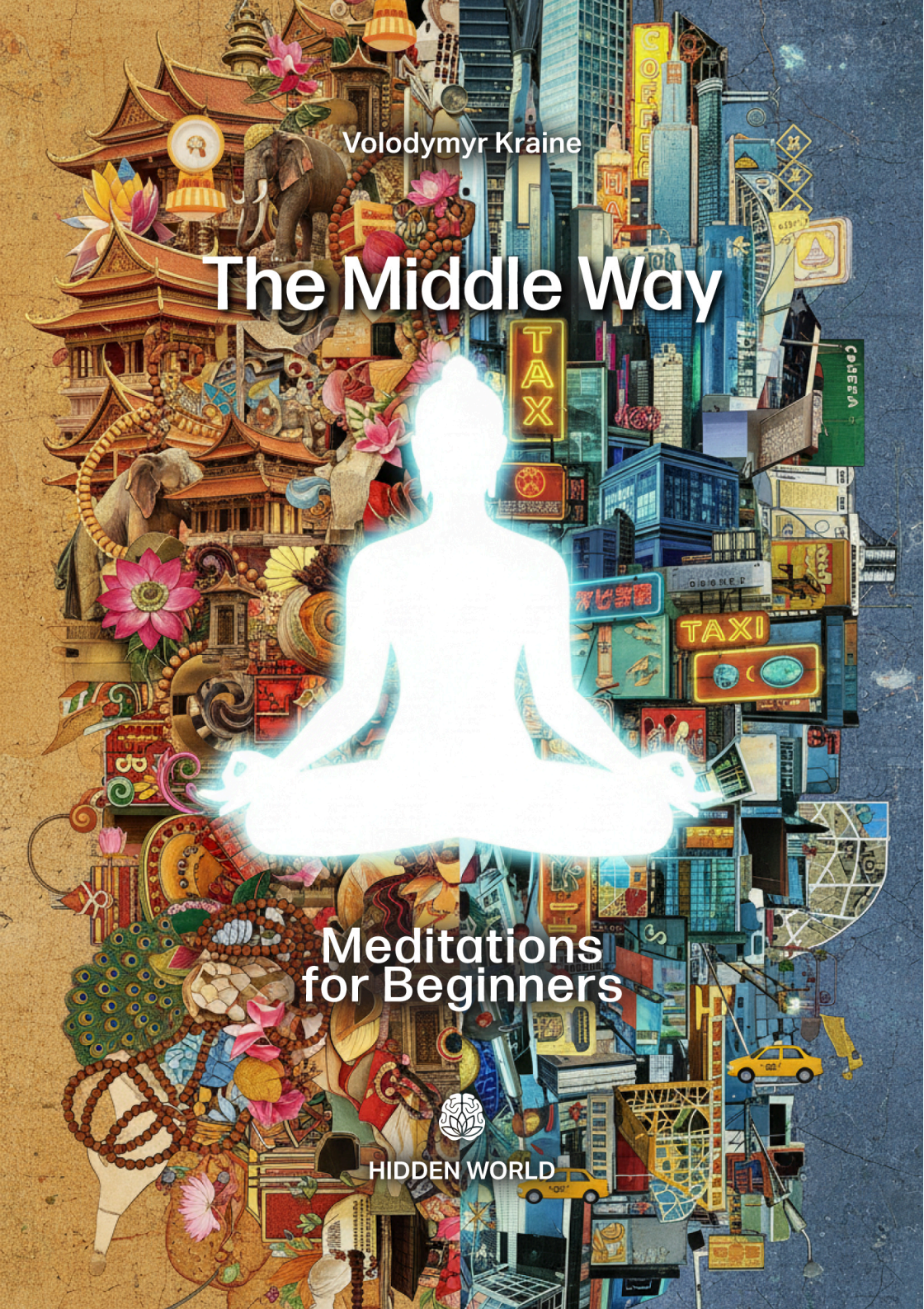

Volodymyr Kraine
The Middle Way
TAX
TAXI
Meditations
for Beginners
HIDDEN WORLD

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Chapter One. The Pause.

There are events in our lives that put life on pause. Usually, that is exactly what we say to ourselves or to others: “I need a break...”. We put relationships on hold; at work, we reach the limit and “take a break”. When making difficult decisions, we also “take a moment” to weigh everything and think it through. Very often, events unfolding in the world “put our lives on pause”. Abrupt changes in politics, abrupt changes in the economy, man-made and natural disasters, wars or epidemics - all of these are pauses imposed upon our lives.

When a pause is beyond our control, we feel uncomfortable. After all, we had so many plans for the active phase. Or perhaps we had plans for the relaxation phase. And now we are forced to wait. Not because we want to. It sends us into a state of “paralysis”. We cannot live with uncertainty. Uncertainty frightens us. It threatens us.

If you pause between inhaling and exhaling and hold that pause for too long, you will become frightened. You cannot live without air. Without air, uncertainty begins to set in. It is one thing if you chose to pause, but if the pause between inhaling and exhaling is imposed from outside, you will experience overwhelming terror. If you dive underwater and, for some reason, remain there longer than expected, all that follows is a struggle for survival, all that follows is fear. A pause imposed from outside is comparable to suffocation.

And what can be said about cardiac arrest? We do not know how to stop our own hearts; cardiac arrest is usually caused by circumstances beyond our control. In the past, a person’s heart

could stop only once in their lifetime, at the moment of death. Today, modern medicine has learned how to “restart” a heart that has stopped. But the pause is frightening all the same.

What would you say if I told you that the Guinness World Record for remaining underwater with preparation is 29 minutes?

Dolphins remain underwater for an average of 5-10 minutes, whales for 10-20 minutes. If you look at these figures not as records, but as abilities, it turns out that the capabilities of the human body allow it to live both in the air and underwater.

The situation with cardiac arrest is even more complicated. A person can survive 6 minutes of cardiac arrest without damage to the brain. If the person’s body was hypothermic at the moment their heart stopped, the longest known case anyone has survived is 8 hours and 42 minutes.

These facts seem miraculous and impossible to us, but only because such cases are not widely documented or publicized. Why should people know that they are half fish? All it takes is erasing the boundary between the possible and the impossible, and your perception of the world will never be the same. And as you can see, that boundary exists only in your perception.

Yogis do not need to “persuade” science or society to accept their point of view. Yoga does not change the world or break its rules. Yoga teaches us to control the pause.

The most remarkable experiment took place in India in the mid-19th century and drew the attention of both local residents and British doctors. A yogi named Hariji agreed to take part in an unusual experiment to demonstrate his unique abilities. Under the supervision of British doctors and local officials, he entered a state of deep meditation and was buried alive.

Before he was buried, the doctors conducted a thorough examination and pronounced him dead: there was no pulse, no breathing, and no other signs of life. Hariji was placed in a special box, which was buried several feet underground. The burial site was marked, wheat was sown around it, and guards were posted to ensure that there was no interference or substitution. The experiment lasted several weeks, and during that time the wheat had time to sprout, providing further proof of how long he had remained underground.

Once the agreed period had elapsed, the box was dug up. In the presence of the same doctors and officials who had pronounced him dead, the box was opened. At first glance, Hariji's body remained motionless and cold, like that of a dead man. But then the process of "resurrection" began. He was placed in warm water, and his limbs were massaged. Gradually, the yogi began to show signs of life: he started breathing, his pulse returned, and after a while he regained consciousness.

I do not promise that this book will teach you to perform miracles on the level of Hariji. But I do guarantee that you will learn exactly how controlling the pause can improve your life. And this is not about convincing you of anything or teaching you something. In truth, every one of us is already capable of performing the miracles Hariji demonstrated; we have simply forgotten.

Chapter Two. The Door to Meditation.

If you live a modern life and are constantly in a state of tension, then right now you want to learn, quickly and simply, the “recipe,” the “life hack,” the “secret” to swiftly recalling the yoga you practiced in your past incarnations so that you can perform miracles. Many people simply buy books, and the mere fact of owning a book is enough for them, but they do not read the book itself. The modern world has imposed these simplifications on us; they are natural to it. It wants each of us to consume more and more. And since the time we have for consumption is limited, the “product” must be consumed quickly. Vacation tours also go by very quickly, because the vacationer still has to manage to consume many other things.

Fortunately or unfortunately, yoga cannot sell you anything or provide you with a quick result. After all, we will be learning to control the pause. And for natural reasons, it is connected neither with the process of tension nor with the process of relaxation.

To discern the “door” to meditation, you need to perform one simple action: balance your inhalation, exhalation, and pause. All three stages should be equal in duration. It is best to practice the inhalation first, then the pause, followed by the exhalation. Until you become bored.

Before you begin, try to look around and remember your state. This simple phrase only seems clear; in fact, something is left unsaid. Turn your head and notice which things or objects “leap out” of reality and “ask” you to pay attention to them. So as not to

strain your memory, write them down. Give yourself some time to forget these objects. Make yourself a comfortable place for meditation, adjust your clothes, or take a sip of fresh tea. Such actions will shift your attention from the objects you remembered to the actions you are performing.

Choose a count for yourself; for example, begin by inhaling for a count of 5, pausing for the same count, and exhaling for a count of 5 as well. Try to deepen all three phases by increasing the count; if you feel discomfort - decrease it. There is no competition here. There can be no results here. Just ordinary breathing, except that all three phases are in balance.

Do not try to see a door or passage. Do not create expectations for yourself. This practice is aimed not at action, but at exploring the pause. None of your active skills, such as endurance, precision, and discipline, will be needed here. If you lose count, nothing terrible will happen. There is no need to be an “obedient” student here. You cannot fail! You have known how to breathe since the moment you were born. Just do this practice. But before you go, I will give you one last recommendation. When you have finished breathing this way, open your eyes and remember your state. Just as you did at the beginning. Again, write down the objects that “caught” your eye. Then compare the results. Have a good practice.

It is best to return to reading after the practice.

Doing something in your imagination is not enough.

I am very glad if you followed my recommendations. If you did not - that is all right. If you could not grasp the pause on your first attempt, we will keep trying, and you will have another chance to read the book and practice the knowledge it contains.

What actually matters is not which objects you wrote down before and after the practice. What matters is the state that changed. You began to perceive everything around you differently. I do not know exactly how you felt it, but the sensations in your body changed. The transition from your initial state of consciousness to the altered state of consciousness you feel after the practice - that is the most important thing. You did not notice exactly how or precisely when your sense of your body changed. In fact, there are two states: the state before the practice and the state after the practice.

Something similar happens when you fall asleep and wake up. You cannot trace the boundary, but you know for certain that your states have changed. This is the “door to meditation.” In time, you may be able to track the shift between states. But only in time. For now, it is important to “see” that you crossed a certain boundary and that this boundary exists. If there is something separating your two states, then there must also be a passage. Otherwise, the states would not have changed.

Usually, when we breathe, we do not notice the pause. Likewise, we do not notice the pause in our heartbeat, although we can “hear” the sound of the heart beating. The pause is always hidden from our perception. When you begin to study the pause, you will discover that you have started to “see” what you did not notice before. For example, when I practiced balancing inhalation, exhalation, and the pause, I saw more objects after the practice. Before the practice, there were only three; afterward, there were nine. The objects had not gone anywhere, and no new ones had appeared. My perception had changed; it had become clearer, stronger, and more precise. That is why “new” objects were added.

When we are focused on the phase of tension, we want to achieve a result more quickly. This is logical, because tension requires energy. The pause requires no energy, and so its capacity for perception is unlimited. On the other hand, we are accustomed to living in a world of limitations, and so we ourselves have set a duration for the pause. If we turn to the canonical texts on yoga, inhalation takes one part, exhalation takes two parts, and the pause takes four parts of the count. This means that you inhale for a count of 5, exhale for a count of 10, and pause for 20.

In an ordinary state, people cannot hold their breath for a long time, but we need to learn to do so. Yogis do not learn to hold their breath; yogis learn to explore the pause.

The entire meaning of yoga can be described in a single sentence: Exploring the pause between inhalation and exhalation.

All other techniques are intended to increase the duration of this exploration. Control of the mind, concentration, diligence in life - these are all tools that help a yogi remain on the boundary between two states. From this boundary, a magnificent view of the entire Universe opens up. The crossroads of worlds lies there. At this zero point of creation, you can be anyone and go anywhere.

We all know what books are. We have all watched films or TV series. Have you ever wondered exactly how we read books or watch films? After all, we “inhabit” the characters. Our sense of our body changes, and we “wish” to become the hero, if only for a little while. The pause is involved in these processes as well. In these processes, we also cross a certain boundary. We often use this effect for entertainment, and sometimes for our benefit. And sometimes we simply think about our own concerns and do not watch the film or read the book. Although, in fact, our eyes are watching, and our brain is speaking the words from the book.

Or we listen to music, and the very act of listening changes our perception of what is happening around us. If our perception changes, then we are crossing the crossroads of worlds. But while we read, watch, or listen, we are following someone else's will. Someone wrote the book, someone wrote the music or made the film. Out of habit, we go wherever we have been invited. We did not choose the path we are taking - we are constantly following someone.

In modern life, we likewise do not choose our own path, our own destiny. We move in the direction someone has set for us. This direction does not necessarily fail to suit or please us; what matters is that we did not choose it. When yogis say that people do not make choices, it does not mean that people have no choice. Yogis say that only when you are able to stop and look around can you make a choice.

Perhaps your life is wonderful and you need neither yoga nor meditation - this is your choice, and although it was not made by you, it is the best one for you. But if you do not know how to take a "pause," you miss many other possibilities. Not necessarily possibilities that are better for you, simply different ones. Before exploring the pause, I saw three objects; after the practice, ten. This is the essence of any practice - to become better than you were before it.

Chapter Three. What Kinds of Meditation Are There?

Now you know that you pass through the door of meditation very often without even noticing it. You have a general understanding that if you pause at the boundary between states, you can choose which meditation you want to enter. In other words: which state you want to experience. But meditation is not limited to the state of the body. We have 5 senses, and their very existence gives rise to the following list of meditations:

1. Experienced states - this is one of the five possible meditations. Changes in bodily sensation are a simple form of meditation available to everyone.

2. In second place are meditations that **show images**. We often use this form of meditation when we imagine or think about something. We do not merely think - we see pictures. And the thoughts swarming through our heads are, in essence, pictures too.

3. Next come **sound meditations** . They are rare, but if you practice music, it is easier for you to hear music than it is for anyone else. Composers imagine not pictures, but sounds. They know how to see them.

4. Then come **taste meditations**. By the same token, people who cook well can imagine a taste. Moreover, they somehow "understand" that certain ingredients will produce a certain taste.

5. Meditations on smells are the rarest. Of course, we are capable of imagining a smell, just as we can imagine anything perceived by the 5 senses. But what matters here is that a smell exists on its own. It does not need an image; it simply is.

Each of the 5 meditations leads the meditating yogi to a meditation in which all five senses intermingle. Meditation then turns into something resembling reality. In the early stages, such a meditation is observed as if from the outside. A "screen" appears directly before your inner eye, and meditations are "shown" through it. The direct analogy is that the brain is a player that plays something for us. All yogis strive for this form of meditation, and a great many attain it quite easily. Many tools were devised specifically for it: breathing practices, hatha yoga, mantra chanting, and others.

The entire modern world acts upon all five senses, drawing us into its game of consumption and sales. If our receptors latch onto something, we want it to continue. If we like something - we want to own it. But all of this pales before the next form of meditation.

6. Meditations perceived as hallucinations. First, the screen through which meditations are shown disappears. Then your 360-degree sense of the room becomes a single screen where you can not only see and feel, but also distinguish directions. It is like the "Sphere in Las Vegas," with you sitting at its center. But at first it is still a screen showing something.

7. When a yogi attains sufficient mastery, he completely **crosses into the world of meditation**. Just as we cross into sleep. After all, sleep is, in essence, a hallucination. But we do not choose our dreams, whereas we can choose our meditation.

Lucid dreaming, in which a person controls the dream world, is a fairly widespread pursuit. But people usually awaken inside a dream, realize they are dreaming, and only then can they manipulate its reality. Meanwhile, all sensation of the body disappears. There is only the dream body.

Yogi Hariji, whom I cited as an example at the beginning, did not stop his breathing or heartbeat. He entered this kind of meditation. He departed into another reality, one resembling the reality of a lucid dream. In such meditations, yogis study what reality itself is made of. And, by analogy with lucid dreaming, they learn to control not only the reality of meditation, but also the reality in which you and I live.

Besides lucid dreaming, there is also the path of psychedelic experience. With the help of psychoactive substances, psychonauts induce hallucinations in themselves and thus attempt to explore the world and understand themselves.

Yoga and meditation do not call on you to leave your reality. Meditation is difficult to use as an escape from reality, as can happen with drug-induced states. Yoga offers tools that allow consciousness to operate in alternative realities. In fact, lucid dreaming is unstable, and consciousness "returns" fairly quickly to existence in the physical body.

Psychedelic states last a long time, but without the necessary skills, these realities fall apart, and a person most often sees incoherent fragments. That is why humanity calls such hallucinations delirium.

You have probably witnessed delirious dreams or encountered other people in delirious states under the influence of alcohol. These states are delirious for only one reason: the people experiencing them do not know how to exist in such states. They do not know how to behave or understand the workings of their own body and consciousness, and so they undergo the experience of "shattered realities."

Humanity has introduced the concept of the boundaries of what is acceptable and permissible. But everything I have listed exists. The universe created it for all of us. Whether we like the order of things or not, that is how it is.

Even if you have never crossed the boundaries of what is acceptable, that does not mean you have never undergone or are not now undergoing the experience of “shattered realities.”

If a person has worked hard and feels that he has “justly” earned a reward, it hardly matters what kind. A raise or a promotion. Then he has undergone or is undergoing the experience of a “shattered reality.”

If a person has faithfully devoted all his time and strength to his family, friends, or homeland and hopes that it will repay him in kind. Then he has undergone or is undergoing the experience of a “shattered reality.”

Whenever a person believes in the honesty, decency, and justice of the world, he undergoes the experience of a “shattered reality.”

Of course, this is not a state of intoxication or a dream, and everything seems real. But a great many examples from the past tell us that human “expectations” of the world have never come true. Our ancestors even came up with sayings for this: “A promise is awaited for three years” or “While the fat man grows thin - the thin man dies.”

Existing in a reality people have invented for themselves is also a kind of meditation. The only difference between an invented reality and other realities is that an invented reality is individual.

It does not matter whether a person is experiencing a fantastical hallucination or an entirely plausible one. He is experiencing a hallucination. At least, that is what yogis who have returned from

other realities and learned to exist there for quite a long time say. You must have heard this phrase quite often: “Everything is illusion, maya.”

But this does not mean that the illusion does not exist, nor does it mean that this illusion cannot be controlled. The tea or coffee you drink in the morning is simultaneously an illusion and something that exists. Your wealth or your poverty is simultaneously an illusion and something that exists. Your hopeless situation is simultaneously hopeless and fortunate. The only difference is what your consciousness is focused on.

Remember how we said that you do not notice the pause? In the same way, you do not notice your happiness, the way out of a hopeless situation, your wealth, or your success. Remember how easy it was to detect the pause; it is just as easy to detect everything else, all that you do not see. You only need to learn to control your perception. Then you will be able to control your reality as well. It does not matter whether it is objective reality or an alternative reality. What matters is the skill of control itself, which is why people with well-developed imaginations will achieve greater success than those without them.

If you can watch films and read books but believe that you have no imagination, - this does not mean you truly have none. In such people, it is poorly developed, so at the beginning of your journey, learning to imagine is a way of training your visual perception. You should do the same with other forms of perception - they need to be trained.