

## Tarka

**Tarka means yogic reflection and analysis.** This reflection and analysis can be on many things including spiritual teachings and their deeper meaning, or your natal chart/transiting planets and how they effect your life experiences. Or it can be tarka on the moment by moment scenario of your daily interactions and the deeper meaning and healing into the inharmonious interactions of your day. For this teaching, I would like to concentrate on reflection of your daily interactions with others including the difficult people you confront or are confronted by, your daily mental ups and downs, and the things you procrastinate and things you very much enjoy doing. In this tarka the analysis is to try to come to an understanding of your karma and thought patterns that played a key role in these daily experiences. And it is from here that a great deal of self-awareness and acceptance will bring you closer to healing from the inside and to a place of Santosha.

**Scenario:** You away at college, sitting for a Thanksgiving meal at a friend's house with other friends and guests. The table is loaded with beautiful and delicious home cooked dishes. The host begins the meal by proposing a toast in honor of the many caring and loving mothers who prepared the feast for the guests. Some of guests immediately start thinking about their own mothers and begin to share stories of childhood Thanksgiving dinners. Some of the guests feel sad and shameful as their childhood did not have the bountifulness of a grand Thanksgiving dinner and they become quiet and reserved. And still other guests find themselves angry and maybe anxious in remembering the many family fights that happened on holidays when they were growing up. Or some may experience deep sadness and bitterness of their own childhood growing up without a mother. Many different past experiences and thought patterns will provide for some very different thoughts, conversations and emotions that will flow around the table on this Thanksgiving celebration and possibly determine many future attitudes and celebrations.

**What did I think? What did I say? How did I respond internally? How did I respond externally? This is tarka.** As we move to a place of reflection, we see how our past experiences modeled our thoughts, words or actions for the entire celebration and maybe days afterward. As we reflect we begin to know ourselves through self-awareness. Going deeper, we may notice how our early experiences of mother, thanksgiving or holiday meals shapes our judgment about current events and people, we can then process the experiences we had and come to realize that that was then, and this is now. We can see more clearly and find acceptance and healing. In this new light we are able to think a new thought, and experience this beautiful meal prepared by caring people in the present moment instead of from past moments.

Every thought we think comes from our attitude on some past experience. Unless you are a seasoned meditator being able to leave all judgment and past experiences aside to think an entirely new thought, my teacher would say we have 5% free will. That means that 95% of the time we are reacting instead of acting consciously in the present moment. Children who haven't had many experiences to influence their thinking, explore life from a very new curious and open perspective. And even those experiences may get influenced by adults or their peers hovering over them to say "oh that is so sad you got your new shirt dirty"!! So there goes playing in the mud, and exploring nature because it is there that we might end up sad!! Another possibility is as we talked about in our karma lesson, is that karma is created in other lifetimes. So a reaction in this lifetime could be from karma of previous lifetime coming forth to germinate in the present day. Two year old twins in a room with mom and dad when a neighbor stops by with a dog. Neither one of the twins has been around a dog before. One Twin runs towards the dog giggling and the other Twin runs away from the dog, hiding behind their parents crying.

What did I say? How did I react? Tarka can helps us: 1. See our proclivities, (predispositions) so that we can choose to act consciously and think a new thought. 2. Move to heal our hurts through compassion and acceptance for self. Eventually leading to *santosha* and self love.

In the Thanksgiving scenario, I am the person that experienced a family of drinking and arguing around the holidays. The scenario went like this; drinking, arguing and then my mom complaining her dissatisfaction and anger afterwards to me. It was not fun. I hated holidays. As a matter of fact when I became single after a divorce, I was so happy to be able to spend holidays alone in the safeness of my own home and kitties. People would invite me over and I would always think of some excuse so I did not have to go. Well guess what? That changed just a few years ago. Once I realized why I hated holidays so much, I started to except invites and totally explore how other people spent time with their families. I do not have to feel offended, shamed or hurt anymore, I can just enjoy their presence and explore their traditions with curiosity and joy. And the more we learn about others' traditions we gain knowledge. As a side note, Go swami Kriyananda would say that the best way to gain knowledge is to study other peoples traditions and other cultures. :)

I have another story of how tarka has helped me heal from the inside. I grew up in a middle sized town in Iowa where I attended a private Catholic School. My family was financial pretty poor. I was grateful that we had to wear uniforms but even with uniforms, sweaters and accessories were a source of distress. I always felt intimidated by other girls my age and their fancy clothing and accessories. There were other events in those days that deepened my thought patterns that I was somehow flawed and less than the other girls my age and that I was not really liked. I carried that thought of not being as good as other girls and being intimidated by these girls with me for over 30 years. And just as coincidence, I drank heavily for most of those 30 years. And then one day, I believe in Divine intervention :), when i was 45 years old, I decided to become sober. At the time, it was the hardest thing that I had ever done. I started doing yoga to calm down in the evenings so I could relax a bit and sleep. At first the yoga was just physical postures, but I realized there was something really cool to being in the moment with my body and mind in the postures. And this led to sitting on the cushion and meditating. And in meditation I started to watch my mind with it's endless loops of thought patterns. During this time, of letting go and becoming what I might be, I picked up the fiddle and started playing the fiddle. One day, I signed up for Fiddle Camp, which was a week long fiddle intensive that was mainly young kids as beginners, and middle grades and high schoolers as intermediate and advanced players. I was a beginner. I was 1 in maybe 5 adults that took the camp and I was the only adult in the beginner classes. I was ok with this, not at all intimidated by these young kids, just enjoyed them, but when it came time for lunch, to sit at tables with chairs my size, I had to sit with the middle and high school girls. I couldn't, I was totally intimidated by them. They were pretty, and they played really good fiddle. Wow, I couldn't hardly believe it. So I went home at the end of that first day and meditated. I sat, closed my eyes, followed my breath, and within a few moments, the whole scene from my adolescent days replayed in my mind, and I could see clearly the thought patterns that shaped my whole life. And within that meditation, an image or an energy body of me when I was 12 years old and in grade school, wearing the school uniform, got up off the meditation cushion and walked away. As this young girl got about 8 feet away from me, she turned around and waved good bye. The next day, I was able to go sit with the high school girls and enjoy their experiences as teenagers and lend a listening ear.

To heal from the inside is to come to a place of acceptance and compassion for our stories! We are here on earth in these bodies to experience, heal and grow. But life is so busy and scattered it is hard to see what needs to be healed. Tarka is a way to do that. Don't let the business of life exclude you from learning and healing. It is why we are here! All life is sacred. Our spiritual life is our daily life, not just a once a week or once a month awakening to your divine being. Everyday needs to be reflected upon so that we can heal and walk through life volitionally, sacredly and happily. Om shanti, shanti, shantih.

### **Steps to Tarka:**

1. Choose a time of day to tarka. You need to set a routine for you to become good at it. Just like practicing a musical instrument. I choose evening before I go to bed. But choose a time that works for you. It is best to use a journal. On a page write the date including year and then write how your day went.
2. Gently walk through your day and ask questions such as: How did I respond to that person when we were talking? How did I respond to the boss telling me there was a better way to do things? Was my day joyful? Was my day stressful? What disturbed me during my day? What pulled me into my addictive behaviors? If it seems

daunting sometimes, just jot down if your day was happy or sad. And maybe reflect the following day. Or maybe draw a picture or a symbol that best describes your day.

3. Then try to move a bit deeper into why you responded as you did? If nothing comes up, that is ok. Maybe the time is not quite right for clarity. You may seek clarity in your meditation or seek clarity by pulling Tarot cards. I studied the I-Ching and received much clarity from that source. Use whatever methods work for you to reveal truth about yourself.

4. Once you start making the effort to reflect it will become easier. And you will start to reflect right after an experience. This is self-awareness. And then eventually you start to reflect before you respond so that you begin to respond with volitional action (Kriya yoga). And this is called balanced self-awareness. **We start to take control of our lives. We begin our journey of self-mastery!!**

**Aham Brahmasmi!**

**A fun exercise:**

Take a month- either from full moon to full moon or new moon to new moon and write down each day with the sign that the moon is in next to the day. Then write a short description of your day, next to that.

The moon in the different signs effect us just as the moon has a pull on the ocean. We are water beings. We are emotional beings. The moon changes signs approximately every 2.5 days. The moon goes through the zodiac in 28 days. So you can really see in a months time how we are affected by the moon. Also with this exercise you get a feel for the qualities of the moon and can study where it land in your natal chart.

Example:

Saturday September 10, 2022 moon in Pisces

Sunday September 11, 2022 moon in Pisces

Monday September 12, 2022 moon in Aries

Tuesday September 13, 2022, moon in Aries

Wednesday September 14, 2022 moon in Taurus

Thursday September 15, 2022 moon in Taurus

Friday September 16, 2022 moon in Gemini

And so forth.....