

An art of Meditation

Silence is the essence of meditation.

Deep within every human soul is silence, like deep sleep, like a deep ocean. Yet within this silence live things that create the human being, body and soul. Meditation, like sleep strengthens the health of mind, body and spirit as well as empowering one's life towards one's deepest aims.

There are four stages of meditation that flow one into another creating a whole. The first is to come to the calm centre that touches the deep silence within. The second is an active building of the meditation through word image or sound. The third is holding the space that this act creates, and the last is to return from that space back to the ordinary awareness that supports our life as healthy part of our daily context. Each part is equally important. Two to five minutes for each part is a healthy period until you become very familiar with it.

To begin a meditation it is helpful to find a space where one will not be observed or interrupted. A way of sitting or standing that does not lead to aches is also helpful. Many people find that an upright spine assists the deepening of consciousness without slipping into dream states.

Once you are comfortable begin the letting go of daily awareness by admitting that all the tasks and worries of your life are beyond your power to do anything about at his very moment, in these next few minutes you cannot change anything by thinking about it. You may assure yourself (the self is always hungry for re-assurance) that after these few minutes you will resume normal awareness and those things that need thinking about will get some attention; but for now put them down and let them all go.

In one sense you are now in a similar position to a teacher with a class: some teachers can get their charges to be quiet by holding themselves still and saying "shush now children" others end up yelling "QUIET!!!" and speaking sharply to those how do not manage this. One's own inner voices are the children and I have tried both ways. I now tend to tell them a story or even let them out to play on days when they really can't manage to be quiet.

A technique that I have found helpful to go deeper into the silence is by noticing the muscles of the body. Begin at the crown of your head, is there any tension in your scalp? Relax these fine muscles as well as you can. Come down over the brow and face, around your eyes, nose, mouth jaw, and so on seeking habitual or unconscious tensions and releasing them. Go down through your neck and shoulders, and right down every bit of the body, slowly seeking and releasing tensions. Use this process as a way of ignoring the minds chatter. If you manage to ignore it for long enough it will eventually cease to badger you to listen to it. Valuable as the mind is if it remains untrained it is not more use than a Chihuahua at a sheepdog trial, regular periods of a gentle refusal to respond to it's chatter allows it to come to rest. Do not expect immediate success with this but do persevere, it does work.

By the time your muscle awareness program reaches your feet your mind and body are likely to be as still as today will allow. Into this stillness introduce the meditation. There are some below as introductory examples. In each case the words may be repeated inwardly whilst your imagination builds pictures from them. It may take several days of once or twice daily to become familiar enough with the words that you can hold the silence around them as well as remember them, until then have them written clear on a paper with no other words on it close enough that you can refer to it with a simple glance. Allow your whole awareness now to grow within the words so that you walk in these images as you would in a cathedral or other beautiful and sacred space. This or that line or word may draw your attention repeatedly like a particular arch or window in such a cathedral would. You may feel the meanings of the words echo around you like music coming from an unseen choir; rhythms, repeated sounds, meanings stretched between words and lines form the beauty of such a space like the beauty of a cathedral hangs between the elements of the

architecture. Wonder at the depth of beauty and meaning held within. Time by time you may become more familiar with ~ and find new meanings hidden in the words as you might learn more about a piece of music you hear again and again. This is your space, live within it.

Slowly the words fade away and the space you built and found in them remains, this sacred space so full of beauty and hidden depths is still around you. Listen quietly to this space. Allow your soul to soak up all of it, to feel into the shadows and lights, the colours and sounds, maybe the smell of the space. It is possible at this stage that you feel something arise here that you had not expected, even though you built this space with the meanings in the words of the meditation it could be that you become aware of a gentle presence arising within you or within the space. Many times gifts from Creator aspects of the world are given in this time of quiet following the active element of a meditation.

Allow yourself now to come out of this deep space: pay attention to your breath, perhaps even your heartbeat in the silence. Think again of your muscles and watch the coursing of awareness returning to your limbs. Move this muscle or that, perhaps from your feet and then your hands up the limbs and up through the body into your neck and head. The presence of this body with it's pains, with the joys that it enables for you through the senses, sound from outside, the scent in the room, light coming through your eyelids. Some people like to pat the legs and arms from the feet and hands in towards the heart to encourage the return of inflowing awareness that serves our being present in everyday reality, present to and for the people around us, present to the world of the senses. The senses whose richness is the joy that can compensate for many of the sorrows of life.

Steady and full return from a meditation is as important a part as any other. Leaving a meditation without proper return to every day consciousness is a soul equivalent to going out in the weather with no clothes on – Exposure robs one of the warmth one needs to maintain health.

Quiet I bear within me
I bear within myself
Forces to make me strong
Now will I be imbued
With their glowing warmth
Now will I fill myself
With my own will's resolve
And I will feel the quiet
Pouring through all my being
When by my steadfast striving
I become strong
To find within myself
The source of strength
The strength of inner quiet.

Rudolf Steiner

Be Still
And know
That
I AM

Psalm 46 v 10