

I am, I am--Invitation to Meditation

A number of years ago when I earnestly began the practice of meditation I was very entertained by the initial interaction between my conscious thoughts and perceptions concerning preparation to meditate. I heartily laughed out loud on many occasions. Since laughter is as rich a tonic as meditation, I appreciated and exercised it even more.

Some of my humorous moments included questioning myself about what I should wear--elastic waists so as not restrict the flow of energy, freshly bathed to come clear and cleansed to the alter, or bare-footed to ground myself.

As I prepared for my first, great efforts, those questions were significant to me. Gradually, I awakened to the idea that my perceptions, not the questions aroused chuckles as I realized that I had been entertaining the notion that there was a right or wrong template and that the choices that I made could affect the spirit of my meditation. All of these elements are part and parcel to the meditative experience; and, they evoke different appreciations in each of us. Any one of them, or combination, is as meaningful--or meaningless--as we define it to be in any given time. Since we are all vibrating, there is never a time that we are still and completely without movement. Our flow is continuously flexing as are our feelings about everything in which we are engaged, including meditation.

Many of my initial questions about being in the practice of meditation included what to say, or how to start. Sometimes I spoke out loud, into the room or into the air. And, sometimes words just floated through my head but were not audible. I smiled at myself as I engaged in these thoughts.

- Should I begin with an Ommmmmm initiated from deep within my abdomen?
- Should I begin with chanting spiritual sounds?
- Should I begin by sounding a small bell or cymbol?
- Should I begin by expressing the names of deities, sages or angels?
- How would the "All That Is, The Universe, The Source" know that I was ready... Logging in, or coming on-line, or dialing into the universal conference call?

So, my very human, conscious thoughts were initially about preparation and appearance. I certainly tapped numerous friends and veteran meditators inspired by the glow and joy with which they addressed the winding paths of life. I loved that they seriously considered my questions about elastic-waisted pants and socks/no socks. Several of them laughed right along with me while others chuckled inside so as not to distress this newly minted meditator.

I especially enjoyed reading the words of Lama Surya Das in *Awakening the Buddha Within*, "As we practice this first Great Effort, I think it helps if we can imagine ourselves as children, scrubbed clean, open to new experiences, new actions and new karma. At every moment we are creating our future. What will it be?"

Dear ones, my many teachers, offered specific routines with deliberate steps to follow.

- Sit quietly and don't engage in questions until your mind has cleared
- Reduce monkey-mind thoughts about having started the washing machine or not
- Set a timer for 20 minutes and when it rings that will be your signal of refreshment and renewal
- Put a notepad and pen beside you and journal immediately following meditation
- State your intentions
- Don't state your intentions, you will be guided spontaneously

I continue to laugh before, after and during meditation. It has become integral to my practice. As Surya Das writes encourages, "...simplicity is the key: the simple necessity of unburdening oneself of all excess baggage, and turning the searchlight inward. For everything is available within our own intangible spiritual core."

Meditation requires so little. The Buddha identified four positions for meditation: standing, sitting, walking and lying down--in other words, all the time, any place, any way.

As with the big, prize drawings, I must be present to win. And, the prize incased in meditative time is discovering being present, discovering the moment, the singular joy of that given moment.

So, what do I wear to meditation time? An open mind, an open heart.
 What sounds do I make in meditation? Sound or no sound, it matters not.
 What sages do I call? We are all one.
 How will I be recognized? I am, I am. I am present.