

BEYOND THE MIND

Principles and meditation techniques with sound and music

by Riccardo Misto



All esoteric traditions and genuine schools of thought have always talked about the need to achieve a particular consciousness level that involves going "beyond the mind." The very essence of yoga, as explained in the famous but often misinterpreted Patanjali's Sutra (*Yogachittavrittinirodha*), is to stop the vortex of thought, which doesn't mean to stop the mind (very difficult operation, if not impossible, and certainly very dangerous), but entering into those windows, those spaces or breaks (*Nirodha*), which are formed between a wave of thought and another (*Vritti*). There you may be able to connect, to join the true Self, the so-called *Purusha*, and that is what we call "True Form" (*Svarupa*), beyond the time-space region (*Bhumi*) that no longer applies the laws that govern and bind the small ego (*Ahamkara*) and the phenomenal world (*Prakriti*)¹.

Meditation has precisely this goal, and basically allows a broadening of our consciousness, an expansion of consciousness. This condition is otherwise called "*altered consciousness*", which has the defect of giving a slightly negative connotation, since the alteration can be interpreted as something abnormal and deviant, approachable for using them to experiences related to the use of psychotropic substances. These drugs, such as LSD, actually allow you to go beyond the normal functioning of the mind and expand consciousness, but maybe very dangerous, so it's better avoiding them.

That said, it's now important to understand what it is, briefly, the normal functioning of the mind, before you see how it's possible to make it "*fall*", and so overcome it.

Without wishing to list all the properties and functions of the mind, it's sufficient to consider the basic feature that is common to all mental activities: this can be identified in the operations to classifying, analyzing, dividing and separating. To the mind can only exist high or low, white or black, etc. It must always move from one opposite to another, choosing without ever, among other things, being in the present, in the "here and now", but constantly moving from the past to the future, in a strictly "dualistic" way.

It's true that these operational characteristics, on the one hand, are useful and necessary, and thanks to them we were allowed throughout history to achieve great results, findings, progress and development. But it is also true that it would be useful for us, sometimes, to abandon the normal system in favor of a new and different use, more archaic and primitive, which allows us to achieve a level of greater efficiency, awareness and harmony with our true Self. Ultimately, to make us more spiritual, which means being in balance between lower and material life levels, and higher and more subtle ones.

If the goal, then, is to "*drop the mind*", you will need some method, some "*trick*" that manages to deceive it and put it in crisis, playing on his own innate dualistic characteristics and, of course, on the sensory links by which it normally acts. Any meditative technique, in fact, starts by a precise and definite sensory scope, and then overcomes it with a particular strategy. Trying to meditate "*not thinking*" is the most wrong and bankruptcy you can imagine: we will immediately and continuously fight with the awkward presence of thought, in an unequal struggle. We must, therefore, begin from a practical and active sensory processing, choosing from the variety of ways at our disposal: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste.

¹ Guido Sgaravatti, "*Patanjali Yoga Sutra*", Ed Uniontrust, 2009. <http://www.fareyoga.it/blog/>

In another article², I showed how you can use the particular vision of a geometric symbol (the "*Flower of Life*"), to enter in a "distorted" dimension that can facilitate the meditative experience. In that case it was the sense of sight to come into play, in that particular mode which implies a different focusing, three-dimensional (to see "*beyond*", shifting the focus beyond the image, or crossing your eyes to bring out forward a portion of the image). In both cases it is used as an alternative in the medium sensory (sight), leaving the usual frame of mind that over time has become the normal and typical way: on the one hand this leads to a different perception of reality and on the other, somehow confusing the mind, it makes possible, in fact, to "fall" it, with the positive result consisting in inducing a different level of consciousness. Still regarding the sense of sight, there may be other "tricks", like looking at items - normally in the background - as if they were in the foreground (eg, the empty spaces between the leaves of a tree): this leads to a different viewing and receiving of the outside world, with the resulting moment of mental deconditioning that doesn't end in the limited time of experience but acts in the long-term, changing in a deeper way our whole view of the world. Other more advanced training ways presuppose an increasingly enlarged modality, until you get to the 180 degrees and, very difficult thing, to a "*panoptic*" mode (of Jewish origin), which consists even in understanding the full range of vision (360 degrees).

The meditative sound and rhythm techniques concern, however, an activity specifically related to the sense of hearing, closely listening. Even in this case, as in all meditative experiences, it is essential the initial concentration of attention which become "*contemplation*" through repetition (*Japa*): this term means intentional and prolonged direction of the mind focused on a specific object (*Beeja*, in this case an "acoustic-sound-rhythmic model"). The best known work in this sense is the "*Mantra*", a verbal-sound formula which, repeated with precise rhythmic modes, as well as melodic and phonetic pronunciation, produces a particular movement of electrical inner currents (*Prana*) and a series of changes in the physical and psychic body. A very illuminating example of this is the recitation of the mantra "*Rama*": a continuous and cyclic repetition of this phoneme induces, at some point, the feeling of repeating the sound "*Mara*", with a shift of accent. When you have the perception that the mantra is both Rama and Mara, at that precise moment the mind goes haywire, not conceiving that can be given a dual interpretation: either Rama or Mara. And so falls: the mind works in this way, according to the principle of duality. Here, in front of an apparent inconsistency, is the so-called collapse of the mind, with the achievement of a different level of consciousness, not more limited by the conventional rules of the mind. In such a state of altered consciousness, may occur many things, some overdrawn with paranormality, as evidenced by Voodoo ritual practices based just in the use of rhythm.

Let's now understand what is, in music, a rhythmic cycle. By this we mean a sound sequence with precise duration and division, which is cyclically always the same: the simplest example is the beating of a clock pendulum, where we have a constant number of pulses per second (1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1 etc.). To speak of rhythmic cycle we must limit its duration in time too. We can, therefore, decide to calculate a sequence of four pulses, which are repeated over and over. We will then have a rhythmic cycle in 4/4. Those four beats, each of equal duration, will be considered as the rhythmic *beeja* (seed), that is the object of our profound attention, concentration and contemplation (better then if we do not only listen to it, but "live" it with the whole body, producing it personally, maybe beating shots on a drum, in a dancing form). Finally, we need to introduce an additional specification element, which consists of "accent": then there will be one of four beats that will be, in fact, emphasized, namely beaten harder. We can clearly choose where to set this accent, having four possible alternatives: the first, second, third or fourth pulse. The most common model is the emphasis on the first: 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, etc. When we execute this simple percussive sequence sound our mind gives more importance to the first pulse, thus making a clear choice. But we know that percussive sound cell also offers other solutions, only shifting the emphasis. In the moment in which, continually repeating the sequence, we can have so net perception of the cell either as 1 2 3 4 (with the accent on the first pulse) that as 1 2 3 4 (with the emphasis moved on fourth), just in that precise moment the mind collapses, as it is located in front of the unsolvable paradox of a perception that can be understood in two opposite ways at the same time. And that, for the dualistic mind, is impossible. Hence its collapse and the opening of a new consciousness level, much more powerful because not bound by the rigid limits previously in place.

We can therefore talk about a "*meditation on rhythm*" as an experiential platform for reaching altered consciousness states, in which the object of meditation is constituted by a rhythmic cell, more or less complex, which, being able to be perceived in two different ways simultaneously, contrasts and undermines our mental interpretation disk, based on exclusivity (white or black, high or low, etc..).

The rhythm in four beats that we have taken as an example, is only one of many possible "models" (it is used in some Sufi rituals). There is another one, more complex and detailed, which is based on a odd rhythmic pattern (five) and a particular course of action on the drum, which requires more expertise and skills: it's explained in detail in my article "*Rhythm Meditation*" but, of course, to be fully understood, it should be directly experienced, requiring a "live" demonstration and practical implementation, which is possible in my seminars and courses on therapeutic and transformative use of sound and music.

² "*Il fiore della vita, primo stereogramma nella storia dell'umanità*", Riccardo Misto, Ed. Armon – www.nadayoga.it