

What is a good meditation?

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

Seekers often ask how they can tell whether they are meditating properly or whether they are just deceiving themselves or having mental hallucinations. It is very easy to know. If you are meditating properly, you will get spontaneous inner joy. Nobody has given you good news, nobody has brought you any gifts, nobody has appreciated or admired you, nobody has done anything for you, but you will have an inner feeling of delight. If this happens, then you will know that you are meditating properly. But if you feel a mental tension or disturbance, then you will know that the kind of meditation that you are doing is not meant for you.

If you are enjoying mental hallucination, you will feel that peace is within and restlessness is without. You are yearning for peace, light and bliss, but outwardly you are feeling a volcanic turbulence. If you are having a real meditation, a sublime meditation, then you are bound to feel peace within and without. If it is soulful meditation, you will feel your eternal existence, you will feel that you are of Eternity and for Eternity. This feeling you cannot get from a mental hallucination.

There is also another way that you can know. If you are actually entering into a higher plane, you will feel that your body is becoming very light. Although you don't have wings, you will almost feel that you can fly. In fact, when you have reached a very high world, you will actually see a bird inside you that can easily fly just as real birds do.

When it is your imagination, you will get a very sweet feeling for a few minutes; then immediately dark or frustrating thoughts will come into you. You will say, "I studied so hard, but I did not do well in my examination," or "I worked so hard in the office today, but I could not please my boss." These negative forces in the form of frustration will immediately come in. Or doubt may enter, and you may say, "How can I meditate so well when yesterday I did so many wrong things? How can God be pleased with me? How can I be having a high meditation?" But if it is really high meditation, you will feel that your whole existence, like a divine bird, is soaring high, higher, highest. While you are having this feeling there will be no sad thoughts, no frustrating thoughts and no doubts. You will be flying in the sky of delight where all is joy, peace and bliss.

You can also know whether you had a good meditation by the way you feel afterwards. If peace, light, love and joy have come to the fore from within as a result of your meditation, then you will know that you have meditated well. If you have a good feeling for the world, if you see the world in a loving way in spite of its teeming imperfections, then you will know that your meditation was good. And if you have a dynamic feeling right after meditation, if you feel that you have come into the world to do something and become something – to grow into God's very image and become his dedicated instrument – this indicates that you have had a good meditation. But the easiest way to know if you have had a good meditation is to feel whether peace, light, love and delight have come to the fore from within.

Please do not be disturbed if you cannot meditate well in the beginning. Even in the ordinary life, God alone knows how many years one must practise in order to become very good at something. If an accomplished pianist thinks of what his standard was when he first began to play, he will laugh. It is through gradual progress that he has achieved his present musical height. In the spiritual life also, you may find it difficult to meditate in the beginning. But do not try to force yourself. Ten minutes early in the morning is enough. Gradually your capacity will increase. If you practise every day, you will make progress in your inner life.

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