

**Fulfillment
Lies in creating a balance
Between Spiritual life
And Ordinary life.
Creating a harmony
Between these two aspects of life
Is called Sadhana,
Spiritual practice.**

One day Buddha was passing through a forest. It was a hot summer's day and he was getting thirsty. Because he was becoming old, he assigned a task to his chief disciple, Ananda. "Ananda, I am feeling tired and thirsty. Just three or four miles back we passed a small stream of water. Return to it and bring a little of the water back to me. Here, take my begging bowl."

Ananda went back, but by the time he had reached the stream, a caravan of bullock carts had crossed the stream and disturbed the water at the crossing. Dead leaves and other debris that had settled to the stream's bottom had been stirred and made the water muddy and unfit to drink.

Ananda returned to Buddha without the water and said, "We will have to wait before we can have water to drink. The stream was filthy because some bullock carts had disturbed the water. There is a river just two miles up ahead. It is much bigger and not so easily made unfit for drinking. I will go ahead and bring us water from there."

But Lord Buddha persisted, "You go back and bring water from the stream I sent you to."

Ananda could not understand Lord Buddha's persistence, but when the master orders something the wise disciple follows. Yet to Ananda the absurdity of the entire venture made no sense—walking back three or four

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miles to water he knows is not worth drinking is galling—but he obeyed and returned. As he was leaving Buddha called out to him, “If the water is still dirty don’t come back. Just sit silently on the bank. Do nothing. Don’t get into the stream. Simply sit on the bank. Be silent and watchful. At some point the water will be clear again. Then fill the bowl and come back.”

Upon his return to the stream Ananda finds that the Buddha was right. The loosened leaves had flowed downstream, and the suspended sediments had mostly resettled to the bottom. But the water was not yet absolutely clear. So, Ananda sat on the bank and contented himself with watching the stream flow by. Slowly, slowly the water became crystal clear. He scooped it up in the two bowls and began his journey back to his master.

As he returned he began to dance. He was filled with joy, for he now understood why Lord Buddha had been so insistent that he return to the stream. There was a certain message in the trek for him, and now he had understood the message.

He gave the water to Buddha, thanked him, and touched his feet.

Buddha said, “What are you doing? I should be thanking you because it is you who have brought water to me.”

Ananda said, “I now understand the purpose of your sending me for water. When you first sent me back I was angry. I hid that from you. I was angry because I thought it was absurd to go back. Now I understand your message to me. It was all about meditation.

“All of this was about my use of mind. Sitting on the bank of that small stream I became aware that my mind and the stream are the same, and that you were using the stream to point out to me the way I approach and use mind. If I were to jump into the stream, I would make it dirty again. I consistently jump into the mind. In jumping I create noise in my mind. I try to stop my mind and end up creating more movement. Just the usage of the mind stirs up and surfaces more of the mind, and all of my efforts to still it serve only to agitate its contents. While sitting by the side of the stream I learned this lesson. Now the technique of meditation belongs to me.

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“From now on I will be sitting by the side of my mind too. I will no longer see the mind as me, a subject, but I will see it, as it truly is, an object outside of me. I will watch it with all its memories, dirtiness, beauty, values, opinions, problems, debris, and hurts. I will see its wounds, memories, and desires. Unconcerned I will sit outside, on the bank and wait for the moment when everything is clear.”

Meditation is continuity of thought in service of transcendence of mind. Meditation and even the next step samadhi, both happen in the mind. Yet, the entire intent of the practices is to engender the conditions where the center of consciousness within will fully enter, govern, and eventually supplant the mind.

In meditation you are like Ananda sitting on the bank of the river. You will sit as a witness to the mind, in neither jumping in to quiet the mind nor to smooth its surface. During meditation: You will eventually cease using the mind. You will cease defining yourself as its contents. You will release experiencing yourself as the motivator of action and the actor. You will witness the mind.

The mind is the cause of its own experience. You are to sit on the bank of the stream and watch the water become clear. This is meditation. Meditation is an art. Meditation is a science. Meditation is a spiritual system.

Yogiraj Achala