

OM
A GUIDE TO
MEDITATION AND
INNER TRANQUILITY



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INNER TRANQUILITY**

By Frank J. MacHovec

*Registered Psychologist,
Province of Manitoba*

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OM

A Guide to Meditation and Inner Tranquility

MEDITATION: WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

DICTIONARIES usually define meditation as deep, continued thought, reflection, or contemplation. Some add that it can be a religious act, a solemn reflection on sacred matters. It is ironic that such a deep and transcendent state of mind is defined with so few words. But then definitions are words and meditation is too deep for words. It may help you to understand what meditation is by describing what it is not.

Meditation is not prayer. Praying is a specific message or appeal directed at God. Meditation is more than a message. It is a state of mind, expansive, outreaching, not narrowly focussed. Prayer is aimed at a target external to the self. Meditation is centered and rooted in the self and meditative awareness wells up from within and extends to the total universe. It begins internally, then expands through the mind to a higher consciousness, cosmic consciousness.

Meditation is not self-hypnosis, although it closely resembles such a state of mind. A person sitting quietly with eyes closed may look hypnotized. But then it is also true that a person in deep sleep may look like a corpse! Modern research methods using test instruments to measure brain waves and body changes show there is a difference in mind and body functioning in a hypnotized subject and an experienced meditator.

Meditation is not learning to generate alpha brain waves into biofeedback apparatus. It is

true that a person's brain in meditation gives off alpha waves, but to concentrate only on this aspect of meditation is like playing football only to get to feel the ball, not to actively play the game. It is leaving out the central idea, focussing on one tiny aspect of the total picture. Alpha waves are only one of many signs of the meditative state. There is much, much more to it.

Meditation is not magic. There is no secret formula, no ancient rite, no mysterious visions. We use Zen, Hindu and other techniques only because they have had more experience in the principles and practices of meditation. The fact that most meditation methods seem mystical and "Eastern" is because meditation has been accepted practice in the East for centuries. If it seems like magic it is because many people consider it in the same category as yogis sitting on nails, Zen monks in mountaintop monasteries, or an old yet ageless lama in Shangri-la, the lost valley of Tibet described in *Lost Horizons*.

Meditation is not psychotherapy, although most people would no doubt find it personally and therefore psychologically helpful. Many psychologists and psychiatrists are recommending meditation as a means to help adjust to the stress of everyday life and to feel more relaxed and at ease. If you feel more relaxed you are better able to know and understand yourself and others, better able to make decisions and to enjoy yourself. That really contributes to personal growth. But meditation cannot cure mental illness. Deep personality problems cannot be meditated away.

What then is meditation? Some have described it as falling down the well which is within us. Others picture it as a slow spiral into the inner self. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Society for Transcendental Meditation, describes it as "diving within." It begins as concentration on a symbol, word, idea, or object. All thoughts but the one are blocked out. Invading thoughts are allowed to pass through

consciousness but eventually, inevitably, the original thought of choice returns.

Gradually, the intellect is phased out. It isn't necessary to think intellectually. The original thought remains of and by itself. Because this no longer requires conscious effort, there is an increasing feeling of serenity and inner peace. In time, this feeling of contentment and self-satisfaction fades away, replaced by a feeling of selflessness. This brings on the final phase of meditation, a joining with something powerful, infinite, indescribable, a deep feeling of mystic unity or union with the entire universe.

The meditative process takes time. You can't take a crash course and develop this skill overnight. It is like dropping a steel ball bearing into a test tube of oil. It moves slowly to the bottom. And when it strikes the bottom, it does so without a crash, gently and effortlessly. There is no friction, no conflict, no noise or excitement. It proceeds at its own speed, reaches its goal in its own time. This is what the Zen Buddhists

mean when they say: "Do not push the river."
When meditating, let it flow.

What can meditation do for you? Most meditators say they can better cope with the realities of life. "Things that used to drive me up the wall," they often report, "just don't seem to get through anymore." The whole personality seems more in balance somehow, more "together." Energy flows more naturally and spontaneously, without an edgy uptight feeling. It is more difficult to take yourself or your problems too seriously. This doesn't mean that you ignore them or are indifferent to them, only that you are better able to cope with them. This is no doubt why Zen monks, Sufis, lamas, and yogis tend to be so cheerful, accepting, optimistic, and childishly happy.

For most of us "normal" people, meditation can relieve tension, reduce anxiety, build self-confidence and a clearer self-image, and unleash previously untapped personal resources. We somehow feel better. We sleep more soundly.

Our friends confide to us that we seem different, more at ease, more self-confident, more settled. Does this sound too good to be true? Perhaps. Yet there are thousands of people turning to and finding meaning in meditation. These seemingly "glowing testimonials" come from them. It's what they have found in it. They tell us that meditation has helped them. Maybe it can help you, too.

Meditation is a way to achieve serenity, self-realization, a sense of unity with life and with the universe. It has been proven in practice by peoples of many cultures for centuries. It is a gift from the ancients but not without a price. Its costs are study and self-discipline. This book is your road-map. Are you ready? If not, mark this line, re-read these pages, then set the book aside for hours, days, even weeks, until you are *ready* to continue. It is very important that you approach meditation with sincerity, openness, and a genuine desire to learn, — a feeling of reaching out for something deeper. Read on

only when your whole self understands and accepts these lines and says YES from somewhere deep within you, beyond mind, ego, and intellect. That is the first step. This book will wait for you.

TIME, PLACE, ATTITUDE

THE discipline begins right now. You've got to make up your mind that whatever is worth doing is worth doing right. That means that you have to spend up to a half hour twice a day on your meditation. There are times when this will not be possible, but in such cases you should meditate once anyway, even if conditions fall short of being ideal.

The Hindu yogis recommend meditating before meals rather than after, morning and late afternoon rather than in the evening. It may seem surprising, but meditation is not conducive to sleep, as restful as it seems. And it is difficult to

digest food when the body has been slowed down by meditation.

You will get out of meditation only what you put into it. Input equals output. That is the formula for beginners. Hopefully, when you are used to it, you will be getting more from it than you put in. It may take a month to see results. That means about sixty sessions, or two sessions a day for about thirty days. That's what it will take to get you in touch with the mainstream of meditative process, the higher levels of consciousness. Relax. It took many yogis a lifetime.

Experienced meditators can "do their thing" just about anywhere. But for you, at this beginning stage, a familiar, comfortable, quiet place is best. Many people find their bedroom the most conducive to meditation, although a carpeted living room floor is just as suitable. If you can set aside a corner of the room for your *ashram* or temple, all the better. Make an altar

from the top of a night table or chest of drawers. Even a chair seat will do nicely.

Place a clean, white men's handkerchief (or linen table cloth) atop the altar. Put an ashtray, for incense, and a candle in a holder on the cloth. Before you meditate, turn out all light sources except the candle, and light the incense. Meditation is more effective if it can be done on a multisensory level — the incense and candle involve sight and smell.

Close and lock the door while you are meditating. If there is a phone in the room and you cannot disconnect it, cover it with pillows and blanket or put it in a drawer. Don't try turning the phone bell mechanism all the way down; it can still ring loud enough to disrupt meditation.

Sit on the bed with back against the wall or the back of the bed, feet extended on the bed. Or sit upright in a comfortable chair or even cross-legged on the floor. Some lie flat on the back,

arms and legs slightly outstretched in the yogic "corpse position." Take your shoes off if this makes you feel more comfortable. The object is to be comfortable so that pains or numbness do not interfere, — yet not so comfortable that you fall asleep.

Beginners make two common mistakes: trying too hard; not trying enough. The first error happens when you concentrate too much, intellectualize, become impatient, or try to speed up the meditative process. The second error happens when you fail to meditate twice a day, cut meditation short, fall asleep, or meditate on a superficial level by allowing distractions to carry you off on tangents. You must do, but not overdo. As the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tse said, "it is like cooking a small fish, one must be careful not to overdo it."

Experienced meditators proceed in an attitude of quiet and subdued expectancy, open and receptive. They are like a radio receiver tuned to a

frequency where there is no station on the air. They tune in anyway, hearing nothing at first. They have no expectations. They therefore can never really be disappointed. And whatever happens is to the good. Whatever happens becomes a learning, a personal growth experience.

We in the West have been conditioned to expect dividends the moment we invest our time and interest in anything. From the days of the explorers, Western man preferred to discover new lands and pursue material wealth while Eastern man delved deeply into the world of the mind and the riches to be found there. Even today, Western man ventures into outer space and Eastern man continues to probe the inner spirit. Think on this, for you may have to overcome a few centuries of conditioning and value judgments. Be reflective. Open your heart. Be a blossoming rose. Greet the sun, not selfishly, but with caring and childish outreaching.

The rewards of meditation come when they are ready to come, at their own speed, in their own

good time. They cannot be bought. They cannot be scheduled. They cannot come on demand. "When the apple is ripe," the ancients taught, "it will drop from the tree of its own weight." So it is with meditation. It cannot be rushed, ripened artificially. It requires patience, acceptance. "It is as if the Emperor arrives unexpectedly," to quote the ancient Chinese. Serendipity!

YOUR FIRST MEDITATION

THE ancients taught the use of a visualized symbol to quiet a restless mind and neutralize invading thought. This will also help prepare you for deeper meditation. Select some favorite thing; a small object is best. Women may find a pin, ring, flower, or some common small object around the house quite suitable. Men may choose a cuff link, ring, watch, or some other small thing. Place it before you on your little altar. Light the candle and the incense, close

and lock your door, take care of the phone, and get into a comfortable position.

Take a deep breath. Wait a few moments, then repeat with a second, then a third deep breath. This lowers the blood pressure and helps you relax. Now gaze upon the favorite object. Study it intently. Notice everything about it. Pick it up. Feel it with your fingers. Put it to your cheek, your closed eyelids, your lips. Return it to the altar. Gaze again on it. Slowly close your eyes and envision it in your mind's eye.

Keep the vision of the object before you. There will be invading thoughts or images. Let them come. Don't fight them. Resisting them causes anxiety. The object is to achieve serenity. Let the invading thoughts break over you like ocean waves that pass over you without disturbing your restful, reflective frame of mind. Gently, easily, bring back the image of your favorite object which is there on the altar before you.

If you have difficulty keeping the image before

you, slowly open your eyes and look at it again, then close your eyes and continue to meditate on it. You may find it helpful to say the name of the object silently to yourself, in order to help keep the image before you. But the secret is not to aggressively control your mind or force concentration. Learning to proceed gently, openly, is vital to the meditative process.

Try this form of meditation twenty minutes a day. With practice you will find it easier to get into the mood and the session will end in a relaxed state of mind. It is quite normal to take a few minutes after your eyes have closed to tune in and loosen up. Good signs to watch for are muscular twitching (yes!) which means release of tension, a "slump" as if your muscles are hanging on your bones (well, they are!), and a decrease, then a total lack of anxiety when an invading thought comes. People with very active minds find it helpful to imagine that the favorite object literally touches the invading thought, thus neutralizing it. Silently speaking

its name to yourself at the same time will further help to drive the invader away, but, please, gently, lovingly. Develop so tranquil a state of mind for those twenty minutes that no other thought, however serious, really matters.

Now that you've reached a deeper level of relaxation you're on your way to higher forms of meditation. Let's check back over some little things that can help you. When you are first getting into your meditative position, try shifting around to be more comfortable. If you've crossed your legs (ankle over ankle, not in yoga sitting position) or folded your arms or hands together, try sitting or lying without parts of your body touching. This can distract you. Some people have a feeling that their fingers are swelling, or circulation is cut off in their arms or legs. This can interfere with concentration.

Start your incense a few minutes early so that you can get the benefit of a fairly strong sense of smell, thus helping condition you to medita-

tion. Have you tried different kinds of incense? Liking the odor is a definite help. If the incense causes you discomfort, stop using it. The object is to deepen the meditation, not to interfere with it.

And by now you should have learned how to prevent interruptions — the phone, callers, etc. Perhaps you have had to re-schedule your meditation sessions. You should be able to meditate about twenty minutes without a clock or watch to check yourself. All these things will make your meditation less mechanical, less forced, less superficial.

If you're one of those who have great difficulty relaxing, try some reassuring self-talk immediately after the deep breathing at the beginning of your session. You may even try tape recording a twenty minute segment with calm, almost whispered, instructions at the beginning and end. The middle of the tape is silent. Tell yourself at the beginning that you will be able to meditate more deeply this time than before.

Suggest that you will feel relaxation spread over your body, from the outer extremities inward, from the tips of your toes and the tips of your fingers inward. The relaxation will continue from the tips of the toes to the ankles, knees and thighs, from the tips of the fingers to the wrists, elbows, and arms, across your chest and back. All the muscles are relaxing as you concentrate on the object on the altar.

After twenty minutes, give yourself instructions to end the meditation session. Tell yourself, in a soft, calm voice, that you will stop concentrating on the object now and after a few minutes open your eyes. When you are ready, blow out the candle and slowly put away your altar materials. Some people have found that it is helpful taping another reminder five minutes after the twenty-minute limit in the event they fall asleep. Be sure your tape recorder is on. Adjust the volume to an acceptable level. Like a ringing phone which can resemble a fire bell, a tape recorder blasting into your ears can cause quite

a shock and destroy the restful effect of the meditation.

When you have been able to reach an easy and relaxed state of mind, try visualization only, without the object before you on the altar. The ancients envisioned a white lotus blossom. The lotus resembles a tulip in structure, but with about a dozen petals which are a bit more open than those of the tulip. It is a strong, sacred, and mystic symbol thousands of years old, known to the ancients in Africa, China, and India. Picture the flower in the morning sun, a few glistening dewdrops on its petals and leaves. There is a slight haze diffusing the sun's rays. You can feel the sun's warmth, perhaps even a bit of humidity. The lotus symbolizes serenity and wisdom. It is a quieting, peace-giving vision. "Touch it" to invading thoughts and they will no longer bother you. It is as if the lotus were a ground to static electricity.

You may find that the lotus will fade away and nothing will be there. Don't panic, this is really

a good sign. Another thought may come and you may fear that the lotus will not return. Worse still, not having the lotus, you may feel upset and anxious because you know you should be thinking something other than the invading thought. Relax. Let the thoughts come at random, when and as they like. The lotus will flow back and forth, bringing peace with it. It's worth waiting for. If you go through a full session without the lotus you will have to exert a bit more conscious control at the beginning of your next session, but don't force it throughout the session. Again return to a quiet and serene state of mind, letting consciousness flow easily and effortlessly. Don't rush it.

Continue with lotus meditation until you have surpassed the relaxation you got using your favorite thing. Do not go on with these instructions until you have achieved a very definite state of relaxation. An easy way to check yourself is to compare your state of mind now with the way you felt before meditating, not just

today, but before you started meditation at all. If you are satisfied that you're more relaxed, move on. If you are not, go back through these pages and try again. Use this technique of learning throughout this book. It will save you time in the long run.

MANTRAS

MANTRAS are words, usually sanskrit, having mystic significance, which are used for meditation. The word or words are spoken, chanted, or envisioned during meditation. Some yogis use a picture or symbol of their mantra, or an abbreviation or letter from it to help them meditate.

By far the best known and most used mantra in the entire world is OM. OM is the sacred syllable, "the" word. It is elemental, primordial sound. It is the sound of God, the Voice of Nature. It is a word-bridge between mind and

body. It is a word, a poem, a prayer; it is sound, it is music, it is all sound, it is no sound.

OM arises in the mind when it is thought of. When it is time to think it, it comes. It is voiced and it then proceeds through the body centers or *chakras*. It is then felt, experienced. Voiced, it is projected into space, to other hearers and beyond. Then it becomes transcendent. Doing all these things, it blends mind and body, unifies them, transcends them, and reaches out to Mystic Unity.

If you try to make the easiest of all sounds, parting your lips slightly and exhaling gently as you make sound, what would that sound be? The ancients found that it is at first an AH sound. And at about the mid-point, perhaps a little before, as you empty your lungs of air, and the lips begin to close, the sound changes. The new sound resembles OO. And when the lips close, there is an MM sound which seems to vibrate through the whole body. When several people chant it together, the whole room

seems to resonate. AH-OO-MM is OM. Some write it as AUM. The AH symbolizes reality. It is beginning, the shock of newness, the cutting edge of change. It breaks silence. It is pure motive. It is the self in action, the self being active and doing, a call to meditation. It sounds off your vocal chords in a very real and dramatic way. OO symbolizes the dream or astral world. Note when you chant it how it seems to be projected out from you. It doesn't remain and vibrate in the same way as AH. It is winged sound; it flies outward. It is more not-you than you. And the MM is the sound of Universal Consciousness, the mystic unifying feeling which embraces all. When sounding it, there is a vibration which is soothing yet powerful, which seems to envelop the whole being in a deep, warm bath of resonance, soft and relaxing.

There are many mantras. Hindu gurus select mantras to suit the student's needs and personality. OM is a universal mantra. Try it several

times. Do not chant it loudly. Take a deep breath and let it sound easily. Let it flow. A mystic river of sound. Maintain the chant several minutes. Let the mouth close very gradually, naturally — experience the three sounds. As you chant, look at your candle. It has wax, string, and flame. Omit any of the three and there is no candle. The ancients taught that OM is the Mystic Candle of the Universe. Omit any of the three syllables and OM is lost.

Now you are prepared to increase the effectiveness of your meditation. By now you can visualize the lotus. Do so again, but begin your meditation with a soft OM chant. As you meditate, picture the lotus but now hear the OM without chanting it aloud. You may hear it in your own voice. You may hear a chorus chant it. It can change in sound, pitch, and rhythm. Gradually you will develop a clear picture of the lotus glistening in the morning sun, and at the same time hear the soft, powerful reassurance of the OM. When you have achieved this,

there is no need to chant OM aloud. Some yogis forbade it to be chanted except on very special occasions, nor would they even write it. To them it was far too sacred. As your meditative skills develop, you may feel a deep reverence for the word, too.

Some meditators think on OM as they go to sleep. They say it brings them pleasant dreams and seems to provide for a more restful sleep. Experienced meditators can “think OM” quietly, silently to themselves whenever they are tense or anxious. It brings serenity with it. It can be a non-drug tranquilizer.

THE YOGA METHOD

PRATYAHARA is sensory awareness. It means developing your senses, sharpening them. It means tuning in or focussing in on only one sensory aspect of a thing to the exclusion of all else, sensing it for what it is and not for what

we think it is or want it to be. It is letting the object exist of and by itself and to experience it for its own sake. Pratyahara is unlearning, unconditioning, overcoming your own fixed idea of what you see, hear, or touch. It is looking at an object and "letting it be," receiving its signals in an open and receptive attitude.

You can develop pratyahara by having a tea ceremony just before your meditation. It should be a tiny cup of fragrant tea. Jasmine or oolong is very good. No sugar. But hot, and only one tiny cup. Place it on your altar. Close your eyes and concentrate on its aroma. If you can't smell it, lean closer. Hold the cup in the fingers of both hands. Close your eyes. Think on the cup's warmth. Place the cup to your lips but before you drink smell the aroma again and think on it, sense it thoroughly. Taste just a tiny sip. "Go with" the taste. How delicate. Enjoy the pleasure of the immediate moment. Sense the warmth on your tongue. When you sip again, sense how its warmth travels down your throat,

even into your stomach. Focus on the taste on your tongue, how the flavor is centered there.

You are surrounded in your home with hundreds of opportunities to develop pratyahara. There are sounds: clocks, washers, dryers, furnaces, creaky floors, lawn mowers, dishwashers, garbage disposals, running water, closing doors, to name a few. There are "people sounds" all around you. Listen not only to what people say but how they say it, their tone of voice, the speed at which they talk, the pauses, what they do while talking. And "nature sounds" such as birds, rustling leaves, brooks, rain, wind. Listen. Really listen.

Develop your sense of sight by "seeing as if for the first time." If a sunrise, sunset, or blue sky with clouds, is not available to you, look at some of your clothing, the colors of your walls, carpets, furniture. Have you ever really seen them before? Visit an art gallery or museum. What a feast of images and colors.

Touch things more. Feel different textures, tree

bark, glass, cement, leather, wool, metal, skin, hair. There is magic in touch. Johnson and Masters have a sequential program for married couples to teach them how to sense each other. Humanistic psychologists recommend a paired exercise where one partner closes his eyes and the other partner leads him around the room, having him touch things and try to guess what they are. Most people who try it learn a great deal about trust, the feel of familiar things, and how wonderful it is to be able to see.

And what of taste? We wolf our food. You can develop your sense of taste by trying foods seasoned differently. Here again, the Hindus for centuries have been preparing curries and chutneys. Enjoy your food. Savor it. Make it a kind of ceremony. Linger on the taste a while longer. Slow down. "Turn on" to the taste.

There is a whole world of sensory awareness. Is it really possible to be bored surrounded by such excitement every day? The everyday world is full of sensory explosions we can ex-

perience simply by being receptive to them, simply by being an interested spectator. Achieving pratyahara is becoming a finely tuned receiver, studying and enjoying everything that enters the senses, what the Buddhists call "windows of the mind."

Practicing pratyahara means overcoming distractions. After all, if you tune in to total sensory input, you'll have trouble sorting them out, there are so many signals received. It would be relatively easy to be confused by "sensory overload." But then, you've been meditating long enough to take care of that. Tune out all but one thought or object. Become a gardener of the soul, turning over the soft, rich soil with an imaginary spade, gently, easily. Focus on the spadeful, not the whole garden. We sense fully only what we select. We thoroughly sense only specific features of the object.

Begin to sharpen your senses every day, on the job, at home, on vacation. You can do this even at meetings, in waiting rooms, driving to and

from work. Do you ever really look a traffic light right in its red eyes? Sense the red. Polish the senses. See, hear, smell, taste, touch! There is a whole new world out there, waiting for you to explore it. It is a truly great adventure, for all who have eyes to see, ears to hear, fingers to touch. Pratyahara is to have a third eye, a third ear, a third hand.

DHARANA is knowing, fully knowing. Dharana is one-pointed concentration. It is undistracted, intense involvement with something, putting it in extremely fine focus, being totally occupied with it. It differs from pratyahara in that dharana uses all the senses and embraces a whole object or idea. It doesn't sort out the senses or specific facts of the senses. It isn't merely sensing the colors of the sunset. It seeks to "know" the sunset, the totality of it, the identity of it. Pratyahara means seeing, touching, feeling, smelling, perhaps tasting, a rose (in the Middle East roses are used for flavoring). It is appreciating the rose for specific attributes

in terms of the senses. But dharana concentrates on the rose, all of it. It focuses on total "rose-ness."

You can practice dharana using your meditation candle. Gaze upon it as you did in earlier meditation. Observe the flame, its reflection on the wax at the top, how the light is diffused just below the surface. See the waxy texture of the candle itself, how it fits into the holder. Close your eyes and envision the candle. Hold the candle in your mind's eye. Bring it to life in your mind. Make it real in your imagination. Know the candle, really know it.

The ancients used flowers or fruits to develop dharana. It's interesting to note that the world's artists do much the same thing trying to bring to life flowers and fruits in still-life painting. You can do the same with the oils and canvas of your mind. An apple, an orange, banana, or pear will do nicely. Concentrate on it. Touch it, study it closely. Use your sharpened senses. Then close your eyes and duplicate the fruit in

your mind as clearly as if your eyes were open and you were looking at it. Make it equally real with or without your eyes being focussed on it. As a close to this part of your meditation, further your pratyahara by experiencing the fruit — eat it. But eat slowly, savoring it.

A glass of water can be your dharana model. Through your senses you can know the shape and feel of the glass and the water within it. There is the seemingly perfect circle of the glass rim, the vertical lines of its sides, the reflection of light from your candle. But you must graduate from sensing to knowing. Concentrate on the total sensory input of the glass so that you duplicate the glass in your mind. It is there just as vividly as the glass you see when you open your eyes. It is equally real. It is "knowing" the glass.

A freshly sharpened pencil is another good model for dharana. Feel the eraser, the metal cap which holds it, the smooth enamelled sides, the rough texture of the wood near the point,

the sharp point itself. Does the bare wooden section have an odor? The eraser? Study it, its parts, the whole pencil. Know it in part and as a whole. Concentrate on it. Eyes closed, picture it. Make it real. Know it.

Seeing, even appreciating a sunrise or sunset for its own sake is pratyahara. Being "into" it, getting with it, knowing it is dharana. As your skills improve, it won't seem like concentration. It's more like absorption. Total absorption. You can achieve dharana in nature by knowing mountains, deserts, rivers, oceans, trees, flowers, soil, the moon, stars, sky, clouds, and so on. And if indoors, paintings and pictures can provide the means. You will know you have achieved dharana when the thought so permeates your mind that nothing else comes through, and it is so vivid that it is the same whether your eyes are open, seeing the object, or closed and imagining it.

DHYANA is at-oneness, total absorption, becoming. It is transcendental consciousness, contem-

plation so deep that it is impossible to separate the "you" from the "it," the object being concentrated upon. It begins as dharana, firm, strong, one-pointed concentration to the total exclusion of everything but the one thought or image allowed to come through. This involves both the intellect, conscious concentration, and the senses, sensing what is there for its own sake. It is factual and it is felt. It is thought about and it is experienced. It thus involves total perception and judgment, the mind and the senses. But doing this is but the beginning stage of dhyana.

Gradually, the intellect fades. It is no longer needed. The mind's eye sees the object without thinking. The mental image exists by and of itself, focussed immovably on target. As the intellect fades so also the object and, a feeling of well-being, of freedom, of rapture, flows. Everything flows together. Some experience a floating feeling at this stage. If this happens, do not be frightened by it. Go with the feeling for it is

part of the dhyanic process. It is a good sign. Relax with it; let it come. Don't resist it, "do not push the river." Finally, dhyana peaks in a feeling most experienced meditators describe as "selflessness." The intellect is a strong supporter of ego, and as intellect fades, ego fades along with it. In dhyana there is no intellect, no ego. Only the perceived, felt object exists and you are one with it, transcending everything, even you.

Dyhana is a mystic leap from you to "it," the object of contemplation. There is no knower, only the known. And the knower and the known are one. You are the object; the object is you. You are absorbed totally in it. It is as if you and it are together in a single bubble of consciousness, aware and vibrating with identity.

Dhyana is achieved naturally, easily, by following the practices thus far described. All that has happened to you up to this point has prepared you for this higher meditative state, and

the one to follow. If you have difficulty achieving dhyana, total absorption, being one with the object, go back and repeat all the exercises. It may be that you have omitted something, missed something. Emphasize the visualization of the white lotus blossom. Include OM in your meditation. Relax. Don't strain, don't overdo. Let it flow. It will come. Make your spirit a receptacle. Let the hidden spring which is in each of us flow.

SAMADHI is cosmic consciousness, Mystic Unity. It is achieved suddenly, with a flash of insight. It has been described as like falling off an imaginary log. It is intuitive, not intellectual. We left the intellect behind some time ago. Samadhi can occur anywhere along the meditative path, spontaneously. It is caught, not taught.

SAVITARKA is the beginning of samadhi. It is a feeling of "at-oneness," of deep and natural belonging. In this state, there are no names, no identity, just belonging, acceptance, part of

something great and powerful. It is a feeling as if something great is about to happen, something good, something positive.

Gradually, you "plug in" to the total universe, to the All, the One. There is no time anymore, no place, no cause or effect, no concept of space except boundless infinity. It's the biggest idea you've ever had; powerful, unifying, uplifting, expansive. The ancients called it *nirvitarka*, the peak of meditative experience, the zenith.

In samadhi you are completely swallowed up in the process. You are plugged into something truly great, to Creation itself. It is more psychical than psychological. It is far too deep for words to describe it. Those who have achieved it describe it thus: "I belong to no one. No one belongs to me. I am free. Part of something great. I am with oceans, continents, mountains, rivers, rocks, drops of water, atoms. One in all, all in one. One. All. I am one; all is one. One with the object, one with self, one with Self, one with nothing, one with everything. There

is no more me, no more it. There is no knower, no known, no seer, no seen, no subject, no object, no good, no evil. There is only Oneness, Unity, and I am there, everywhere, nowhere."

Patanjali, according to legend the founder of yoga, described seven stages to the achievement of samadhi: You must deeply and sincerely seek the truth; use proper meditation methods; phase out ego and intellect and all previous conditioning and preconceived notions; purify mind and body to be worthy of further truth; achieve serenity in the face of the distractions of everyday life; perceive the world and its ways as unreal and know that it all will some day pass away; and see the Eternal Spirit, the Mystic Unity, the Universal Consciousness in everyone and everything. Use this paragraph for meditation. The teaching has inspired yogis for 2,000 years, lighting their way toward samadhi. May it do the same for you. Realize the limitation of words; the truth in this paragraph lies deeper than words. Read

between the lines with your third eye, your second mind.

Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi are the final four of the eight steps of yoga. They deal with the self, the inner you. They are not separate and distinct, but overlap. It is possible to experience samadhi in a sudden flash of insight before you have progressed methodically through the previous stages. But for most beginners, meditative enlightenment occurs in the sequence described here. Experienced meditators "plug in" at higher levels without the need to go through lower stages. This is because they include the mental states of lower levels in the first few minutes of meditation. After all, they have "been there before" and they enter the meditation state well prepared for higher achievement.

Summing up the function and achievements of yogic meditation: *pratyahara* brings sharp sensory awareness; *dharana* develops one-pointed concentration; *dhyana* is at-oneness or total

absorption into the object meditated upon: and *samadhi*, union with cosmic or universal consciousness, the Eternal Spirit, One, All.

Many yogis recommend *asanas* or physical exercises to limber up the body for more effective meditation and *pranayama* or breathing exercises to tone up body function. These practices do seem to help. If you are having trouble achieving higher meditative states, try them. Any good book on yoga will describe more positions and exercises than you need.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION OR TM

TRANSCENDENTAL Meditation or TM is a system of teaching meditation brought out of the Himalayas by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He was taught this simple and quickly learned method by his teacher, the Guru Dev. It is estimated that over 150,000 people from all walks of life have been initiated into TM in the United

States alone. The Maharishi's followers now operate training centers in major cities throughout the world.

There are free public introductory meetings held just about everywhere. TM supporters have a missionary zeal which arouses curiosity in some, resistance and skepticism in others. It sounds very simple, a far cry from the yogis of old who practiced many years and worked hard at their enlightenment.

The TM method is simple, but it works. It is necessary to attend sessions on several consecutive days or nights, a "checking" session a week later and once a week thereafter for the first month. After that, it is recommended that you attend one checking session a month. All these meetings are included in the \$35 student or \$75 adult fee. As a matter of fact, you can attend all the checking sessions you wish at no extra charge.

TM candidates bring three flowers, two pieces

of fruit, and a man's white handkerchief to the initiation ceremony. After a brief ritual you are given your own mantra and asked not to share it with anyone. You are then taught the basic process of meditation. The Maharishi claims it is not necessary to fast or indulge in the traditional yogic exercises to meditate effectively. Once initiated, you are entitled to attend special weekend training sessions where you can meditate with others, listen to tapes of the Maharishi, and further perfect your meditative skills.

Since the Maharishi's whirlwind tour of the U. S., there have been many scientific studies of TM meditation using sophisticated measuring instruments. Researchers agree that something very definitely happens to body functioning in the meditative state. Heart and breathing rates and oxygen consumption are reduced and there is a characteristic change in brain waves, unlike the waking, sleeping, or dream states. This has led some investigators to describe TM as "the fourth state of consciousness."

THE BUDDHIST METHOD

GOTAMA Siddhartha, the Buddha, the Compassionate One, was born and educated in the Hindu religion. He was wealthy and he knew the advantages and disadvantages of being rich. He left home to search for truth and lived the life of a hermit, denying himself, almost starving to death. He renounced both approaches, the affluent and the ascetic, and found enlightenment through moderation, the "Middle Path."

Buddha preached over forty years after he achieved *nirvana* or perfect enlightenment. As a result, there are volumes and volumes of his teachings, faithfully recorded by monks who studied at his side. Contrast this to the Christian New Testament, written a long time after the death of Jesus, mostly by people who never saw or knew him. Buddhist meditation involves concentrating on the thoughts and ideas of The Compassionate One. It probes the medi-

tator's mind, quiets it, then kindles the flame of wisdom.

Concentrating on Buddha's ideas brings about a change in attitude. Calm, dispassionate reflection on Buddhist teachings quiets anxiety. This reflection sharpens perception, makes the meditator more open, accepting, insightful. The Buddhist meditative process is much the same as the yoga method. First the senses and intellect consider the idea. They turn it over and over in the mind, sorting it, sifting it, reflecting it deep inside, to the inner self. Gradually, sensing and intellect fade and one-pointed concentration begins. *Jhana* or total absorption takes place, at-oneness. Then, there is no idea, only a selfless void. At this time, the four "formless states" are experienced: infinite space; infinite consciousness; awareness of non-existence; and awareness of Unity or Oneness.

The object of Buddhist meditation is *nirvana* or enlightenment. Along the way, *prajna* or discriminating wisdom is achieved. Buddhist liter-

ature is by far richer than Hindu because the Buddha had the advantage of knowing the Hindu approach, and he had a lifetime to think on it and offer help in mastering meditation. What follows are the more important Buddhist teachings, those used for meditation.

In his famous Sermon at Benares, Buddha described The Four Noble Truths. They are the foundation of Buddhism. (1) Existence is *dukkha* (painful). *To live is to know pain*, (2) The reason for this is *tanha* (craving). *The pain is caused by the ego's selfish striving*, (3) It need not be so. *There is a way to overcome suffering*, (4) The way is the eight-fold path.

Buddha's eight-fold path is *The Way*: (1) Right understanding of self and these truths; (2) Right purpose or motive; (3) Right speech (do not lie or slander; if you have nothing to say, say nothing); (4) Right behavior (do not kill, steal, take drugs, drink, or be unchaste; (5) Right vocation (life is a mission, not a career); (6) Right effort (do your best in all

things); (7) Right awareness (see with the third eye; hear with the third ear); (8) Right meditation (seek ultimate truth; Universal Consciousness).

Buddha's five meditations: (1) *Love*, in which you long for the welfare of all, including the happiness of your enemies; (2) *Compassion*, in which you care about all who are in distress and understand their sorrow and anxiety; (3) *Joy*, in which you rejoice with the good fortune of others and genuinely wish them well; (4) *Impurity*, in which you consider the consequences of wrongdoing; how trivial the pleasure of the moment and how evil the consequences; (5) *Serenity*, in which you rise above love and hate, tyranny and servitude, wealth and want, and accept your fate with tranquility.

The four earnest Meditations: (1) On the body; (2) On the senses; (3) On ideas; (4) On reason and character.

The seven kinds of Wisdom: (1) Energy; (2) Thought; (3) Contemplation; (4) Investiga-

tion; (5) Joy; (6) Repose or inaction; (7) Serenity.

From the *Dhammapadda*:

Plant a thought and reap an act,
Plant an act and reap a habit,
Plant a habit and reap a character,
Plant a character and reap a destiny.

All that we are is the result of what we have
thought;

It is founded on our thoughts;

It is made up of our thoughts.

If a man speaks or acts with evil thought, pain
follows him

As the wheel follows the foot of the ox which
draws the cart.

If a man speaks or acts with pure thought,
happiness follows him

Like a shadow that never leaves him.

Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time;

Hatred ceases by love — this is an eternal law.

So, as carpenters fashion wood

Wise people fashion themselves.

The Ten Kasinas: earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, light, and the limits of space.

The Four Sublime States: caring, love, kindness; compassion, empathy; joy in the happiness of others; and serenity, tranquility.

The Four Vows: save all beings; destroy evil passion; learn sacred teachings; achieve Buddhahood despite all difficulties.

The Ten Reflections: attributes of The Buddha; His teachings; those who seek and achieve nirvana; your own self-discipline and values; your freedom; your values versus the truth; the inevitability of death; thirty-two parts of the body; breathing.

Buddha described ten obstacles to meditation: home expenses; family welfare; status and gifts; the "ego trip" when you have a following; busy work; travel; demanding friends or loved one; illness; using theory without practice; pre-occupation with psychic powers.

Buddhists meditate on these teachings, spending entire sessions on one idea, even on one word. Try it. It can be not only good, rewarding meditations, but an in-depth course in personality and psychology. From the human relations standpoint, these 2500-year-old teachings are as timely as tomorrow's newspaper.

THE ZEN METHOD

BODHIDHARMA, "the blue eyed monk" brought Zen Buddhism from India to China in the Sixth century. It is a mystic form of Mahayana Buddhism which became mixed with Taoism when it came to China. In the Seventh century, Zen missionaries brought it to Japan.

Zazen is sitting meditation. *Kinbin* is walking meditation. The Zen Master assigns his student a *koan*, a statement which sounds like a riddle. The object is to master the koan. This is done

by reflecting on the question, giving voice to innermost intuitive feelings, reacting to the totality of it with the totality which is you, trying for a flash of insight.

Perhaps an anecdote from the Zen literature will help you understand the approach. It was the custom in the monasteries for the Zen Master to have a special seat at dinner. A young monk sat in the master's place one evening. The Master arrived a few minutes late. "How old are you in the Buddhist Way?" he asked the young monk. "As old as the prehistoric Buddha," the student replied. "Then move over," the Master said, "you are my grandson."

Sometimes the Zen Master is very direct in applying his insight. There is the legend of Enyadatta who looked in the mirror and saw no face. She panicked. Everyone assured her she had a head, but she wouldn't believe them. A Zen Master passing by observed her dilemma, walked up to her and struck her on the

head with a stick, saying: "That is your head." The emblem of the Zen Master is the *kyosaku*, a stick. It is used to strike the student if he does not solve his assigned koan to the Master's satisfaction.

Here is another account of a Master interacting with a student in *sanzen*, the word which means discussing the koan:

JOSHU: What is the true way?

NANSEN: The true way is the everyday way.

JOSHU: Can I study it?

NANSEN: The more you study, the farther you are from the way.

JOSHU: But if I can't study it how can I know it?

NANSEN: The way does not belong to things seen, nor to things unseen. It does not belong to things known nor to things unknown. Do not seek it, study it, or name it. To find yourself in it, open yourself as wide as the sky.

And yet another, to illustrate the Zen approach:

MASTER: I will soon die and leave you only with my corpse.

STUDENT: I will see you then where nothing is born and nothing dies.

MASTER: I will go to that place where nothing is born and nothing dies and where therefore there is no need to see each other at all.

Here is a list of koans for your own meditation. Spend an entire session (or more!) on each of them. There are no "right" answers. Logic is of no use whatever. And a factual reply is almost always "wrong." The best answers transcend reason, even the senses.

(1) Who speaks truth?; (2) How can truth shout in silence?; (3) How is loneliness good?; (4) What is time?; (5) What time is it?; (6) What is death?; (7) What is beauty? Ugli-

ness?; (8) Who is your mother?; (9) Who is your teacher?; (10) What is mind?; (11) What is sanity? Normal?; (12) What is emptiness?; (13) How old are you?; (14) When is your birthday?; (15) What is fear? Love?; (16) What is greatness?; (17) Who is great?; (18) Where are you from?; (19) What is peace? war?; (20) What is God? (21) What is reality?; (22) What is truth?; (23) What is great wisdom like?; (24) What is ego?; (25) What is maturity?; (26) What is action?; (27) What is meditation like?; (28) How can a man standing on tiptoe on a mountaintop and reaching up reach even higher?; (29) Describe the sound of one hand clapping; (30) How does one play the solid iron flute which is without holes?; (31) Describe the sound where there is no ear; (32) How is this a happy message: grandfather dies; father dies; son dies?; (33) What did your face look like before you were conceived?; (34) Why give a blind man a lighted lantern?; (35) There is a snake and a piece of rope in a dark room. Which is which?

TAOIST MEDITATION

THE Book of Tao, legend has it, was written some 2,500 years ago by Lao-tse, Keeper of the Archives of China. It influenced Zen Buddhism and is a rich source of material for meditation. Here are a few excerpts related to the meditative stages described earlier in this book:

One who knows others is wise; one who knows himself is wisest. One who conquers others is strong; one who conquers himself is strongest. To have the world know of you or to know yourself, which is more important? Money or your mind, which is more valuable? Profit or loss, which is the greater evil? To be content is to be wealthy; to be dedicated, committed, is to be strong; to be natural and genuine is to endure; to die and to be remembered is to have immortality.

As civilization grew, names began. With names one should know where to stop. Whoever knows this has security. The scholar needs to

know more and more each day. The follower of Tao needs to know less and less each day. By lessening knowledge one achieves serenity. With serenity everything can be accomplished. The world is won by those who leave it alone. When you feel compelled to dominate, the world is already beyond your reach.

Nature is sparing in its talk. Usually high winds do not last the whole morning. Usually heavy rains do not last the whole day. Where do wind and rain come from? Within Nature. And if Nature so spares its talk, how much more then should you?

The highest motive is to be like water. Water is essential to all life, yet it does not demand a fee or proclaim its importance. Rather, it flows humbly to the lowest level, and in so doing it is much like Tao. Nothing in the world is weaker nor more yielding than water, yet nothing is its equal in wearing away the hard and strong. There is nothing quite like it. Thus the weak can overpower the strong; the flexible

can overcome the rigid. The softest will penetrate the hardest; the non-existent will penetrate the existent. By this you know the value of being gentle.

Thirty spokes unite at the hub but the ultimate use of the wheel depends on the part where nothing exists. Clay is molded into a vase but the ultimate use of the vase depends on the part where nothing exists. Doors and windows are cut out of the walls of a house but the ultimate use of the house depends on the parts where nothing exists. So there is advantage in using what can be seen, what exists. And there is also advantage in using what cannot be seen, what is non-existent.

The ancient followers of Tao, so wise, so subtle, so profound, so deeply understanding that they were themselves misunderstood! It is necessary therefore to understand them: cautious, like crossing a stream in midwinter; observant like moving through a hostile land; modest, retiring like ice melting; dignified like an honored

guest; genuine like natural, uncarved wood; receptive like an inviting, open valley; and friendly, like muddy water, freely mixing. The ancient followers of Tao did not use it to selfishly increase knowledge but rather to preserve simplicity, the ancient standard. To know the ancient standard is to possess Tao of a certainty. It is deep and vast as infinity. It returns us to the serenity of primal peace.

Everything comes into existence but returns to its source. Vegetation flourishes and grows but returns to the soil from whence it came. Returning to the source is serenity. It is to realize one's destiny. It is to know the Eternal Constant. It is to be enlightened.

There is a danger in extremes: pull a bowstring too far and you wish you had let go before. Hone a sword edge too sharp and it will wear too soon. Fill your house with gold and jade and you invite thieves. Be proud and arrogant and you prepare for your own downfall. Whoever stands on tiptoe is unsteady. Whoever walks

with long strides cannot long keep up the pace. Whoever makes a show of himself cannot really shine. According to the Tao, these are excessive. They are to be avoided.

The truly wise are helpful to people. No one is rejected. The truly wise are helpful to everything. Nothing is rejected. To know this is to have double enlightenment. It is to be a friend to the friendless, hope to the hopeless. Therefore the good teach the bad; the bad are lessons for the good. This is the subtlety of true wisdom. The truly wise are selfless; people's needs are their needs. The good are treated with goodness and the bad are also treated with goodness. This is the goodness of Tao. The faithful are treated in good faith and the faithless are also treated in good faith. This is the faith of Tao. The truly wise accept all people as their own family.

Why do rivers and seas have dominion over lowlands? Because they lower themselves to the

lowlands. To be elevated by the people, speak like their inferior. To lead people, walk behind them. Thus the truly wise are above but people do not feel their weight. They walk in front but people do not feel blocked. And when the best leader's work is done the people say: "We did it ourselves." The world respects and never tires of such leadership.

A great tree with an arm's girth of trunk grew from a tiny sprout. An eight-storied terrace arose from a small heap of dirt. And an old Chinese proverb tells us that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

I have three jewels. Guard them and keep them safe for me. The first is love, without it nothing is possible; the second is moderation, which is to know the mystic balance, avoid extremes, accept differences as the means to grow; the third is humility, to know that you have come from nothing and that you will return to nothing.

HINDU MEDITATION

From the Hindu Mundaka Upanishad

TAKE the secret teaching as the bow,
Place on it the arrow sharp from meditation,
Draw it with a mind full of at-oneness,
Thus arrow, target, and mind are eternal.
Let OM be the bow and Self be the arrow,
Let at-oneness be the target;
The target is struck through awareness;
Thus arrow, target, and mind are one.

TIBETAN MEDITATION

From the Tibetan Book of the Dead

WHEN I wander, full of illusion,
Seeking enlightenment, afraid, confused,
May the Buddhas, Deities of Feeling and
Reason, inspire and strengthen me;
May the Divine Mothers comfort and sustain
me;
May I achieve Buddhahood.