



Understanding and Cultivating Silence, by Ajahn Sumedho

Just by exploring this you really get to understand what [self] is, how you become a personality and also to see that when there is no person there is still awareness. Itâ€™s an intelligent awareness; itâ€™s not an unconscious dull stupidity, itâ€™s a bright, clear, intelligent emptiness. When you become a personality through having thoughts like: feeling sorry for yourself, views and opinions, self-criticism and so forth, and then it stops â€” there is the silence. But still the silence is bright and clear, intelligent. I prefer this silence rather than this endless proliferating nattering that goes on in the mind.

I used to have what I call an â€”inner tyrantâ€™, a bad habit that I picked up of always criticizing myself. Itâ€™s a real tyrant â€” there is nobody in this world that has been more tyrannical, critical or nasty to me than I have. Even the most critical person, however much they have harmed and made me miserable, has never made me relentlessly miserable as much as I have myself, as a result of this inner tyrant. Itâ€™s a real wet blanket of a tyrant, no matter what I do itâ€™s never good enough. Even if everybody says, â€œAjahn Sumedho, you gave such a wonderful [inspiring talk]â€•, the inner tyrant says â€œYou shouldnâ€™t have said this, you didnâ€™t say that right.â€• It goes on, in an endless perpetual tirade of criticism and fault-finding. Yet itâ€™s just habit, I freed my mind from this habit, it does not have any footing anymore. I know exactly what it is, I no longer believe in it, or even try to get rid of it, I just know not to pursue it and just to let it dissolve into the silence.

Thatâ€™s a way of breaking a lot of these emotional habits we have that plague us and obsess our minds. You can actually train your mind, not through rejection or denial but through understanding and cultivating this silence. So donâ€™t use this silence as a way of annihilating or getting rid of what is arising in experience, but as a way of resolving and liberating your mind from the obsessive thoughts and negative attitudes that can endlessly plague conscious experience.

-- Ajahn Sumedho, from "Intuitive Awareness"