

Inspiration

I have said that meditation is the road to enlightenment and the greatest endeavour of this life. Whenever I talk about meditation to my students, I always stress the necessity of practicing it with resolute discipline and one-pointed devotion; at the same time, I always tell them how important it is to do it in as inspired and as richly creative a way as possible. In one sense meditation is an art, and you should bring to it an artist's delight and fertility of invention.

Become as resourceful in inspiring yourself to enter your own peace as you are at being neurotic and competitive in the world. There are so many ways of making the approach to meditation as joyful as possible. You can find the music that most exalts you and use it to open your heart and mind. You can collect pieces of poetry, or quotations or lines of teachings that over the years have moved you, and keep them always at hand to elevate your spirit. I have always loved Tibetan *thangka* paintings and derive strength from their beauty. You too can find reproductions of paintings that arouse a sense of sacredness and hang them on the walls of your room. Listen to a cassette tape of a teaching by a great master or a sacred chant. You can make of the place where you meditate a simple paradise, with one flower, one stick of incense, one candle, one photograph of an enlightened master, or one statue of a deity or a buddha. You can transform the most ordinary of rooms into an intimate sacred space, into an environment where every day you come to the meeting with your true self with all the joy and happy ceremony of one old friend greeting another.

And if you find that meditation does not come easily in your city room, be inventive and go out into nature. Nature is always an unfailing fountain of inspiration. To calm your mind, go for a walk at dawn in the park or watch the dew on a rose in a garden. Lie on the ground and gaze up into the sky, and let your mind expand into its spaciousness. Let the sky outside awake a sky inside your mind. Stand by a stream and mingle your mind with its rushing, become one with its ceaseless sound. Sit by a waterfall and let its healing laughter purify your spirit. Walk on a beach and take the sea wind full and sweet against your face. Celebrate and use the beauty of moonlight to poise your mind. Sit by a lake or in a garden and, breathing quietly, let your mind fall silent as the moon comes up majestically and slowly in the cloudless night.

Everything can be used as an invitation to meditation. A smile, a face in the subway, the sight of a small flower growing in the crack of a cement pavement, a fall of rich cloth in a shop window, the way the sun lights up flower pots on a window sill. Be alert for any sign of beauty or grace. Offer up every joy, be awake at all moments to "the news that is always arriving out of silence." (Rainer Maria Rilke)

Slowly you will become a master of your own bliss, a chemist of your own joy, with all sorts of remedies always at hand to elevate, cheer, illuminate, and inspire your every breath and movement. What is a great spiritual practitioner? A person who lives always in the presence of his or her own true self, someone who has found and who uses continually the springs and sources of profound inspiration . . . To embody the transcendent is why we are here.

Source: Rinpoche, Sogyal (2002). *The Tibetan Book of Living And Dying*. Edited by Patrick Gaffney and Andrew Harvey. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. (Pages 84-85.)