving.

Achieving has much more of a leaning forward actively engaged quality. Resting has a much more leaning back relaxed quality. Then when you're meditating with that orientation, something will come by and you'll lean forward and grab it, and then you'll recognize that you've leaned forward and gotten involved in something, and then, on yeah, I'm resting, and you just let it go, and rest again.

As you practice, you'll be able to stay in the resting, leaned back position for longer and longer periods of time. Eventually, you'll be unmovable. You'll just be able to rest no matter what arises, no matter what thoughts arise, no matter what happens, you're just resting. That's when you start to feel the enjoyment. Oh, this is actually enjoyable, this rest. This is much nicer than trying to make something happen all the time. This is really a break. So, you start to enjoy it.

Now I want to add something to the metaphor of leaning back. I want you to think about when you're in a swimming pool and your head is above water and it's bright and you can see things and you can hear things. Then if you lean back and you go deeply enough so that your ears are under water and your eyes are under water, you dunk in, if you're not that deep in the water, you can still hear stuff that's happening outside, right? But it's just dull a little bit. It's not crisp like when you're up here, you hear the birds. There's a crisp chirp, chirp, chirp. If you go underwater, you might still hear them, but it will be a little fainter, chirp, chirp, chirp. Some stuff you'll lose completely, but if it's loud enough, you'll still hear things. Then if you sink deeper, you start to lose more and more of what's on the surface. You hear less and less. And if you're in something much deeper than a swimming pool, eventually you won't even see the light anymore. It'll just get darker and darker as you sink to the bottom.

It's a great metaphor for meditation. The leaning back, if you lean back off the surface and you just rest there, that's the part you can do. The part you can do is go from achieving and working with stuff, to just resting in what's already there and then you just rest. This is as much as you can do. There's nothing else that you can do on the spiritual path except stop doing anything.

Then you just rest and everything else is a matter of grace and karma. You have no idea how far you're going to go. You don't know what lifetimes you've lived up until this one. You have no idea how close your karma is to full fruition. And it doesn't matter because you're not doing anything anymore. You're already experiencing perfect peace and complete freedom. You don't have any more needs to be enlightened. You're just resting.

Then depending on your karma, you may start to sink more deeply into that state. That's like sinking more deeply into the water. You're not doing it. It's just happening.

If it starts to happen and you go, oh, I want this to happen faster and you start trying to fluff your arms so you go down, you'll go back to the top. And you'll be hearing this and might still think that you're under water, but now you're just splashing around the top, going look how deep in the water I am. And people go, you're not actually in the water at all, you're splashing around on top. And you go, no, no, I'm totally in the water. Then whatever had happened is lost because it's been usurped by the waking consciousness's desire to have something.

If you can remain surrendered and let go, then you just keep sinking and all the sounds get fainter and fainter and fainter and all the images start to disappear and it gets darker, and you're just settling, settling, settling and all of the sensory perceptions of the wakeful identity are disappearing, slowly and slowly and slowly. Then you go as deeply as you go, depending on whatever your karma is. Literally, there's no reason for you to worry about what happens.

The only concern you have is getting to the place where you're resting, and if you're resting, then that's what you do. Resting in that space, from one point of view, it's everything really. Resting in that space is the highest form of worship, it's the highest form of surrender, it's where you're saying I'm done. I'm completely done. I'm in absolute utter trust of the universe. I'm no longer under any delusion that my doing is going to help me.

I'm now completely surrendered to a consciousness that's bigger than me, to a story that's bigger than my history, and to a possibility that's beyond what I can imagine, and I'm just going to rest and let it unfold. And then that's done.

Yesterday we talked about living a spiritual life and how I want to extend that today is to say that this position of just resting is ultimately what it means to live a spiritual life. That's a spiritual life. That's a surrendered life. It's a life in which you've given up

control of what's going to happen. You've taken the control out of the hands of your mind and your identity and all of its ideas and all of its desires and you've given it over to something much bigger than that and you're just letting it happen.

When we talk about living a spiritual life, we're not talking about the wakeful identity living a spiritual-looking life. We're talking about a completely different way to live. It's a different operating system altogether. It's not the same operating system that now adopts new things to do, which is often what spiritual life becomes in a Western context. It becomes a lifestyle rather than an actual different way of being. And there's nothing wrong with a lifestyle. Usually a spiritual lifestyle is better than a lot of other possible lifestyles people can live. But, it's not a completely surrendered life. It's not a life surrendered to God.

Extending this metaphor that we've been using, you go from thrashing around, doing whatever you think you're doing which is keeping you on the surface, to letting go. And then you sink and then, depending on your karma, you sink deeper and deeper and deeper. Initially there's still quite a bit of sort of wakeful identity that's sinking with you. This is a tricky territory, too, I think – this beginning stage of feeling something, because this is the stage where we want to use our deeper consciousness to mine for insights that we can bring back to waking consciousness.

We start to sink and we get into these early stages of deeper connection. What begins to happen, if we continue with the analogy, is you start sinking, and as I was saying, you start losing the sounds that are happening outside and you start losing the visions that are happening outside, and you start sinking, and as you sink, but then something else starts to happen, which is you start hearing things from the depths that you couldn't hear on the surface.

Say if we're using the analogy of the ocean, the deeper you sink, the more you start to hear things from the depths of the ocean that are very different from anything you ever heard from above. Things that we're hearing from the depths of consciousness, insights, inspirations, visions that are coming from deeper places in ourselves. Then, to whatever extent there's still this kind of wakeful doing consciousness intact, it goes, oh, I could really use that, that's exactly the insight I've been looking for to solve that problem on the surface. Then there's an effort to grab it, remember it, write it down, swim back to the top and use it. You can get good at that.

Wakeful conscious egos can get good at sinking, mining for insights, harvesting, coming back and using them. You become like a fisherman of insights.

But, there's no surrender involved. It's still completely the egoic consciousness that's now using deeper realization as a storehouse for energies and inspirations and insights and ideas to then bring back and use on the surface.

At least the way I want to talk about it today, that's not what I'm thinking about when I think about a spiritual life. To be honest, that's what a lot of people are thinking about when they're thinking about living a spiritual life. They're thinking about a life that's being informed by deeper currents of spirit.

But I'm thinking about something different than that, because if you keep going beyond the place where you start to have all these insights and amazing things happen, and you avoid the temptation to try to rush back to the surface to apply them, then you sink deeper to a place where you're more and more absorbed in this consciousness that's all around. And the desire to go back to the surface diminishes more and more. The idea of taking something and swimming all the way back to the top so you can flop it onto the dock and make something out of it, starts to feel like, oh, so much bother, compared to just being in this unending bath of spiritual insight and inspiration. But when you're in

these depths, there's still some way in which you can see that there's a surface that you could swim back to if you have any inclination to swim back there.

What starts to happen, is you realize that – and this is kind of like a moment that's hard to fully appreciate – you realize that the you from the surface, the one that sunk into the water and is now sinking, is actually still on the surface. They never came with you. You just thought they sank into the water and were sinking down. In fact, you fell out of that person and have been sinking and they're still doing stuff on the surface.

Then you enter into a state which Ramana calls waking sleep, where basically your body is doing what it's doing and you're just allowing yourself to be totally absorbed in these deeper spiritual currents and those deeper spiritual currents are informing the actions of the waking body that you're no longer feeling that connected to. It's like it's all happening, it's like your waking life has become more like a dream.

It's still happening and to the extent that you're paying attention, you're noticing that your waking being is doing stuff you would never do, like in your old life. It's just starting to have completely different responses to everything, because all those responses are now coming from your abidance in God. This is what I mean by a spiritual life, a life in which all you're doing is being surrendered to God and resting in God consciousness and you're not doing anything else. That's a spiritual life. You're not doing anything else except resting in divinity. Then your waking life, it's not like your body is just going to drop. The body keeps going. But now it's an avatar on the surface. It's being informed by the depth of your surrender and it starts to behave in completely different ways.

When you meet deeply enlightened beings, deeply awakened beings, one of the characteristics of them is they have this kind of dreamy look in their eyes. And it can be any culture. You look at pictures, you look at old photographs of Walt Whitman, who

was a deeply awakened individual, and he's got this look – is he really there, does he know if anybody's taking a picture or not? Because he looks like he's about thirty-feet behind his eyeballs. His consciousness is so deep. Or you look at Ramana's eyes and you just see the depth of surrender that's occurring.

And you know if you have a chance to meet someone who has that kind of depth, you can see the softness in their eyes, like they're not there on the surface the way a normal person is. You can feel their inner absorption in God. They keep making choices. Things keep coming out but it's not really coming from their waking, working-it-out analytical mind anymore. All that stuff is probably still going on. The mind keeps doing what minds do. But now it's all in service of the deeper surrender rather than being in service to the mind. And these are all of the things that they say in all the traditions.

The shift in a life is the shift from living in service of the fears and the desires of the ego through all of its analytic needs to living in service of God through a completely other operating system, a completely other mysterious way of being.

In terms of why would anybody want to do this, this is a perfectly reasonable question at this point. Why would anyone want to give up their control? As I said at the beginning, this retreat is all about giving up control and this is kind of the ultimate giving up of control. Why would anyone want to give up control? Only because they recognize that there is a God, that there is a higher source of wisdom, and that they have come to the point in which they want to be an instrument of that, rather than an instrument of their own fears and desires, and they have recognized that whatever goodness means, it's about surrender to that. Whatever is the definition of goodness, it has to do with surrendering to that.

I would say that everybody in this room already believes in God. You may not, of course, believe in a man with a white beard in a cloud, because we've all like put that

one to bed at least a hundred years ago. Nowadays, spiritually minded people talk about it as the universe, or the evolutionary impulse, or the big self, or whatever you want to call it, it means that intelligence behind the whole thing, which they used to call God. We don't need to call it that anymore.

But when your practice moves from being a more technically-based practice to a love-based practice, it's because it starts to be fueled by a love of God, because you start to connect with the inherent love of whatever it was or whatever it is that's responsible for this opportunity. It wasn't me, it wasn't anybody else that I know in human form. But there is something that I can sense is behind all this and when I let go and rest in meditation, and I fall into this all-pervasive awareness, that's behind all other states of awareness, there's a sense of directly communing with the wisdom and compassion that's behind everything else, that is the substrate of the universe.

And a spiritual life is a life lived in surrender of that, it's lived in direct contact with that, which we do initially through spiritual practice. As our practice gets deeper and deeper and deeper, that kind of resting becomes more and more what I like to call our set point. Initially, our set point is waking consciousness. If we're not actively doing practice, we go back to the waking consciousness, we go back to the ego. But if you practice enough, with enough feeling, with enough love in your heart, which adds the intensity of the practice, then this resting position becomes more and more your set point, which means more and more when you're not busy doing something else, the place you're naturally falling into is this resting consciousness.

At least as far as I understand now, that would be the goal for spiritual life that I would like to support more and more people to have, that they shift their set point from the waking state, egoic achieving consciousness to the surrendered resting consciousness, so that this becomes their natural home, this becomes what they begin to identify with as home, and that becomes where they go when they need to do something.

We're always in the doing something and this is our home, where we're busy, busy, busy all the time and occasionally we take a break in resting because we're starting to enjoy it, but when we're done resting and the bell rings, we go back to being busy because busy is what we do. So I want to find out what happens when a significant number of people are just resting in this kind of surrendered, connected consciousness. Then when they need to get something done, they make the effort to go out there and get it done. They are still engaging, but their set point has shifted to something much deeper.

What happens? Hopefully what happens when you have a not insignificant number of people resting in that for five, ten, twenty years? What can occur as a result of that kind of surrender? What kind of lives begin to be lived? How does human life look in that case? Does it look different than human life that we see when the set point is the achieving self? And in what ways is it different? What are the fruits that become apparent?

Of course, the trick is we're not doing it for those fruits. That's going to be part of the interesting byproduct. We're doing it because we've come to the place where resting in divinity is the thing that makes the most sense to do. What are you doing? I'm resting in divinity. What are you doing? Oh, I'm busy doing this. Then you could have an argument about what's better, resting in divinity or busy doing something. At some point if you follow all this practice deeply enough, the resting in divinity initially starts to feel like the smartest option, given the way the world works. Eventually, as we've talked about, it's just the only option, because actually it was kind of what was there anyway.

Extending the idea of living a spiritual life, making it clear that living a spiritual life is not the waking identity adopting spiritual ways of being. It's a surrender into the consciousness beyond waking consciousness, and that consciousness is not the

extension of waking consciousness. It's something else that's already here. It's already everywhere. You can't move into it because there's no place where it's not. In order to be able to move into something, you have to be able to be in a place where it's not to begin with.

Ramana calls that state of deep resting, wakefulness without concern. It's like you're aware of what's happening, but you're not concerned with any of it. In a sense it doesn't really feel like it has to do with you. In the early stages, you're aware of a kind of resting, and then if you sink deeply enough, the awareness of the resting is not really happening anymore. The subject/object relationship disappears. You cease to be an object to yourself that you can see doing things, even resting in awareness.