Study 1.3 The Neutral Observer/Witness

So one of our very first classes is to talk about the neutral witness. This is Arathi Ma. So why is it so important, to awaken the neutral witness or the observer at the center of the mind? And what is it really? It’s the point of neutrality in your field of attention. It's this seer that can witness an object or a situation without attachment to it. Or the other way around, when were not attached, we are in a state of neutrality, which is awareness, being aware of something without liking or disliking the object of the attention. There's really no preference. Once we realize that admits all the movements through the field of time, which is always the case, perceived through the senses, there's actually exists a piece of us that, that is changeless. The rest of us is always moving through time. There’s always something to be perceived, but there's something that is perceiving all of that and what is that? I even have an image for it, which I like the analogy of the old vinyl record. If you remember those records that you put on a record player. The only way you could put it on the record player, or your parents because you probably don't, maybe you don't remember, or never saw them because the center of the vinyl has a hole and the music is in the grooves of the plastic of the vinyl so the emptiness, the hole in the center, is just like the neutral point in your mind. Your mind is filled with memories and impressions, and we need to find that one spot that gives us the ability to to to observe it from, to be, to retreat from all these impressions and memories to find peace and rest. Otherwise we would just go crazy, go round and round and round and round, which some people do and they can get off, the thinking and restless mind. In order to really see what is going on we have to kind of step away because when we’re going round and round and round and round we are only in a place of reactivity. We don't have any ability to make conscious choices, we’re just reacting. So we have to have a true chance to see things for what they are. It's the clarity that comes from sitting right in that center, and is free from past judgments. It's really the only spot from which the totality is fully recognized cause when you're in the center of that vinyl, or in the center of the mind, that's the way I'd like to describe it because it is actually just the beginning of when we start out to work with this. Essentially there is no center anywhere because the center is everywhere, but that's too complicated so this is a very good experience from our starting point from when you are very embroiled in life and you are very, you are caught in thinking, you are identified with the person that you are and your mind is full of thoughts, then you can retreat into the center so there is this actually an experience of the center then. So at some point this seer, this center, is claimed as your identity and when that happens, then your liberated and free from the mind’s activity of judgment and division. The mind always divides things in this and that, here and there, now and later, and etc. etc. dark and light, right and wrong, the chair, the couch, up and down. We begin to reclaim our true identity as a first step and that is activating neutrality into our lives. It's one part of the core, of the entire core, because besides the mind there’s also feelings, but we’ll get to that later. First of all in order to navigate the emotions that are chaotic and very nonlinear, non-analytic, they’re emotions, we have to have a strong center point. So it begins as a sharp and steep journey. And why is this? Because the witness or the seer’s uninvolved with life, so ther has to be some kind of decision, some clarity, to say okay, I said I I'd like to actually step out and really see life for what it is. I also want to know who is this one that’s seeing? Who am I really? Am I? am I the situation? Am I that which people judge me to be? Or am I that which I myself judge myself to be? and what am I really? I'm changing, and, and what part of it is actually also painful?” There's a lot of things that are very painful. There's things that are pleasureful, but everything is changing so who am I really? The witness, the seer's uninvolved with life. It has no ability, by nature, to like or dislike something and it feels quite different to be in it, to be it. Different to the usual mechanics that we’re used to that that witness does not take any sides. It's nonjudgmental. It's useless in consolidating a personal identity. It's really not what it does. It helps actually in eliminating those pieces and structures, these programs. That's why we want to slip into that center so that we can actually let those structures fall apart because as we, as long as we’re in the grooves of the mind we keep blowing energy into it like a balloon and we make it, make it very real and they stick around. So the seer is completely impersonal. It’s really what most people think of as our spirit, but it is actually the center of the mind, the eye of the hurricane, the stillness, silence, emptiness. It might be new and unusual for you, but maybe you've been in it already. You know it, but have you identified with it. Do you live in it naturally, on autopilot, always? is it hard for you to actually even be involved in the minds activity in the old way? if not then, you need to deepen the neutral witness, it has to become your grounding platform on the mental level. So the habituated nature that has become so conditioned to function as an “either/or“ needs to become lessened. We need to less identify with that because that's the one that keeps us stuck in a roller coaster of suffering. All day long we compartmentalize every feeling, every thought, and sensation within ourselves. This is habitually done, I would do this same with people and objects and events out there in the world filing it as useful or not useful in order to maintain and consolidate and support that familiar identity we have chosen. You know, like some people say well you know I don't do Windows. This is not what I do. I don't do this. I do this. So this is, this is a choice and not that these things aren't going to remain, but they have to become fluid and not stuck, and the only way things can remain fluid and go with life and adjust to always this ever present moment, this ever present now, is to be in the center of the mind. So like the record. So that you're just kind of flowing and flowing in a nice music comes about. You know, we have deeply actualized Descartes, the philosopher that said, “I think, therefore I am”. So we think and we are that. But, that's not neutrality and it doesn't serve our evolution of becoming what you really are. We all know that the identity we cherish so much does not remain intact anyway and we've gone through a few models since our childhood and most of the model transitions were done through suffering and pain because we didn’t learn to flow with the changes. You know, just think about puberty times when we’re teenagers how difficult it was for yourself. And, and also our society accepts that that it’s the norm that these changes have to be hard and painful. Menopause is another one. But does it have to be like that in the light of this discussion? Does it have to be? It doesn't. Our identity has become an object that needs to be maintained or changed in a controlled way and and that takes a lot of energy. You know, in fact, we need to go to sleep every night to get away from our identity that costs so much energy to keep, keeping it intact. If we look very carefully where and what is it anyway? The whole point is not that having an identity is a bad thing. Rather, you know, the question is do you want to have the ups and downs in life? Do you want that to end and find yourself happy, balanced, finding true purpose and fulfillment. Realizing may be who you really are. If that is so; then cultivating neutrality is an invitation to live without the familiar feeling of control, but to gain true self-control. The self is the neutral witness, an aspect of the self. So the question is how do we get to live from the observer’s point of view? And does it mean that life will have no zest and it will be just boring? So far the spice in life that we had came from the continuous ups and downs and isn’t that what everybody's doing and what we’re taught to do? But maybe you’ve come to a place where this has become very painful. Nowadays, times are changing and it is required to be a bit more fluid so it's going to be harder to maintain an identity and more pain will come up. There will be a signal, the pain, the suffering, I’m talking really about the suffering, not, you know, physical pain, I mean, pain is part of a sensory expression of, of a signal of some sort that is biologically useful, I’m talking about the suffering. So one day you might notice for yourself that when you finally have a happy day, inside of yourself you’re already staging your next drama. Have you ever notice that? The happiness you are experiencing is not a true happiness. It is somewhat empty, it’s rather excitement that has, that has an opposite. It is interlinked and based on opposite. So when you are that kind of, kind of polarized happy it has an opposite which is unhappy and and because we’re aware of it, that it has opposite, we usually, there's, there's a pattern to actually stage the next drama to flip to the other side. If you’re very conscious you maybe already noticed it. Or you don't trusting the happiness. You’re thinking “Will this remain? Probably not.” Then you destroy it. It is very common. Because it's interlinked with the opposite. And to be whole, you can see it from the center, from the center of the mind, that you want to balance it out. So living with neutrality means to not suffer anymore and to reclaim your divinity, really, which is the inherent natural happiness we are all drawn to experience in life. If we look at the nature of neutral witnessing we can see easily that a nonbiased view, contains all there is to see, not just half of the vista. And so everything is being experienced but it just feels quite different when you are open to experience the ing the whole and not a partial reality. So neutrality is a way of having it all. It's not boring it's not neutral like a neutral color that's the way the mind labels it. Not at all. It's this moment when you're in flow, when you’re present, when you’re here, now, you are in the zone. We do not prefer only one side of the coin, by giving up staring at only one side, we gain the other that we might not like, we hate, or even fear, but by doing so, we gain much more. We gain not two flat sides of a coin, but the coin itself. So by giving up happiness and unhappiness, you are gaining yourself the, the source of happiness, the source of that particular experience, those experiences. There's a wealth in that. We gain a third way of being in life because neutrality is the stairway out of a present situation. So when you're stuck, how do you get out? Neutrality is the doorway out. It is a vertical reality we access and identify with. We use the neutral witness as the doorway and plus elevator into the next floor. It is really an elevator it's, it goes, straight up. It's all or nothing. And later we’re going to talk about deeper levels of that which is samadhi, states of absorption, and that is being in neutrality, in the flow, is a is a part of that, is a form of Samadhi, a very low one, but it is, it can get deeper. There is the space between here and there. The gap between perception, but we need to give up our cherished point of view, the need to be right, the need to suffer, we have to trade it for a larger, whole view, where everything is always here and present so we have to let go from being controlling in life to living the dynamic state of becoming. In order to start living from the center point of the mind we must commit to doing so. So commitment is important first step. Also understanding why should, I do this, so we talked about it. Otherwise, we will remain in the habitual polarized dynamic of identification with the experience and not the experiencer itself. The commitment is towards wanting to know who’s actually having this experience, which takes us to the act of claiming our divinity. It's a bold step, really. I am divine and what is that? Who am I really? You don't know who that, who you really are. You can never really know through the mind, you can be it, but you can at least say I'm not this experience. Who is really experiencing this? by making a small shift in the field of attention we are confirming our divinity, so we are not inquiring here but actually changing the experience of our identification so this might appear at first somewhat silly and useless, dropping a beloved attachment or desire by remaining an uninvolved watcher. You might ask, what's the point? The point will only be grasped when we have recognized, understood, the nature of life in motion and when we decide to not want to remain caught in a never ending cycle of this and that, and it’s, like I said, the foundation to more but this has to be really strong so look at it as a beginning of something. We have to come to see that while we push something away that troubles us. we pull the same experience towards us. You see, it's a cycle, we’re either in the center or we’re outside, the rim. We have to see that we’re actually trapped. This might not be so obvious if years or decades or lifetimes lie between the cycles. But once we arrive at the moment of, “Oh, I've had enough of this treadmill. I'm not going anywhere” then we are ready to step up stepping off and neutrality is the stepping off the treadmill. We are outside the minds dynamic, we considered life and now what kind of life lies outside the treadmill. Well, it's a life of freedom, ease, bliss, and true creativity. Inside the system of push and pull, true creativity did not exist. It cannot, we can only react. Now we can move from reaction to action. So neutrality is part of the experience of the enlightened self an aspect. It is the anchor of the self in the world of polarities, of the likes and dislikes, and in order to free ourselves from this world, we need to replace it with a new anchor. We need to be strong and hang onto something outside the familiar, the known, and the deepest healing cannot come about if we are not grounded and anchored in this witness, which is the only true constant within the mind. So we begin to dissolve the deeper belief system so far that we can ground ourselves on that, on that new space, and we have a replacement to hold onto. In that way we can let go of the old identifications so as you begin to identify with your neutrality you find yourself noticing that life is moving through you. It is a different experience suddenly you're not attached, you’re not completely identified, you’re not in reaction, you’re not suffering, you’re beginning to notice there's a bit of a distance. So but yet again, and again you will find yourself attached again and you feel that you're stuck in thought and situations and and you have the sense that they're so important and real that's really what happens when you are attached with this usual feeling of being caught in blame and in judgment and worry and anger and but essentially mainly blame and judgment as will happen over and over again. But as you allow life to be the way it is with time you will find yourself being more often in flow and less attracted or repulsed by life. It’s going to be more of an acceptance for life, for what it is. you have become more surrendered to the moment at hand and witnessing doesn't mean that you actively watching yourself doing things, if that happens you want to really forget about that; you’re not splitting yourself but occasionally that might happen because you’re just about to learn about it. You’re just in the process of learning and all you actually really need to do, how you’re actually slipping into the place of neutrality is that you are noticing your suffering, you’re noticing that you’re identified with something, you're caught. It's all you need to do and that's the noticing. There isn't a creation of an artificial space between the witness and that which is being noticed. That's not what is asked of you. Much, much simpler. So this is actually also the beginning of Samadhi. We use this word initially, a term, a Sanskrit term that is an state of absorption where you are very absorbed within yourself in your own nature. There are different levels of that and it's the luminous state of freedom itself. And the more we are that, the more that happens within our body and heart. Big changes take place. Healing naturally begins that restores the natural function to all your systems because you're not stopping the energetic flow. You cannot crystallize anymore, the energy, because only judgment and identification with the energy, we’re holding on, we’re touching it, it freezes. That doesn't happen so it just keeps flowing so there is a beautiful side effect of healing that takes place. And in nature all energy must move and what stagnates will begin to harden, to rot, to decay, to die so being in your witness allows for the flow of life in your whole body. And in this way, we begin to slowly eradicate the idea of being a body, identifying, relating to a body as something separate and the fear of death that comes along with it which is really an underlying energy in everything that we consider a problem. You become more and more comfortable with fluidity, the ground to stand on will not be the illusionary stability of material structures, but you come more close to the experience of scientific truth that life is in constant motion and even more than that it's really made out of nothing as all atoms are really not solid at all. And that's not what the mind thinks what a nothing is because it contains all of existence. This nothingness so that through neutrality we begin to identify with the changeless spirit of our true divine essence, our pure potentiality and neutrality is the doorway to it.