

Meditation: A natural part of life

Most people think of meditation as sitting cross-legged with eyes closed, which is a great way to experience the state of meditation. However, you can also experience the state of meditation through any activity that requires a great deal of focus or peaceful, repetitive actions.

Natural sources of meditation were once built into daily life, before society became as busy and technologically complex as it is today. For centuries, people paid much more attention to nature's magnificent and subtle displays — watching, enjoying, and meditating on her ever-changing beauty and drama.

Bells and whistles: Spiritual experiences along the way

Some meditators experience various visual, auditory, or other internal visions, sounds, sensations, and understandings when they sit for meditation. These inner experiences may delight your spirit and entice your mind, and can be a great incentive for you to continue your meditation practices. Some meditation traditions suggest that you meditate on these inner experiences, while others tell you to ignore them and rest in emptiness.

Most meditation masters suggest that even if you do enjoy your meditation experiences, you shouldn't get too attached to these inner visions, sounds, and revelations. Being too attached to these enchantments can become a distraction from your greater spiritual quest, as can any attachment to sensory pleasures. Yet, these amazing inner experiences can also fill your heart with inspiration and bring about great spurts of spiritual growth. Brahmananda, one of the great poet sages of India, opens the secret gates to some of these meditation experiences in this poetic description:

No one is playing this delightful song you hear, o dear one. The music within your heart is so sweet, but no one is playing it.

Sit down in a meditation posture and close your ears off from outer sounds. You will hear a soft sound within. Concentrate, and soon you will hear the vibration of a unique kind of music.

In the beginning, you may hear a kind of orchestra, and then each instrument will be heard separately: the bell, conch, flute, veena, and drums.

As days go by, the sound gets louder and the body starts trembling. A drop of nectar will fall into your palate and fill you with great bliss.

Body consciousness disappears and a light dances both within and without. Only a rare saint can confirm what I am saying.

A peaceful, meditative focus was also present in our ancestors' lives through all the daily tasks that have since been replaced by modern technology and convenience, such as churning butter, milking cows, plowing fields, and chopping wood. These naturally meditative actions offered regular times of peaceful repose, steady movements, and communion with nature.

Modern life brings fewer occasions for routine meditative actions. Many people today are rushing from one responsibility to another, having complex interactions with other people, dwelling on fears of job security, preparing for meetings, going through e-mail requests, maintaining their houses, cars, dogs, children, and financial situations, all while thinking about vacation plans, eating schedules, desires for recognition, concerns about weight and hair styles, and so on. Personal energies are pouring out through countless spigots of worldly life, leaving many people feeling depleted and distracted. However, it doesn't have to be this way for you.

Take the floodlights of energy that are going out into your daily life and turn them around, redirecting these energy flows back into yourself through meditation.

Sit quietly and reap the benefits from having all this extra energy in your body, mind, and spirit. Allow the spiritual energy of meditation to carry you into more meaningful explorations of your inner world and soul. Let your mind become so calm that it reveals the peaceful sky of spiritual awareness. Invite the great universal sun of divine grace to shine through everything you think, say, and do.

Spirituality in Action

Here's an example of how to meditate on a spiritual concept. Sit quietly, close your eyes, focus your mind, and dive into the essence of these words: *This moment right now is eternal. Every moment is eternal.* Allow your mind to move beyond the limitations of time and expand into the eternal presence. If you'd like, you can mentally say these lines with your inhalations and exhalations. As you breathe in, think, "This moment is eternal," and as you breathe out, think, "Every moment is eternal."