

Individual Meditation at Home

excerpted from Meditation : Man-Perfection in God-Satisfaction by Sri Chinmoy

When you meditate at home, you should have a corner of your room which is absolutely pure and sanctified – a sacred place which you use only for meditation. There you can make a shrine where you can keep a picture of your spiritual Master, or the Christ, or some other beloved spiritual figure whom you regard as your Master.

Before beginning to meditate, it is helpful if you can take a shower or proper bath. The cleanliness of the body is very helpful for the purification of the consciousness. If you are unable to take a shower or bath before sitting down to meditate, you should at least wash your face. It is also advisable to wear clean and light clothes.

It will also help if you burn incense and keep some fresh flowers on your shrine. When you smell the sent of incense, you get perhaps only an iota of inspiration and purification, but this iota can be added to your inner treasure. There are some people who say that it is not necessary to have flowers in front of you during meditation. They say, “The flower is inside, the thousand-petalled lotus is inside.” But the physical flower on your shrine will remind you of the inner flower. Its colour, its fragrance and its pure consciousness will give you inspiration. From inspiration you get aspiration.

It is the same with using candles during meditation. The flame from a candle will not in itself give you aspiration, but when you see the outer flame immediately you feel that the flame of aspiration in your inner being is also climbing high, higher, highest. If someone is on the verge of God-realisation or has actually realised God, then these outer things will have no value. But if you know that your God-realisation is still a far cry, then they will definitely increase your aspiration.

When you are doing your individual daily meditation, try to meditate alone... Collective meditation is also important, but for individual daily meditation it is better to meditate privately at one's own shrine.

When meditating, it is important to keep the spine straight and erect, and to keep the body relaxed. If the body is stiff, the divine and fulfilling qualities that are flowing in and through it during meditation will not be received. The body should not be uncomfortable, either. While you are meditating, your inner being will spontaneously take you to a comfortable position, and then it is up to you to maintain it. The main advantage of the lotus position is that it helps keep the spinal cord straight and erect. But it is not comfortable for most people. So the lotus position is not at all necessary for proper meditation. Many people meditate very well while seated in a chair.

It is not at all advisable to meditate while lying down, even for those who have been meditating for several years. Those who try to meditate while lying down will enter into the world of sleep or into a kind of inner drift or dose. Furthermore, while you are lying down, your breathing is not as satisfactory as it is when you are in a sitting position, since it is not conscious or controlled. Proper breathing is very important in meditation.

When you keep your eyes closed during meditation and enter into the world of sleep, you may enjoy all kinds of fantasies ... So it is best to meditate with the eyes half open and half closed.

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