

Concentration, Meditation and Other Exercises

excerpted from the writings of Sri Chinmoy

Exercise in Concentration

Kindly imagine inside your heart (*note: this refers to the spiritual heart, or the heart or anahata chakra located about in the middle of one's chest*) a flame. Right now perhaps the flame is tiny and flickering; it is not a powerful flame. But one day it will definitely become most powerful and most illumining. So every day before you pray and meditate, try to imagine inside your heart a flame, a burning flame. And please try to imagine that that flame is illumining your mind. You cannot concentrate according to your satisfaction because the mind is not focused. The mind is constantly thinking of many things. It has become a victim of many uncomely thoughts. The mind does not have proper illumination, so imagine a beautiful flame inside your heart, illumining you. Bring that illumining flame inside your mind. Then you will gradually see a streak of light inside your mind. When your mind starts becoming illumined, it is very, very easy to concentrate for a long time, and also to concentrate more deeply.

Stilling the Mind

To make your mind vacant, you should not allow any thought to enter into your mind and take shape. Suppose a thought, a vibration, or something else is coming. Immediately, shoot an arrow and pierce it into pieces. An idea comes, somebody's name comes, or some thought comes. Immediately, just throw it out. It must not come and enter into your mind. Before it touches your mind you have to cut it into pieces.

Breathing Exercises

Exercise 1: Proper breathing is very important in meditation. When breathing, try to breathe in as slowly and as quietly as possible, so that if somebody placed a tiny thread in front of your nose, it would not move at all. And when you breathe out, try to breathe out even more slowly than when you breathed in. If possible, leave a short pause between the end of your first exhalation and the beginning of your second inhalation. If you can, hold your breath for a few seconds. But if it is difficult, do not do it. Never do anything that will harm your organs or respiratory system.

Exercise 2: Each time you breathe in, try to feel that you are bringing into your body peace, infinite peace. The opposite of peace is restlessness. When you breathe out, try to feel that you are expelling the restlessness within you and also the restlessness that you see all around you. When you breathe this way, you will find restlessness leaving you.

Chanting Mantras

If you want to achieve overall purification of your nature, then japa (repetition of a mantra) can be most effective. But you have to do it in a systematic way, step by step. Today repeat 'Aum' or 'Supreme' or whatever mantra your Master has given you five hundred times. Then tomorrow repeat it six hundred times, the day after tomorrow, seven hundred times, and so on, until you reach twelve hundred in one week's time. Then begin descending each day until you reach five hundred again. In this way you can climb up the tree and climb down the tree. Please continue this exercise, week by week, for a month. Whether you want to change your name or not, the world will give you a new name: 'Purity'. Some of my students have done this exercise and they have achieved, I must say, considerable purification of their nature and their emotional problems.

Meditation on the Spiritual Heart

Exercise 1: When you meditate, please meditate on the heart (*note: this refers to the spiritual heart, or the heart or anahata chakra located about in the middle of one's chest*), and then try to have the peace, light and bliss of the heart percolate through the entire being. In the heart you have peace, and like a flower it has to blossom petal by petal, here, there, everywhere. Then you have a flower of peace whose petals have blossomed in all parts of the being.

Exercise 2: When you want to meditate, at that time think of something very vast – the sky, the ocean, the mountains – and become one with the vastness, which is all power. Imagine something very vast, calm and quiet. When you start meditating, feel that inside you is a vast ocean and that you have dived to the bottom, where it is all tranquillity. If you can identify yourself with this vast ocean, with this flood of tranquillity, then it will be extremely easy for you to meditate.

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