

Voyaging in Inner Space

by Bodhisattva Shree Swami Premodaya

From the moment you are born, you are taught to focus outward. You are not schooled in any kind of inner focus, but you are well-trained in moving outwards — in looking, expressing, relating, acquiring, holding. The inner focus is, for the most part, ignored. It's not news to you that in everyday life you are pulled outside yourself. But what may be news to some is the notion that the outside cannot really give you anything worthwhile (i.e., lasting.) Sure, you can get money, you can get a husband or a wife, you can get a house, you can get a job — you can get many things on the outside. But contrary to what you have been societally conditioned to think and feel (which simply binds you firmly to the material level of things) none of these are the purpose or the meaning of life. They can all be taken away, and in fact, they all will be taken away. But if you dive deep enough, what you find on the inside cannot be taken away. You take it with you for the rest of your life, and even beyond this life — which is why it's the truest of riches.

Now, consider that the interior and the exterior, oddly enough, are in no way separate — two sides of the same coin. But due to that outer-directed focus we are all taught, most of us experience inner and outer as separate. And if that's too new of a viewpoint, or a bit too much to instantly grasp, think of it as both sides being fully interactive. However, the better understanding is that there is no outside and no inside. The inside is just the inner part of the outside. The outside is just the outer part of the inside.

Further, inner space is just as vast as outer space. The only difference is that if you want to travel in outer space, others can travel with you; you can go as a group of astronauts. Someone can be the pilot, someone else can be the navigator. But when it comes to inner space, you can only go alone. Nobody can go with you — you are a lone intronaut.

When you go deep inside yourself, far from your ordinary thoughts, your typical experiences, your usual modes of attention; when all the distractions and memories and attachments and identifications and illusions have receded into the distance; when your attention is free-floating and you are not locked into your perpetual self-categorizations as a particular entity — a man or a woman, an old person or a young person, a sick person or a well person, and so on — only then can you taste what it feels like to be the consciousness that you are. In the East, they refer to this “the inner sky.”

When this becomes possible, and is experienced more and more, then you have the opportunity to identify more directly with your interiority, your inside-ness, your inner spaciousness. And you start being more adept at sensing and experiencing the formless aspects of existence — the previously ignored part; the part that

takes more sensitivity — the more subtle dimensions that, as it turns out, stretch in all directions. And when that is going on, if you persist — if you grow in your ability to travel deeper and deeper in inner space (if you become an experienced intronaut) then sooner or later, you start arriving at previously unknown destinations. You are startled to discover the dark side of the moon, an unfamiliar terrain beyond imagining.

The list of destinations is well-known. Some of the nearer junctions are: deep relaxation/letting go, expanded awareness, awe and wonder, deep gratitude, new and more-useful self-insight/ability to go beyond culturally conditioned (mis)perception, surprising access to higher wisdom, feeling the intensity of life itself, involuntary reverence for life, crushing humility, actual unconditional love/compassion, absolute trust, and joyful, intelligent surrender. Then, as one travels even further into inner space, one finds oneself touching down at: vanquishment of any and all doubt, divine will trumps own will, inner explosion of unbearable ecstasy, unbidden bliss states, palpable descent of grace, the end of suffering, permanent inner peace, God-centeredness, no separation, self-realization, enlightenment, ceaseless inner prayer — and lots and lots of laughter, light-heartedness and silliness... The rest of the list, of course, goes on and on, as this is a voyage with no end.

As you travel, you can comprehend the roadmap of inner space quite simply, in its most elemental aspect: outer space is the landscape of time and space and forms, inner space is the landscape of eternity and infinity and formlessness. This is one of the reasons why Buddhists talk so much about “emptiness.” Understand that emptiness does not mean an absence of anything. It refers, instead, to the presence of everything. Emptiness just means the space everything is arising in — falls back into — and therefore, is made of. The manifest can only be comprised of the un-manifest. Where else would it come from?

When you become familiar with this, inner space is traversable and there is enough inner attention for the spaciousness to be palpable. In other words, you can occupy the space (with all your laundry lists and baggage) or truth can occupy that space (or God, or wisdom, or the ultimate, or higher self, or pure awareness, or peace, or oversoul, or love, or divine intention or whatever term you prefer that indicates “the profound” itself). To the degree that you occupy the space you're in — less of that. To the degree that you become simple awareness, not occupying the space where you are, more inner spaciousness — more space for that.

Less you equals more space. More space equals more God. More you equals less God. These are the simple equations; the basic spiritual algebra. Plumbing inner space is the primary method that

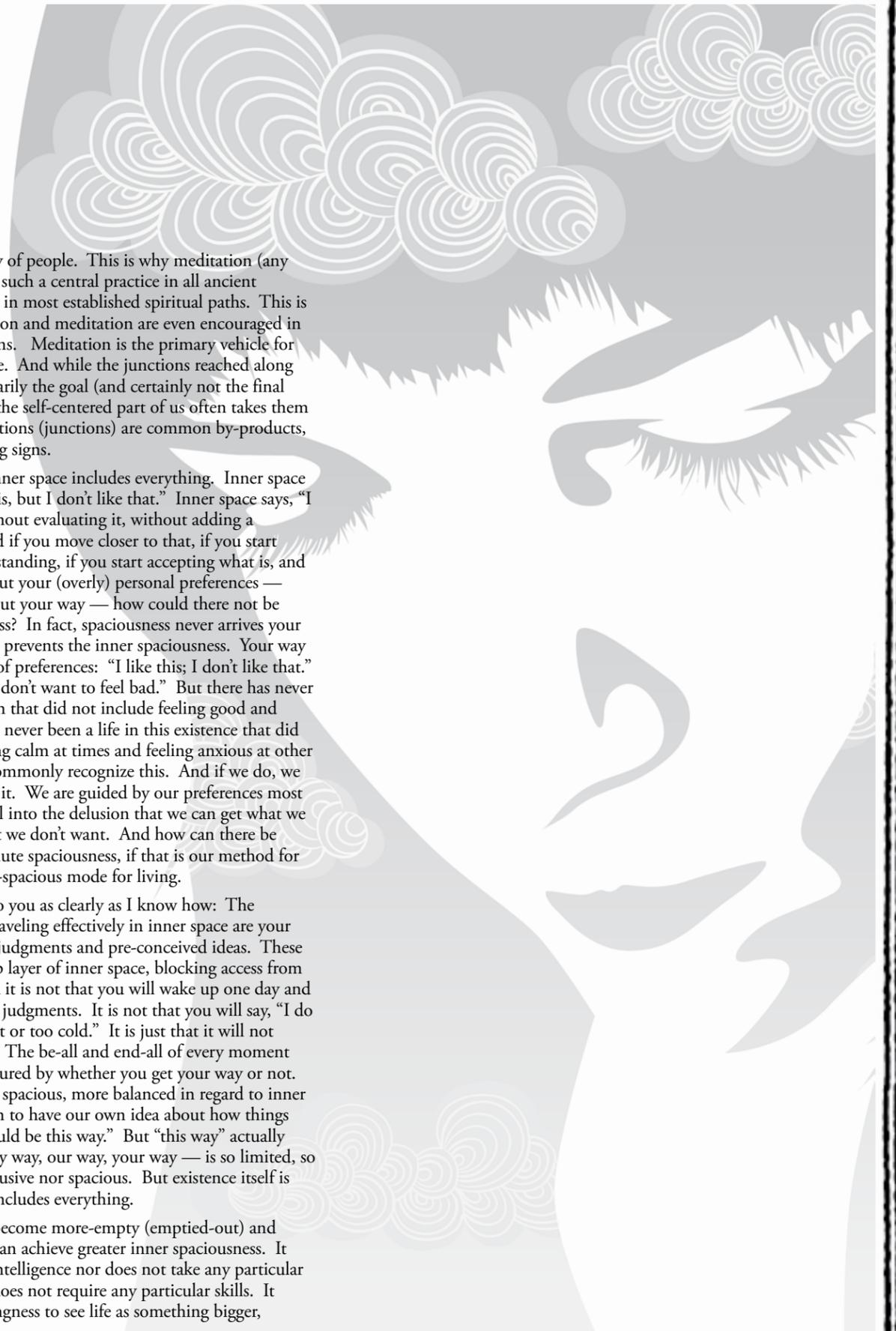
works, for the majority of people. This is why meditation (any form of meditation) is such a central practice in all ancient wisdom traditions and in most established spiritual paths. This is why quiet contemplation and meditation are even encouraged in most organized religions. Meditation is the primary vehicle for traveling in inner space. And while the junctions reached along the way are not necessarily the goal (and certainly not the final destination, although the self-centered part of us often takes them to be,) these manifestations (junctions) are common by-products, and serve as confirming signs.

Remember that inner space includes everything. Inner space does not say, “I like this, but I don't like that.” Inner space says, “I am that which is,” without evaluating it, without adding a judgment on top. And if you move closer to that, if you start living with that understanding, if you start accepting what is, and not being so rabid about your (overly) personal preferences — about things turning out your way — how could there not be more inner spaciousness? In fact, spaciousness never arrives your way. Your way is what prevents the inner spaciousness. Your way is just an arbitrary set of preferences: “I like this; I don't like that.” “I want to feel good; I don't want to feel bad.” But there has never been a life on this earth that did not include feeling good and feeling bad. There has never been a life in this existence that did not include both feeling calm at times and feeling anxious at other times. But we don't commonly recognize this. And if we do, we tend not to remember it. We are guided by our preferences most of the time, and we fall into the delusion that we can get what we like and keep out what we don't want. And how can there be anything close to absolute spaciousness, if that is our method for living? That's the non-spacious mode for living.

So I want to say to you as clearly as I know how: The primary obstacles to traveling effectively in inner space are your very own preferences, judgments and pre-conceived ideas. These tend to take up the top layer of inner space, blocking access from above and below. And it is not that you will wake up one day and have no preferences or judgments. It is not that you will say, “I do not care if I am too hot or too cold.” It is just that it will not matter quite so much. The be-all and end-all of every moment will no longer be measured by whether you get your way or not. You will become more spacious, more balanced in regard to inner and outer. We all seem to have our own idea about how things should be, “things should be this way.” But “this way” actually means my way; and my way, our way, your way — is so limited, so tiny — neither all-inclusive nor spacious. But existence itself is spacious and vast. It includes everything.

And anyone can become more-empty (emptied-out) and more silent. Anyone can achieve greater inner spaciousness. It does not take special intelligence nor does not take any particular set of qualities and it does not require any particular skills. It simply needs the willingness to see life as something bigger,

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something more than just the outer aspects (i.e., the material level; that which is unobtrusive and plainly visible) — and concomitantly — the willingness to no longer limit the inner aspects to the constant self-monitoring of one's own ever-changing experience (as measured by whether or not we get our personal preferences met). You don't need to keep being dazzled and distracted by the shimmering surface. You don't have to keep living there. In fact, stop living there, and live at least a little more, a little deeper, in inner space.

Stop living from the idea that "nothing matters more in any given moment, than what my mind tells me I should have or feel."

Stop doing that for thirty seconds, and I guarantee you, you will have thirty seconds of actual inner peace. Think of inner space as where you originate from. Think of your everyday self as the tree, with the roots deep in inner space. Focusing mostly on the outside, on what is happening around you, doesn't allow you to have much of a sense of that. Find the way to get out of the way. Find your bearings in inner space.

The strongest encouragement I can offer you for familiarizing yourself more with the inner voyage, is the fact that you are already on it! If you were born, if you are breathing, then you have embarked on the inner journey. You have always been aware that you are on an outer journey, but now see that the outer journey is the exterior aspect of the inner voyage. Aren't you always viewing everything from the inside? Doesn't every movement start inside? Have you ever been anywhere other than inside? And if this is so, then it means you have been taught to regard things inside-out. The outside occurs within the inside — not vice-versa, as is the common conceptualization. That's the big news: the inside contains the outside! Not the other way round (which is still, of course, how it may tend to seem or feel — but perception is not reality). And it is, after all, reality that we are talking about.

And absolutely know, once and for all and full well (I invite you to accept it, and I encourage you to see it for yourself) that when we say "reality" it includes you — that you are in no way separate from anyone or anything; not ever, not in any way, not even for a second — no matter what nonsense your mind (and your culture-bound mis-education) has been telling you your whole life. No matter what issues have been there or have not been there, no matter what anybody else thinks of you, no matter what this life has been about, you are part and parcel of the absolute. Less sincere people than you

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have come to that true knowing. Less intelligent people than you have come to eternal wisdom. More negativistic people than you have come to permanent inner peace. More selfish people than you have found actual God. So clearly, the same is absolutely possible for you. Be encouraged. You have heard this again and again, from all kinds of folks. You have read it in books and heard it at spiritual talks: "Peace is what you are made of;" "The truth is always available;" "Get out of your own way;" "Go with the flow." You have heard it a thousand different ways from a thousand different sources. You have probably pondered it quite deeply. So, don't make it some faraway thing anymore. Recognize once

and for all, that in this lifetime, it is absolutely possible for you. Find the way to start traveling for real (not in imagination) in inner space. And then keep traveling deeper and deeper. Keep going. Don't give up when it's hard, or tell yourself "It's not for me," or "I'm no good at meditating." Just

persist. Can you play the piano after the first month of lessons? Just keep practicing, and become a more able voyager in inner space — one who is willing to go deeper inside, to travel more consciously and intentionally and willingly across the inner landscape.

In persisting, the first significant junction you come to will likely be a feeling of deep relief — deep understanding that you are not lacking anything. You can relax; there's nowhere to go, because the voyage is already underway. And beyond that...

And it all starts with the first step of the inner voyage.

Bodhisattva Shree Swami Premodaya is the founder of The Bodhi Center, a spiritual center in WLA and Malibu offering darshan, satsang, meditation courses, classes & trainings in self-development, workshops & intensives in spiritual awareness, residential retreats, as well as private sessions with Swamiji.



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